

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men
at
New Life Gospel Center
Cleveland, Ohio

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the Liberty University School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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The researcher will address the problem of African American Men at New Life Gospel Center failing to lead their family's spiritual journey in the home. Fourteen men covering three generations came together through Zoom classes, a series of interviews, eight weekly classes, focus groups, and surveys. The men were encouraged, educated, and trained to lead prayer in their homes with their families. The men challenged each other and made themselves accountable to study the Bible and prayer. The thesis was for the average Christian man who is simply a churchgoer but wants to transform into a *Kingdom Man*. A *Kingdom Man* is a man who receives his instructions from God, and he will glorify the King in every area of his life. The researcher takes a journey back to slavery through generational curses that have left a mark on the mental health of Black men. The journey continues as they reclaim their identity not only as Black men but as *Godly Men*. They are reminded of their value and the power God has given them through prayer. The project challenges African American men to lead their families spiritually by being an example of a praying man. When the prayer classes concluded, the women were interviewed so that the researcher could understand their viewpoints on how the men's prayer lives changed. During the final class, the men decided to continue the Zoom meetings to study the Word and practice praying together. The project will influence others in the field of prayer to reach African American Christian men in churches across America, denying the supernatural power God has given them to be men of prayer.

Keywords: African, American, Men, Prayer, Black, Kingdom

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Abbreviations

DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
NIV	<i>New International Version</i>
NLGC	<i>New Life Gospel Center</i>
PK	<i>Preachers Kid</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In comparison with African American women, African American men at New Life Gospel Center disproportionally lack frequency in their prayer life in the home. The researcher will identify how African American men recognize, comprehend, and represent their faith and prayer life. The purpose is to inspire, instruct, and help develop a lifestyle change directing them on a spiritual journey into becoming an inspiration in prayer in their homes.

How is the goal accomplished? To develop an effective prayer life, it begins with consistent Bible reading, as prayer encounters what is in the Bible.¹ Through the Bible, they can establish new, healthier patterns of behavior, patterns foundational to a powerful legacy of prayer can develop. These unique spiritual patterns can culminate into the fruit of purpose through God's direct intervention. The study will allow the researcher to listen to the experiences of African American men and how they process their prayer life. The researcher will take considerable thought, research, insight, and contributions from women and men within the African American church.

Biblical truths will be established to help develop strong African American men of prayer. God and His Word are critical; therefore, men must trust God's Word to be the authority and God's Spirit to work in their life. Each man must realize they are not only a sinner saved by grace, but they are saints (Eph 2:8). Christians are no longer sinners if they have been saved by grace because they are identified not by sin but by grace.²

¹ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: Tyndale, 2014), 87.

² Jawanza Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries* (Chicago: African American Images, 2006), 9.

Paul refers to Christians as saints in almost every letter he wrote in the New Testament.³ Now, this verse does not mean that Christians do not sin, but Christ's sacrifice on the Cross blots out the sin (Heb 9:25-26). When a person gives their life to Christ, they are not reformed, rehabilitated, or reeducated; they are new creatures living in union with Christ (Col 2:6-7).

All humanity has sinned through Adam's sin, but through Jesus Christ, all who believe in Him are made righteous (Rom 5:13-14). They are living a new life under a new Master (Rom 6:18). There is a difference between a sin and a saint: one is a noun, and other is a verb and a noun. The noun (saint) determines our identity, while the verb/noun (sin) describes our behavior in a situation.⁴ Therefore, it is critical to point out the person's behavior and not attack the character. "When Christians apply the term 'sinner' to themselves rather than their behavior, this gives them *carte blanche* sin privileges."⁵ 'I couldn't help myself I'm only human' are phrases people use as excuses for sin. African American men must see themselves as Jesus Christ sees them. Not as sinners but as saints. They have the right to come boldly to the throne of grace as a saint (Heb 4:16).

African American men must have a desire to grow spiritually. They must get into the habit of referring even the minor actions of their lives to God. Christian men should allow inward prayer to be their last act before falling asleep and the first act when they awake in the

³ Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 9; see (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Phil 4:22; Col 1:26; 1 Tim 5:10; Phlm 1:5).

⁴ Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 9.

⁵ Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 9.

morning.⁶ Developing a good, daily, disciplined prayer can be one of the most challenging exercises Christ-followers undertake.⁷

Worship and intercession rank at the top of any list of spiritual struggles and is a major reason the inner lives of so many Christians are in a state of disorder.⁸ Prayer is essential to establishing a time to bring order to their private world through prayer. There are three possible reasons why African American men may struggle to pray. First, worship and intercession can seem to be unnatural acts. In his sinless nature, man probably desired communion with the Creator; however, sin turned a natural activity into an unnatural function.⁹

The spiritual hunger, once undoubtedly powerful, has been dulled by the power of sin.¹⁰ Thus, worship and intercession have become difficult challenges. Surrender does not mean giving up or not caring. Surrender means trusting God and allowing all things to be managed by Him. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight.”¹¹

The second reason African American men can find it challenging to enter worship and intercession is that these acts are by nature admissions of personal weakness.¹² To enter the act

⁶ Gordon MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2017), 151.

⁷ MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World*, 151.

⁸ MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World*, 151.

⁹ MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World*, 152.

¹⁰ MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World*, 152.

¹¹ Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this thesis project will be from the New International Version bible.

¹² MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World*, 152.

of prayer, they must acknowledge that they are completely dependent on God. The sin that lies deep within strongly denies dependence. Tony Evans stated,

Because the enemy of our souls knows how unfamiliar we are with operating consistently in the spiritual realm, he also knows we quickly revert back to what the five senses are comfortable with. After all, when we pray, we are talking to someone who we can't see and who is not audibly talking back to us. This causes some of us to feel like we often are musing aimlessly in thin air. When we come to realize, however, that prayer is the divinely authorized means to access the kingdom of heaven and to get that kingdom to intervene in the affairs of our earthly life, it affects both our perception of and persistence in prayer. I define kingdom prayer as *the divinely authorized methodology to access heavenly authority for earthly intervention*. Prayer is God's backstage pass into a personal audience with Him. Thus the enemy, not wanting us to make contact, seeks to divert our belief, confidence, determination, and our practice of prayer. Prayer unlike anything else, grants us legitimate authority to invoke heaven into history, so that God is welcomed into our affairs.¹³

Prayer confronts the power and authority in each Christian to link them into a realm to gain access to God.

African American men must understand the authoritative nature of prayer. Prayer is in the context of the creation of humanity that the understanding of authority is fully realized. When God created humanity, He chose to create a lesser creature.¹⁴ He did so to demonstrate what God could do when mankind is fully dependent upon Him.¹⁵

Why is this understanding important regarding prayer? In Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all earth." God gave what is known in theological terms as the *dominion covenant*, or the *dominion mandate*.¹⁶

¹³ Tony Evans, *Kingdom Prayer: Touching Heaven to Change Earth* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2016), 8.

¹⁴ Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 34.

¹⁵ Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 34; see Ps 8:5; Heb 2:7.

¹⁶ Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 8.

“Let them rule” means that God would not rule independently of man.¹⁷ Humankind’s decisions would now carry weight regarding what God did or did not do. God has delegated the managerial responsibility for ruling earth to man. However, God retains absolute, sovereign authority and ownership. Humanities decisions directly affect the quality of life within the sphere in which they function and will have a large bearing on whether the realm of influence increases or decreases with time. That may include family, community, church, or the workplace. Unfortunately, few realize the significant and strategic role prayer plays in fulfilling the dominion mandate.¹⁸

Finally, sometimes prayer seems to be unrelated to tangible results. Every serious Christian recognizes the importance the Bible places on prayer; however, most fall short when it is time to pray.¹⁹ They will say they believe that God answers prayer. However, many African American men have had enough experience to realize that His answers do not always come in the forms of healings, miracles, or guidance according to an organized schedule. But the fact is that prayer cannot be directly tied to the results they expected or demanded.²⁰

Prayer is strategic to the Christian life. “It is a God-given communication link between heaven and earth, time and eternity, the finite and the infinite.”²¹ Much of God’s activity in history is determined by the presence or absence of prayer.²² Prayer grants legitimate authority to invoke heaven into history. The enemy seeks to divert the Christian from their belief, confidence,

¹⁷ Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 35.

¹⁸ Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 38.

¹⁹ MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World*, 154.

²⁰ MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World*, 154.

²¹ Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 7.

²² Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 8.

and practice of prayer. The prayers of the Christian needs to be focused because only heaven can fix what earth cannot.

African American Christian men are encouraged to lean on God's sovereignty. Nothing takes God by surprise (Ps 147:5). Every experience in life from the greatest of pleasures to the most painful, has been allowed by God for a special purpose. Some Christians use Job 1:21, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away," to attempt to explain suffering. The story of Job continues to a positive conclusion, thanks to God's favor and grace in Job's life.

In John 10:10, Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." Satan stole Job's wealth, killed his family, and destroyed his life. God had nothing to do with the evil that occurred in Job's life, but He had everything to do with Job's restoration.²³ Job's overwhelming grief, anguish, and fear sent his emotions soaring into the turbulent belief that God caused his suffering. Christians are encouraged to remember that Job acknowledged God's sovereign authority over everything God had given him (Job 13:15).

God created humankind to communicate with Him to exercise His will on earth.²⁴ The African American male must grasp all that is happening in the invisible realm in response to his prayers. When they can comprehend the dominion mandate, prayer would be the priority and their greatest tool. That would lead to men following the call of Paul to prayer continually (1 Thess 5:16).

²³ Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 11.

²⁴ Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 34.

Ministry Context

The ministry context for the DMIN action research thesis is a non-denominational church located in the inner-city of Cleveland, Ohio, called New Life Gospel Center (NLGC). The church staff includes the senior pastor, five elders, six ministers, several deacon and deaconesses, and a church administrative assistant. In addition, there is a panel of five board of directors, including the senior pastor, and a panel of five advisor board members.

The current pastor is the third pastor since the church was established in 1979. The founding pastor was married in his mid-thirties with two small children, and so was the average member. Since then, three generations have called New Life Gospel Center home. The second generation of young adults at NLGC has attended college at a ratio of about 4 to 1. Although many young people have left New Life Gospel Center to attend college and established families in other states, they continue to call NLGC home. The researcher has been a member of the church since its inception.

Cultural Setting

New Life Gospel Center is an inter-city church located on the east side of Cleveland in the Buckeye-Woodland area of the city. According to the last census in April 2020, the US Census Bureau reports the city of Cleveland is home to about 372,624 people.²⁵ The church was purchased in 1989 from the First Hungarian Reform Church. The neighborhood was once home to a bustling community of Hungarian families, but many residents moved out as African American families began purchasing homes. From 1989 to the early 2000s, most African American homeowners have since moved into the suburbs. As a result, many of the families now

²⁵ US Census Bureau Quick Facts: Cleveland city, Ohio, accessed November 11, 2021, www.census.gov.

living in the neighborhood are low-income. The median annual household income in the area is about \$15,204.²⁶

Most of the families who are members of the church are from other communities within the city and surrounding suburbs. The church membership is about 150 congregants, and the men make up about 25% of that number. The income level of the NLGC members is working lower-class to upper-middle-class income, and about half the congregation own their homes. Thus, about 25% of the congregants are at the poverty level based on their income and family size.²⁷ Approximately 50% of the congregation are single parents, both male and female. Of that, single men represent about 5%.

Outreach

The church provides many services to the local community, such as a food pantry, clothing, housing beatification/curb appeal, and health awareness. They also partner with Habitat for Humanity and a program that builds pocket parks to provide small neighborhood parks on residential streets. Before the pandemic, the church partnered with the local women's homeless shelters and a re-entry program in the area. Meals were served on the first Wednesday of each month to the occupants. The ministry also supports worldwide missionaries by sending finances and ministry teams. Many people in the community utilize the church's services but only attend the worship services from time to time.

²⁶ 44104 Zip Code – USA.com, accessed November 11, 2021. www.usa.com.

²⁷ New Life Gospel Center Church Membership Data, (Cleveland, 2021), accessed 11/11/21.

Ministry Focus

The core values of the church have always been focused on the whole family. The Church's mission statement "is a ministry of love dedicated to families, designed to fulfill the Great Commission as commanded in the Holy Scriptures, making disciples in all nations. We are dedicated to training LEADERS to reach the lost souls, giving them a charge to go into the highways and byways, reconciling and restoring men unto God."²⁸ The vision of NLGC "shall be a beacon of light to the City of Cleveland.

NLGC is a ministry of integrity, a pace setting ministry dedicated to families; establishing ministries to train our youth to become leaders. New Life Gospel Center shall be a 'Mother Church' dedicated to training leaders and caring for our orphans and widows."²⁹ NLGC is devoted to being a family church and a teaching center providing spiritual growth through biblical teaching, preaching, and mentoring. The congregation values the concept of prayer and its effects on the believer's life. Prayer has always been a solid foundation in the church throughout the generations.

In addition, the church gathers on a conference call for prayer on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Friday mornings from 6:00 a.m.- 6:15 a.m. There are about 30 people on the prayer line at any given time; however, there are only about 6 men out of that 30. For the most part, out of that 6, about 4 are leaders, which leaves only about 2 male members, while the remainder is women members of the congregation (including 3 women in leadership). Thus, there are few men from the general membership participating in prayer during the week.

²⁸ "Mission Statement," *New Life Gospel Center* (Cleveland, 2022), accessed 2/21/22. www.newlifegospelcenter.org/mission-statement.

²⁹ "Vision Statement," *New Life Gospel Center* (Cleveland, 2022), accessed 2/21/22. www.newlifegospelcenter.org/vision.

Yet, somehow the men at NLGC do not participate in corporate prayer according to their attendance ratio in the church. The current focus of the ministry is on African American men in the church not attending prayer or leading prayer in their homes. The men's prayer has become a concern to the leadership in response to some trepidations voiced by the women in the church. The church has prayer 6 days a week. On Friday and Tuesday nights and Sunday mornings, prayer is conducted in the church, and there are about 12 -14 women and 2-3 men who gather for prayer in the sanctuary.

The women's primary concern is the lack of prayer by the men in the church and their homes. Several women of the church have been crying out for years concerning the lack of presence of the men in their homes to operate as spiritual leaders. They have expressed their desires for the men in their homes to lead their families in prayer, reinforce the study of the Bible, Scripture memorization, fasting, and have family discussions about the sermon or Bible study lesson presented during the week.

The researcher examined the prayer life of multi-generational African American males between 18-80, representing leadership roles in the church and its members. These men consisted of various backgrounds and income levels. The participants include married, single, single fathers, divorced men, some raised in the church, and others first-generation Christians. The males interviewed in the study all have roots in a mid-size church in Cleveland, Ohio. Although the church is in the inner-city, there are few families from the neighborhood that are members. The families that are members came because of evangelism.

The African American women desire the men in their homes to be prayer warriors setting examples for their children. The women continued to present their concerns to God during the times of corporate prayer. The researcher has attended the church for the past thirty years and

raised two generations of men there. Over the last five years, the cry has gone out from the women asking, “Lord, where are the men?” The women stated, “as the watchman over the family, the men are called to guard and protect; how can they do that when they don’t come out to prayer?” The inconsistency became the subject of not only prayer but a complaint.

The cry of the African American women in prayer at New Life Gospel Center offered an excellent opportunity to examine the prayer life of Black men and how they feel about their prayer life. The researcher utilized the opportunity to learn if this concern affects the men, and if so, what they think can be done about it. The researcher examined the effects of the experiences of Black men and the correlation to their prayer life.

Family worship in the home and the element of prayer should be taught diligently at every opportunity, individually and collectively (Deut 6:4-7). Whether prayer is offered by the men or someone they designate, they are part of the experience to lead their family in the spiritual matters of the home and the church. God deserves to be worshiped daily in the family home. Therefore, it was vital to understand how the participants see themselves as godly leaders in their homes.

The resources needed in the project will not require finances outside of purchasing a small tape recorder, coffee, and donuts. However, because the project is an action research project, it requires people and time. Therefore, the only thing necessary is for each man to schedule time to spend about an hour of their time speaking with the researcher.

Problem Presented

The problem is many African American men at New Life Gospel Center are not leading their families' spiritual journey through prayer. In most cases, they tend to leave prayer to the women in their families, which tends to include wives, sisters, parents, and grandparents. According to 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul said, "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." Paul means that in God's order, man is the head of his family. Therefore, prayer is expected, as he is responsible for preserving order and harmony in the family.

For many of the men at NLGC prayer in their homes is dominated by females. The African American men have observed generations of Black women in earnest prayer for the needs and protection of the family. The prayer petitions were continuously lifted to the throne of grace by the females while they were growing up, and for most of them, prayer is still dominated by the women in their families. Black men have allowed the women in their lives to take the leading role in prayer because they believe that women who pray are more earnest in prayer. Not to say men were not earnest enough, but their female counterparts were more committed to prayer within the household.

For many Black men at NLGC, their role models in prayer were women, and they seldom saw or heard their fathers or grandfathers praying in the home, which leads one to believe that there is a correlation between boys having male role models in the home and boys growing up to be spiritual leaders. Christian growth and maturity are best measured by those living in the home. Therefore, it is beneficial to convince African American men to become role models in their households by passing on a legacy of prayer.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the DMIN action research project aims to encourage, educate, and train African American men at New Life Gospel Center how to lead prayer for their families. According to Pew Research Center, African American men are less religious than African American women.³⁰ Pew defines “Highly religious” as those who pray at least once a day, attend religious services at least once a week, are absolute about their belief in God, and say religion is essential in their lives.³¹ However, religion takes more than just church attendance; it is a lifestyle of faith, prayer, and study of the Word of God. If African American men practice leading in prayer and studying the Word of God in their homes, this holy habit can yield powerful results. When they lead in prayer, they can pass the heritage of their faith on to their children and grandchildren for generations to come.

Basic Assumptions

There are a few basic assumptions in the action research thesis. First, there is an assumption that African American men typically have women in their households. When a man is raising his children alone, there are typically women in his life who assist him with everyday activities, whether it is his mother, sisters, or girlfriend, etc. Few African American families are absent of females in the home. Second, there is an assumption that male leaders in the church pray more for their families because they seem to know how to pray. Unfortunately, there can be

³⁰ Besheer Mohamed, Kiana Cox, Jeff Diamant, and Claire Gecewicz, “Faith Among Black Americans” *Pew Research Center* (Washington, 2021): 3. accessed 10/8/2. www.pewforum.org/2021/02/16/faith-among-black-americans.

³¹ Kiana Cox & Jeff Diamant, “Black men are less religious than black women, but more religious than white women and men” *Pew Research Center* (Washington, DC., 2018): 3, accessed 9/2/21. www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/09/26/black-men-are-less...ious-than-black-women-but-more-religious-than-white-women-and-men.

a dependency on the leaders to pray, but God has empowered each man to come to Him in prayer.

The third assumption is that “highly religious” is the same as spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines are practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth. They are habits of devotion in pursuit of godliness.³² Fourth, the assumption is that a man wants to learn to pray. However, it can be said that the greatest blessing in life comes to fruition through prayer. The real question is does the Black man see the need for prayer if it is already being done in his home. Another assumption is that because a man does not come to corporate prayer, he does not pray at home. Finally, the researcher assumes the final DMIN project curriculum will be better received if presented by male leadership.

Definitions

The research project will focus on the prayer life of African American men at New Life Gospel Center. One of the key terms that will overlap in the project is African American and Black. The commonality of both words is used interchangeably at New Life Gospel Center. Other key terms used in the research project include discipline, epigenetics, faith, kingdom man, prayer, and urban apologetics.

African American. Refers to people in the United States who have origins in any black race of African descent. African Americans are one of the largest of the many ethnic groups in the United States. They are descendants of enslaved people who were brought from Africa to the New World. Furthermore, Americans of African descent have defined themselves in terms of

³² Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 9.

their African roots for well over two hundred years.³³ As Americans of African descent reach new phases in their struggle for equality, they reevaluated their identity. The slaveholder labels of *black* and *negro* were offensive; they chose the euphemism *coloured* when they were freed. Capitalized, *Negro* became acceptable during the migration to the North for factory jobs.³⁴

Afro-American was implemented by civil rights activists to emphasize pride in their ancestral homeland, but *Black*- the symbol of power and revolution – proved more popular. Many of these terms are still reflected in the names of some organizations. To reestablish ‘cultural integrity’ in the late 1980s, Jesse Jackson proposed *African American*, which proclaims kinship with a historical land base, unlike some ‘baseless’ color label. In the 21st century, the terms Black and African American are both widely used.³⁵

Discipline. Paul referred to spiritual discipline in 1 Timothy 4:7 “train yourself to be godly.” Paul’s statement to Timothy means “to exercise, work out for the purpose of godliness.”³⁶ The Christian is not to simply wait for holiness but to pursue it.³⁷ Discipline is one of the core values New Life Gospel Center aspires to teach the congregants to help enhance their personal prayer life. NLGC is focused on the type of discipline that promotes spiritual fitness to impact a lifestyle towards godliness.

³³ *Who are African Americans?* – National Park Service, accessed 10/30/21. <https://www.nps.gov>.

³⁴ Hollis Lynch, *African Americans*, accessed 11/11/2021. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/African-American>, 4.

³⁵ Lynch, *African Americans*, 4.

³⁶ R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 20.

³⁷ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 2.

Epigenetics. Epigenetics has revealed how your environment can influence genes and, more specifically, trauma can be transmitted over generations.³⁸ Behavioral can be affected by events in previous generations which have been passed on through a form of genetic memory. Research shows that DNA may contain a biological memory of the stress your grandparents endured.³⁹

Scientists say even nightmares can be passed down from generation to generation.⁴⁰ Significant life-threatening experiences alter genetic coding, and is inherited in subsequent generations. The legacy of trauma is reflected in many behaviors and beliefs. These behaviors and beliefs may have been necessary for survival.⁴¹

Katrina Margit Erdelyi Psycom interviewed Chris Mason, an associate professor at Weill Cornell Medicine. Mason stated there is some strong evidence that parental trauma can alter how genes are passed down.⁴² Trauma can leave a chemical mark on a person's genes, which can then be passed down to future generations. The mark does not cause a genetic mutation, but it does alter the mechanism by which the gene is expressed. As such, the alteration caused by trauma is not genetic but epigenetic.⁴³

Faith. Faith involves *acting* like God is telling the truth. A person of faith will base their actions on the belief that what God says is true.⁴⁴ Faith compels action without the requirement

³⁸ Joy DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing* (United States: Uptone Press, 2017), 101.

³⁹ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 14.

⁴⁰ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 14.

⁴¹ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 102.

⁴² Karina Margit Erdelyi, "Can Trauma Be Passed Down From One Generation to The Next?" *Psycho*, 1, 2021. www.psycom.net/epigenetics-trauma

⁴³ Erdelyi, "Can Trauma Be Passed Down," 1.

of prior visible, empirical evidence to validate it (2 Cor 5:7). Faith is based on the integrity of God.⁴⁵ Faith includes movement and action aligned with what you believe to be true. Faith is a concrete manifestation of God, and what you believe about Him to be married to what you do considering that belief.⁴⁶ Faith is about what cannot be seen, and it involves placing belief in the spiritual realm over what can be seen or experienced in the physical realm.⁴⁷

Kingdom Man. A kingdom man is a man who visibly establishes the rule of God under the lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of his life. A kingdom man gives God his time, talents, and treasures. His faith is measured by his feet, not by his feelings. He is measured by what he does, not by what he says he is going to do. A kingdom man realizes that a godly life will not be easy, but he knows it will be worth it.⁴⁸

Leadership. The characteristics of leadership are integrity and conviction of purpose, vision, prioritizing relationships, and selfless service.⁴⁹ Boyd Bailey suggests the best leaders have a high level of spiritual maturity – they have learned to walk with God in intimacy and let that relationship spill into their leadership style.⁵⁰ A leader has a priority and urgency of being a person of prayer. They are committed to living life with a clear sense of God-given direction.

⁴⁴ Tony Evans, *Kingdom Heroes: Building A Strong Faith That Endures* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2021), 15.

⁴⁵ Evans, *Kingdom Heroes* 15.

⁴⁶ Evans, *Kingdom Heroes*, 15.

⁴⁷ Evans, *Kingdom Heroes*, 16.

⁴⁸ Evans, *Kingdom Heroes*, 7.

⁴⁹ Michael Rowell, *Leadership Upgrade: 10 Keys to Becoming the Leader Your World Is Waiting For – Home, Community, Work* (Sale, Victoria: Empowered Nation Publishing, 2021), Introduction.

⁵⁰ Boyd Bailey, *The Spiritual Life of a Leader* (Eugene Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2021), 5.

They are unquestionably committed and mindful of the cost involved in that commitment. Finally, they commit themselves to pattern their lives after Jesus (Matt 10:24-25).

The book of Nehemiah provides strategic management qualities of leadership. Nehemiah's strategies in leadership ranged from prayer to perseverance.⁵¹ Not to be confused with the leadership defined under the leadership hierarchy in a church organization, i.e., Deacons, elders, assistant pastors, etc.

Prayer. Is communicating with God as you would talk with anyone else. Prayer is an intimate fellowship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ. John Calvin referred to prayer as 'the soul of faith.' Faith without prayer soon becomes lifeless. Through prayer, humanity contacts God, and through prayer, God communicates with humanity.⁵²

Prayer is the greatest outlet of power. S. D. Gordon outlines five outlets of prayer: five ways the Holy Spirit reveals His power. First, through the life of how a man lives. Second, through the lips in what is said. Third, through the service a man provides. If the best is your best, it will bring a harvest. Fourth, through money, what is not kept, but what is released to God. Finally, through prayer, what is claimed in Jesus' name.⁵³

Religious. A person who attends religious services on an average of once a week, prays once a day, and is unequivocally convinced about their belief in God.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Cheryl Patton, "What Made Nehemiah an Effective Leader?" *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*, 11, no. 1(2017) 8, accessed 11/11/2021. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAjGOV191216000857&site=shost-live&scope=site>.

⁵² D. G. Bloesch, "Prayer" In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 867.

⁵³ S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer* (Lexington: Okitoks Press, 2017), 2-3.

⁵⁴ Adelle M. Banks, "Black Men More Religious than Whites" *National Catholic Reporter*, (Sept. 2018) 3, accessed 9/14/21. www.ncronline.org/news/people/black-men-more-religious-whites-research-shows.

Urban Apologetics. Urban apologetics are born out of a need to respond to specific and unique challenges to the Christian faith within the African American community.⁵⁵ The word urban points to the city. However, before it became a slang term, urban implied concentrated complexity. Urban is a geographical landscape with a high concentration of cultures, politics, intellectual ideologies, houses, wealth and poverty, ethnic groups, traffic, economy, art, and spiritualities. At some point, urban became the code word for Black, brown, and poor.⁵⁶

Apologetics is a term devised from 1 Peter 3:15 “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear...(NIV).” “The word translated here is ‘defense’ comes from the Greek word *apologia*. Thus, apologetics is a reasonable defense of the gospel based on the eschatological and imminent hope one has in Jesus, or as one lexicon puts it; ‘As a legal, technical term, apologetics is a speech in defense of oneself, *reply*, *verbal defense* (2 Tim 4:16); as a religious technical term, it is a *defense* of the gospel message from false teaching (Phil 1:7).”⁵⁷

Urban apologetics is beneficial for the edification of the Black church. Urban apologetics forms and preserves a Christian consciousness that can be articulated intellectually, demonstrating rational significance.⁵⁸ If there is to be the recovery of a generation lost and an

⁵⁵ Eric Mason, “What Is Urban Apologetics?” In *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity With The Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021), 55.

⁵⁶ Mason, “What Is Urban Apologetics?” 55.

⁵⁷ Mason, “What Is Urban Apologetics?” 29.

⁵⁸ Mason, “What Is Urban Apologetics?” 55.

attempt to apply a preventive inoculation to future denials and doubts, there must be an injection of urban apologetics into the life of every local congregation.⁵⁹

Limitations

The DMIN action research thesis foresees limitations in a lack of under-examined resources concerning faith, worship, and prayer in the lives of Black men. There is a lack of scholarly material on the prayer life of African American males causing a gap of information, especially in current literature (5 years or less). A few scholarly authors have written about African American men and their prayer lives; however, most literature is outdated.

A specific challenge encountered by the research project is the research will be conducted by an African American female seeking to interview African American males concerning an intimate subject matter. The researcher is also limited by the church community in which the study will be conducted. Although there are multi-generational men to interview at NLGC, the numbers are small considering the membership. The church is in inner-city Cleveland; however, a large majority of the participants are not from the inner-city. The researcher will attempt to doubt the number of participants needed in hopes that if any of the participants wish to drop out or refuse to participate, there will be enough men to continue the research uninterrupted.

Delimitations

The research took place in an inner-city church in Cleveland, Ohio. The research for the study started with sources obtained through action research by interviewing African American males over three generations (25 years) to link Spiritual Disciplines passed down from one

⁵⁹ Mason, "What Is Urban Apologetics?" 55.

generation to another. The interview began with in-depth, open-ended questions allowing the participants to describe in their own words the Spiritual Disciplines they observed or were a part of in their homes.

The research targeted African American males between 18 – 80 for the researcher to gain information across generational barriers. The research defined adult males over 18 living apart from their parents either in college or working. If the males are 18-21 living with their parents and unemployed, they are defined as dependents. The research also targeted young single fathers who have visitation rights or shared custody of their children.

All the males were identified in several categories, such as first-generation Christians; raised in the church by way of their parents or grandparents. The researcher also targeted African American women in inner-city church. They were interviewed to gain an understanding of their views on the Christian men in their lives.

Thesis Statement

If African American men are better equipped, then they can become more confident in their prayer life. If they can become leaders of prayer in their homes, it could build a stronger and more faithful family structure. There is more value gained from the spiritual state of a man when he learns to pray, maintain diligence, and obedience in the Word of God. When African American men come together in prayer across multi-generational groups aligning themselves with God, they can impact heaven and earth. As they acknowledge the need to “fight for the soul” to push past emotional and psychological trauma, they can find strength, faith, and power in their walk with God.

The researcher's approach is to interview multi-generational African American men about their prayer life. Through the research and evaluation process of the interview questions, the results will create awareness of a subject matter which African American men may not have previously considered.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The researcher addressed the issue of prayer in the life of African American families, focusing on the men as the spiritual leaders. Therefore, it is essential to note what material has been studied and evaluated in gathering the academic material used in the project. The research project will analyze pertinent themes and establish gaps through the literature review process. During the study of the relevant, scholarly works related to African American men becoming spiritual leaders in their homes through prayer, the following literature was vital to the research process.

Literature Review

African American men have had to endure overwhelming issues concerning their dignity, identity, and spiritual hope only to find the truth in God’s Word, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). Although each man is who he believes, “this is fortunate if what he thinks about himself is in alignment with what God thinks.”⁶⁰ The literature review will examine areas that hinder and encourage African American men in their prayer life.

Dignity

One of the first themes addressed is dignity. “When we refer to ‘dignity,’ we are talking about God-invested value.”⁶¹ Each man must see in himself what God sees. The African American male’s ancestors were introduced to this land as a broken, reeking, undignified person and considered subhuman even in all his humanity.⁶² Diane J. Chandler surmises that addressing

⁶⁰ Irwin Brown, *From Prayers to Players: The Despiritualization of The Black Man In American* (Meadville: Christian Faith Publishing, Inc., 2018), 14.

⁶¹ Eric Mason, ed. “Restoring Black Dignity” In *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with The Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021), 7.

⁶² Mason, “Restoring Black Dignity,” 7.

the needs resulting from poverty and discrimination and appealing to the Bible, which upholds the dignity of each person as created by the image of God, was the center of gravity to where the shift must begin.⁶³ The African American male must overcome the feelings of being disregarded, disrespected, discredited, feared, and devalued.⁶⁴ Through God, they must bring order and take their position using the greatest weapon they have, the weapon of prayer.

When men are wise and mature and walk in the highest degree of manhood, it is challenging to remember God's mandate in their lives. Men can sometimes forget to create safe spaces for others, especially when they are habitually under attack and feeling unsafe. When men continually feel devalued, they can lose sight of just how valuable they are.⁶⁵

By appealing to the Bible that upholds the dignity of each person as created in the image of God, African American males should always be willing to submit themselves to God's direction by appealing to Him in prayer. One of the primary ways a lack of dignity reduces one's ability to pray occurs when a man has been devalued and discredited by others. His dignity lingers in a state of confusion which he can unknowingly pass down from generation to generation. As a result, a man may find it challenging to find value in himself or believe that God values him enough to hear his prayers. Although this challenge may be true for men of all walks of life, African American men are, arguably, victims of devaluation more consistently.

Several authors addressed the subject of dignity in the African American male and the need to feel respected and valued. There is a challenge for the males whose souls are damaged.

⁶³ Diane Chandler, "African American Spirituality: Through Another Lens" *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 10, no. 2 (2017): 166, accessed 9/8/21, [https://exproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.edscost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=33h&AN=51593&site=host-live&scope-site.](https://exproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.edscost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=33h&AN=51593&site=host-live&scope-site;); See also Gen 1:26-27.

⁶⁴ Brown, *From Prayers to Players*, 191.

⁶⁵ Dondre' Whitfield, *Male vs Man: How to Honor Women, Teach Children, and Elevate Men to Change The World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 163.

His lack of dignity reduces his ability to pray because the damage can bring on an improper coping mechanism that creates a hostile environment.⁶⁶ Trauma's most appealing torture is the hopelessness it brings, the fear that pain will never end.⁶⁷ However, the glimpse of hope gives a revelation and a promise. Hope can be the beginning of the end of the worst kind of suffering.⁶⁸

Spiritual Hope

Spiritual hope is looked at through the experience of African American men in how it influences and guides their spirituality.⁶⁹ Nurturing that spirituality is essential for a holistic approach to encouraging maturity. Their spiritual development and holiness are also vital parts of moral and religious development, which deserve attention.⁷⁰ Holiness is an under-examined resource in the lives of Black men. Holiness is a field ripe with opportunities to enhance African American men's mental and spiritual well-being.⁷¹

Unfortunately, many African American men are out of the will of the Lord by not leading spiritually in their homes. However, African American women may bear some responsibility for

⁶⁶ Whitfield, *Male vs Man*, 163.

⁶⁷ James S. Gordon, *Transforming Trauma: The Path To Hope and Healing* (New York: HarperCollins, 2021), 55.

⁶⁸ Gordon, *Transforming Trauma*, 55.

⁶⁹ Nicholas Grier, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health of Black Men: Hope to Keep Going* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2020), 96.

⁷⁰ Alice Wood, "The Spiritual Disciplines Project: Fostering Spiritual Development of Undergraduates at a Historically Black University" *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society* 10, no. 4 (2020): 65, accessed 9/10/21, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asn&AN-147123400&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

⁷¹ Grier, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health*, 99.

the dysfunction because when a boy is enabled, a man is disabled.⁷² Fredrick Douglas stated, “once thoroughly broken down, who is he that can repair the damage. For it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”⁷³ African American men need to commit to functioning in their households as men of prayer. Men need to be encouraged “constantly seek ways to grow beyond their current existence and boost in an upward trajectory.”⁷⁴ Achieving this growth will feed their appetite to be the servant leaders God has ordained.⁷⁵

R. Kent Hughes stated in his book *Disciplines of a Godly Man* that there are personal benefits offered by time spent in the presence of God in prayer.⁷⁶ Hughes quotes Dallas Willard from *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, “The ‘open secret’ of many ‘Bible-believing’ churches is that a vanishing small percentage of those talking about prayer... are actually doing what they are talking about.”⁷⁷ Hughes believes this quote is especially true among men, to their detriment and shame.⁷⁸ When men of prayer, whether in high places or low practice Scriptural praying, the results will transform their lives.

Nicholas Grier stated in his book, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health of Black Men: Hope to Keep Going*, that spirituality has the power to nurture hope in the lives of Black men so that they can continue in life’s journey toward greater freedom, healing, and flourishing despite the odds and obstacles stacked against them by oppressive structural and social forces

⁷² Whitfield, *Male vs Man*, 22.

⁷³ Fredrick Douglas, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Project Gutenberg, 1855), 72.

⁷⁴ Whitfield, *Male vs Man*. 188.

⁷⁵ Whitfield, *Male vs Man*. 188.

⁷⁶ R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 108.

⁷⁷ Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, 108.

⁷⁸ Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, 108.

they experience in the world.⁷⁹ James Allen declares, “Of all the beautiful truths pertaining to the soul which have been restored and brought to light in this age, none is more gladdening or fruitful of divine promise and confidence than this – that man is the master of thought, the molder of character, and the maker and shaper of condition, environment, and destiny.”⁸⁰ African American men are overcomers, and as they align to biblical values and principles and allow God to be their point of reference, they will bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).

The presence and potential of Black men whose faith, prayers, and study of the Word identify how they perceive, understand, and embody spirituality, as they consider how it can contribute to their survival, liberation, and healing.⁸¹ As Christians, it is imperative that their perspective about life and reality change. The Word of God must take root in their minds creating new values as they discover the foundational change common to every Christian.⁸²

African American men must understand the importance of the power of prayer, faith, and the knowledge of the Word of the Lord to pass on to the next generation. When the Black man realizes that the offering of his requests to God in faith will call down His power upon his life and his family, he will become unstoppable. Prayer lights up the soul with Christ’s shining image, and His image helps to change the character in humankind. The more time spent with God, the more His image is burned into the character of the African American male. Therefore, it

⁷⁹ Grier, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health*, 108.

⁸⁰ James Allen, *As A Man Thinketh: As a Man Thinketh in his Heart, so is He* (New York, 2021), 11.

⁸¹ Grier, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health*, 97.

⁸² Eric Mason, *Manhood Restored: How the Gospel Makes Men Whole* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2013),

is imperative to maintain a disciplined devotional life and allow God to align the will of man to His will.

Identity

“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7, NKJV). The Lord who gives us our significance. To each man and woman, they are who they think they are. A man is indeed what he thinks, his character being the complete sum of all his thoughts. The devil knows how dangerous it is for a man not to know who he is in God. Therefore, Satan wants to control how each man sees himself.⁸³

The question of identity is an ongoing issue that the African American man has encountered throughout his life. Identity is the foundation on which individuality rests. Identity captures that which gratifies the deepest yearnings of life. Terry Wardle agrees that “the origin of our identity, whether rock solid or shifting sand, impacts our self-esteem and self-worth and directly influences the questions of purpose and significance in our quest for a meaningful existence. They serve as the structural steel we build our lives on.”⁸⁴ Identity insecurity impacts a person’s ability to respond appropriately to the Word of God; therefore, it affects the relationship a person will have toward God in prayer. Praying men influence God, and the African American men must execute their responsibility to go before God for the needs of his family, his church, and himself.

Eric Mason stated, “In most black churches, men make up just 25 percent of the congregation. Black men are searching for value and identity, and they’re not finding it in

⁸³ Mason, *Manhood Restored*, 14.

⁸⁴ Terry Wardle, *Identity Matters: Discovering Who You Are In Christ* (Abilene: Leafwood Publishers, 2017), 13-14.

church.”⁸⁵ Black men are not just Westerners; they are Africans whose past culture has been largely forgotten.⁸⁶ As a community of believers, the church must be intentional in the way they engage black men. If the church does not engage them properly, black religious identity groups will use the opportunity to twist God's Word and speak lies into their lives.⁸⁷

Identity matters, and the African American men's identity is in what is eternal. Andrew Purves shared in his book, *The Crucifixion of Ministry*, “that what is of Christ by nature as God's Son now becomes true of us through adoption.”⁸⁸ There is a difference between securing one's identity on the foundation of being a child of God versus the constant pressure to prove that they are more than the world says they are. Understanding what being a child of God means is a substantial step toward the awakening of the true self.⁸⁹ The Christian African American man must realize that his identity is secure for an eternal relationship with God. Because of his adoption, he has every right to go before the Lord in prayer.

African American men should not allow someone else's perspective to form who they think they are or where they feel they should be in life. They must first change their thinking, which will aid in changing their lifestyles. Their lifestyles will change once they see themselves as kingdom men, looking only to God for approval. Once they realize all power and authority is in who they are as children of God, they can be an example of a *kingdom man* who touches the heart of God.

⁸⁵ Eric Mason, “Intentionally Engaging Black Men” In *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity With The Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2021), 157.

⁸⁶ Mason, “Intentionally Engaging Black Men,” 157.

⁸⁷ Mason, “Intentionally Engaging Black Men,” 157.

⁸⁸ Wardle, *Identity Matters*, 84.

⁸⁹ Wardle, *Identity Matters*, 46.

As African American men continue praying through the trials and distractions that would keep them from their destiny, they empower the next generation. Black men can learn to move forward and thrive; however, to do that, they will need to understand and accept who they are as a people. Knowing who and what they are can identify their strengths and build upon them.⁹⁰ As they comprehend the strength that lies deep within them passed down from generation to generation, they will begin to heal from a past of being brutalized, marginalized, tortured, and lynched.

Fight For the Soul

At the soul level, the greatest need of black men is the gospel, and the church has an opportunity to apply the gospel to the darkest places of men's lives.⁹¹ Prayer is expected of those who are under the authority of Christ. God's command for prayer is a command of love. Through prayer, Black men will ascend to the highest stage of this life, fighting for their souls and the souls of their families. Prayer advances them into heavenly places and embrace in their hearts the gleam of light and the truth of God's plan for them.

Allen stated, "A man is always the master; even in his weakness and degradation, he is the foolish master who misgoverns his household."⁹² Men must tap into that transforming and regenerative agency at the soul level.

Only by searching and mining are gold and diamonds obtained, and a man can find every truth connected with his being, if he will dig deep into the mine of his soul;... if he will watch, control, and alter his thoughts, tracing their effects upon himself, upon others, and upon his life and circumstances, linking cause and

⁹⁰ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 157.

⁹¹ Mason, "Intentionally Engaging Black Men," 165.

⁹² Allen, *As A Man Thinketh*, 11.

effect by patient practice and investigation, and utilizing his every experience, even to the most, trivial, everyday occurrence as a means to obtaining knowledge.⁹³

Attaining freedom is never easy, even when God oversees setting the captives free. A great deal of the difficulty comes from the mind or thought pattern of the people being set free.⁹⁴ The fight for the soul isn't physical, intellectual, psychological, sociological, economical, or political – it's spiritual (Eph 6:12).

When men engage at the level of their souls with the gospel's content, they will rely on the power of God (Rom 1:16).⁹⁵ The challenge for the men whose souls are damaged is that improper coping mechanisms create hostile environments. These damaged souls cause casualties everywhere they go.⁹⁶ However, the gospel is the answer to the needs of the soul, and prayer is expected of every child of God.

Allen believed a man should have a sincere purpose in his heart and plan to accomplish it. When there is no clear purpose in life, it is easy to fall victim to the prey of “petty worries, fears, troubles, and self-pitying’s, all of which are indications of weakness, which lead, just as surely as deliberately planned sins... to failure, unhappiness, and loss, for weakness cannot persist in a power evolving universe.”⁹⁷ Whitfield also addresses the purpose of the African American male. He stated the African American man must be attentive to hear the deepest monologue of the Spirit that says, you are a powerful Man sent here to be a servant leader. Will

⁹³ Allen, *As A Man Thinketh*, 11-12.

⁹⁴ Brown, *From Prayers to Players*, 84.

⁹⁵ Eric Mason, “Apologetics As Spiritual Warfare” In *Urban Apologetics Restoring Black Dignity With The Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2021), 229.

⁹⁶ Whitfield, *Male vs Man*, 163.

⁹⁷ Allen, *As A Man Thinketh*, 31.

it be service or self? The ‘service’ is of my spirit, while the ‘self’ is of my flesh. Winning the battle of “service versus self is a daily fight of every *Man* who chooses not to be the male that society enables him to be.”⁹⁸ Jesus requires sincere, heartfelt devotion.

Devotion is a matter of developing an intimate relationship with the living God. The disciples heard Jesus pray and asked, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). This prayer is not a simple ritual, but it was a guide. African American Christian men must recognize that Jesus has come and demonstrated the desirability of personal godliness and given the Holy Spirit to enable them to live this life. They have the hope of experiencing the life of Christ as they endeavor to press into the Holy place with prayer and supplication. Prayer, worship, and meditation is an exercise for the soul.

Environment Issues

In his book *From Prayers to Players*, Irvin Brown stated a boy has a spiritual need for guidance. His first authority figure was intended to be his earthly father. A boy’s mother is his nurturer, but his influence in the spiritual growth process was meant to be his father.⁹⁹ A man must be like a deeply rooted tree that is immovable for the sake of the family. He takes the toxic nature of what comes at him and turns it into something others around him can use to increase themselves. His spirituality originates from the instructions and guidance he gets from the Bible, as his words produce the fruit and help build up those around him. His life is lived based on the direction he gets from the Word of God.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Whitfield, *Male vs Man*, 32.

⁹⁹ Brown, *From Prayers to Players*, 20.

¹⁰⁰ Whitfield, *Male vs Man*, 158.

Through conversations with African American men, Nicholas Grier's research reveals they were considerably affected by the negative cultural images of Black men that are presented throughout the United States and around the world.¹⁰¹ In addition, they are affected daily by adverse treatment from society which relates to Black men based on negative cultural images in the media and society. Grier offers an example of a person wearing contact lenses. Contact lens requires cleaning, but if the solution the lens is placed in is dirty, the lens causes the eyes discomfort. However, the contacts give immediate comfort when the solution is changed, and the lens is cleaned. The problem is not the contact lens; it's the dirty solution, the environment in which the contact lens was placed.¹⁰² Therefore, cultural environments matter and have a tremendous impact on the lives of African American men.¹⁰³

Brown and Grier touched on how environmental issues shape and mold a young man. The young men's first lesson begins in the home through their parents. Their first encounter with the Christian tradition or religious experience comes early in life, and it is essential not to give a multi-religious perspective on faith and prayer. The African American male should constantly strive to serve and lead by example first. Many African American men fail in personal devotions and prayer because they are not as spiritually sensitive and open as women. Generally, men tend to be consumed by the time-crunching, production ethic of the marketplace, prioritizing work over meditation and prayer.¹⁰⁴ Prayer does not hinder men from meditation; it merely is not prioritized in his daily accomplishments.

¹⁰¹ Grier, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health*, 39.

¹⁰² Grier, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health*, 39.

¹⁰³ Grier, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health*, 39.

¹⁰⁴ Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, 108.

When it comes to the environment, if the person is looking to ‘survive’ his atmosphere, they will seek mentors they believe have already survived. A mentor who has grown up on the streets will be someone the young man will seek out to advise him. “Hostile people give hostile advice.”¹⁰⁵ He may impart to him the beliefs that have infiltrated his heart. The African American male must never forget; men should constantly strive to serve and lead by example.

Religion

Congress abolished the African slave trade on March 2, 1807. The conclusion of the slave trade gave rise to the birth of an indigenous and growing native-born population of African Americans. These groups of African descent whose ancestors were uprooted in their exile created a hybrid form of Christianity. These individuals, blended with various cultures and language groups, cultural traditions, religious practices, and uniquely kinship characteristics, were identified as “African Americans.” Moreover, the responsiveness of slaves to American Evangelicalism planted seeds for the birth of independent black churches.¹⁰⁶ “In the brush arbors of the invisible institution – the clandestine church of slavery times – they met to sing, to pray, and to preach.”¹⁰⁷

R. Neal Siler cited a survey done in 2007 that stated 87% of blacks are affiliated with a religion, and 79% of blacks say that religion is essential in their lives. The survey gives support

¹⁰⁵ Brown, *From Prayers to Players*, 22.

¹⁰⁶ Chandler, “African American Spirituality, 165.

¹⁰⁷ Anne Marie Reijnen, “Landscapes of The Spirit in The African American Experience: From The Lonesome Valley Through The Deep River And The Mountaintop” *Communio Viatorum* 59, no.2 (2017): 211, accessed 9/9/21, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=33h&AN=ATLAI FZU180514000897&site=ehost-live&scope-site>.

to the significance of the church as essential to the life of African Americans.¹⁰⁸ The church is fundamental to the life of the faithful, and it has a responsibility to the culture. Its role in African American life is too important. The word *discipline* is from the same root as the word *disciple*, which means instruction or training. All religions recognize that faith or belief does not automatically guarantee right living – a goal that requires practice or discipline.¹⁰⁹ The African American Church’s influence can be understood when pastors focus on the church’s witness to the wholeness of the person.

Pew Research has shown that men in the United States are generally less religious than women. Black men are more religious than white men, and they tend to be more religious than white women – but not as religious as black women.¹¹⁰ Jackson and Bergeman stated, “multiple benefits for religiosity include resilience, broader support system, sense of meaning and hope, and perceived control over circumstances.”¹¹¹ However, if true, African American men would depend on prayer throughout their Christian walk and not only during stressful situations and adverse outcomes. Prayer would not be just about religious coping, but prayer would be routine in his household.

Although the religiosity of black men in comparison to white men, white women, and black women may result in black men being the second most religious group of people, it typically does not reflect in the leadership of most religious organizations. Because the inner

¹⁰⁸ R. Neal Siler, *How I Got Over: Healing for the African American Soul* (Mechanicsville: New Life Publishing, 2017). 166.

¹⁰⁹ Alice Wood, “The Spiritual Disciplines Project, 68.

¹¹⁰ Cox & Diamant, “Black Men Are Less Religious Than Black Women, But More Religious Than White Women and Men,” 1-2.

¹¹¹ B. R. Jackson & C. S. Bergeman, “How Does Religiosity Enhance Well-being? The role of perceived control. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 3, no. 2 (2011): 151, accessed 9/9/21, <http://10.1037/a0021597>.

workings of most religious institutions, several other variables may contribute to the makeup of its leadership, for example, demographics, population, availability, etc.

African American Women

The contributions of godly African American women are unmistakable. However, African American women often face the pressure of the strong Black woman image.¹¹² They are expected to manage the pressures of life without assistance. Chanequa Walker-Barne brings awareness and discourse concerning the ‘inordinate burden that the demand for *strength* places upon women of African descent.’¹¹³ What price has the African American woman paid for that strength, and what did she give up?

The African American woman stands recognized as a caregiver, an emotional strength, and an independent woman. However, she is screaming for the African American men to step into the role of the spiritual leader so she can be released from this burdensome yoke that the ideology of the *strong black women* places on her shoulders. Sarita T. Lyons quoted Malcolm X, who said Black women are the most unprotected people and the most disrespected women in America.¹¹⁴

African American women expect their husbands/fathers to be that measure of strength as their understanding is deepened by the Word of God and communicated in his prayer for the family. The woman who trusts in God will refer to her ability to aid the man with military-like

¹¹² Janee R. Avent Harris, Jasmine L. Garland McKinney, Jessica Fripp, “God Is a Keeper”: A Phenomenological Investigation of Christian African American Women’s Experiences With Religious Coping” *The Professional Counselor* 9, no.3 (2019): 172, accessed 9/9/21, <http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>.

¹¹³ Chanequa Walker-Barnes, *Too Heavy a Yoke: Black Women and the Burden of Strength* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014), 52.

¹¹⁴ Sarita Lyons, “Black Women and the Appeal of the Black Conscious Community and Feminism” In *Urban Apologetics*, ed. Eric Mason (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021), 133-34.

strength, act as a rescuer, and help in the way God helps His people. Black women realize that Christ defines them, and this realization makes them a formidable enemy against the attacks of Satan. Therefore, African American women will stand with a kingdom man as his helper. The woman of God will stand confidently in her identity through Christ to be a wife and mother. She is willing to fulfill her divine destiny in completing a man and being completed by a man. Not to say that every African American woman is destined to be a wife or a mother, her contribution to the family is still invaluable no matter what her role.

Lyons contributed to *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with The Gospel* edited by Eric Mason. In her chapter on “Black Women and The Appeal of The Black Conscious Community and Feminism,” she stated, “I have found that many intelligent, accomplished, gifted, and faithful Black women appreciate and desire strong, godly, Spirit-filled male leaders.”¹¹⁵ African American women support men leading their families, communities, and churches, and they have no desire to be the primary spiritual leader of the home.¹¹⁶ Instead, women love and appreciate men who have a vision, focus, and spiritual discipline.

Like most women, African American women desire the men in their lives to worship and work; they want men who pray more than play. Many African American women do not feel they have men who are kingdom men. They may have husbands and fathers who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and attend church; however, their spirituality does not include spiritual disciplines. Many of these men have no desire to stand as the spiritual authority in their homes.

¹¹⁵ Lyons, “Black Women and the Appeal of the Black Conscious Community and Feminism,” 155.

¹¹⁶ Lyons, “Black Women and the Appeal of the Black Conscious Community and Feminism,” 155.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:3, “the man is the head of the woman;” God ordains this order to prevent chaos in the family. There is a hierarchy in church, business, government, and family. Godly women, empowered by the Spirit and submitted to Christ, have fewer challenges submitting to male leadership when the men submit to the direction of Christ.¹¹⁷ The Black women must use the examples of the women of faith to live out God's powerful calling on their lives to be the helper.¹¹⁸

Prayer and Meditation

Within each person “is a center of peace. It is from there where the Lord resides. It is also where our power in God is.”¹¹⁹ The most critical relationship in a man’s life is his relationship with the Lord.¹²⁰ Through prayer and meditation, a spirit of gratitude is developed and maintained as one’s spirituality contributes to the ability to identify the blessings in his life despite heartaches quickly. Prayer is a relationship where there is a partnership with the Most High as He provides clarity of thought and guidance. Nicholas Grier interviewed four African American men about their concept of prayer and meditation. Grier recognized that in each of his interviews, prayer helped Black men see and appreciate the blessings in their lives even when surrounded by oppressive forces.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Lyons, “Black Women and the Appeal of the Black Conscious Community and Feminism,” 155.

¹¹⁸ Lyons, “Black Women and the Appeal of the Black Conscious Community and Feminism,” 155.

¹¹⁹ Brown, *From Prayers to Players*, 229

¹²⁰ Brown, *From Prayers to Players*, 229

¹²¹ Grier, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health*, 102.

African Americans stressed the value of the Word of God and its role in providing guidance and direction throughout their lives, especially during challenging circumstances.¹²² They realized they must stand on the scriptures in every area of life. He that seeks will find; and to him that knock, it shall be opened (Matt. 7:7): “for only by patience, practice, and ceaseless importunity can a man enter the Door of the Temple of Knowledge.”¹²³ He must link power, intelligence, love, and his thoughts, as they hold the key to every situation in obtaining the right choice and proper application as he places his trust in God.¹²⁴

Past research has shown that African American Christians are particularly likely to believe in the efficacy of prayer, even compared to other religious groups.¹²⁵ Prayer is also connected with well-being in Black adolescents.¹²⁶ Research findings indicate that developing students’ spirituality positively affects their overall well-being and academic success, especially African American students.¹²⁷

Through the trials of the African American man, faith in God is used to maintain one’s sense of self-worth while coping with hardship. They have suffered generations of abuses, and still, they manage to rise.¹²⁸ In responding to the harsh realities of slavery, prayer was an

¹²² Avent Harris, et al. “God Is a Keeper,” 178.

¹²³ Allen, *As A Man Thinketh*, 12.

¹²⁴ Allen, *As A Man Thinketh*, 12.

¹²⁵ Mallory Millett, A., Lauren E. Cook, Antonius D. Skipper, Cassandra D. Chaney, Loren D. Marks, and David C. Dollahite, “Weathering the Storm: The Black American Christian Families” *Marriage & Family Review* 54, no.7 (2018): 662, accessed 9/9/21. <https://www.tandfonline-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1080/01494929.2018.1469572>

¹²⁶ Millett et al., “Weathering the Storm”, 662.

¹²⁷ Wood, “The Spiritual Disciplines Project,” 65.

¹²⁸ Wood, “The Spiritual Disciplines Project,” 157.

emotional lifting to the Lord and a confident expectation of His response. Thus, faith and prayer proceed a relationship with God which created and sustained self-esteem amid hardship.

While it can be challenging to continue to trust God, but the ancestors of African American families had trusted – even when it appeared like the world was caving in around them. Even in this age, the old prejudices seep through the fabric of society that seemed to be hidden so well. With the advancement of technology, the abuses and injustice confined to hidden areas were soon exposed to the world. Yet, the African American family still found themselves suffering the cruelties of prejudice in society and using prayer to cope.

Prayer transforms lives, alters circumstances, and provides peace and perseverance through trials. Prayer provides healing from the abuse of the human experience. Prayer is the lifeline of the Christian life.¹²⁹ When African American men recognize and learn the biblical principles of prayer, they become God’s priests and ambassadors, beginning in their homes, and overflowing into every other area of their lives. The gospel can connect the African American male to their true ancestor, Jesus.¹³⁰

African American men can discover how to approach God and experience intimacy with Him to receive the spiritual strength to fulfill His purpose through the gospel. When they apply biblical principles to their prayer life, they will communicate with God with power, grace, and confidence. As a result, they can have a close relationship with their heavenly Father as they serve Him with joy and effectiveness.

Prayer is second, only to receiving Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior. Prayer is one of the greatest gifts African American men can pass on from one generation to the next.

¹²⁹ Mason, *Manhood Restored*, 187.

¹³⁰ Mason, “Apologetics as Spiritual Warfare,” 231.

Prayer is the most incredible legacy anyone can leave behind. The real question is, how does the African American man achieve this spiritual life of prayer?

Religious Coping

Much of the research on religiosity among African American families have been on religion as a coping mechanism during times of stress to cope with external stressors and to sustain homeostasis or as a protective aspect against adverse outcomes.¹³¹ Therefore, those who wish to strengthen African American families should recognize the strength of religion in coping with stress and develop programs that address the external factors placed in a disproportionate amount of stress on Black Families.¹³²

Religious coping is often accessible and includes but is not limited to prayer, meditation, and worship. K. I. Pargament et al. discovered that religious coping could be considered as negative or positive.¹³³ “Usually, those who employ adaptive coping strategies create opportunities to incorporate a belief in God in a healthy way...”¹³⁴ However, individuals can and do engage in maladaptive forms of religious coping, which occurs by depending solely on God, failing to do anything for themselves, and blaming God when adverse circumstances continue.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Millett, et al., “Weathering the Storm,” 665, 689.

¹³² Millett, et al., “Weathering the Storm,” 689.

¹³³ Millett et al., “Weathering the Storm,” 689.

¹³⁴ Avent-Harris, et al., “God Is A Keeper,” 172.

¹³⁵ Avent-Harris, et al., “God Is A Keeper,” 172.

Religious coping includes prayer, meditation, and worship. African American men have adaptive coping strategies that may place them in a ranking higher than their white counterparts regarding religion; however, it still leaves them lacking in prayer in their homes. Millett et al. state religion has revolved around a coping mechanism during stressful times or as a protective factor against negative outcomes.¹³⁶ Avent et al. agree and added that African Americans seek religious coping support for various life circumstances.¹³⁷

African American men have learned to cope and thrive, despite the obstacles that may stand in their way.¹³⁸ Prayer is essential to continue practicing Spiritual Discipline in their households, providing examples of a kingdom man for their children and their children's children. He teaches them to pray for themselves and their families. The foundation of spiritual disciplines can build as each member of the family aligns themselves with the teachings of Christ and decides to be healed from all manner of spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical ailments.

Black Christian Family

For generations, African American families have been under duress and need healing from historical injuries dating back to slavery. Not only is it imperative that healing takes place, but they should build on the strength that draws from the inner fortitude, resilience, and endurance that comes from faith and prayer.¹³⁹ Unfortunately, they have suffered from the inability to influence events and social conditions that affect their lives and the lives of their

¹³⁶ Millett et al. "Weathering the Storm," 668.

¹³⁷ Avent-Harris, et al., "God Is A Keeper," 172.

¹³⁸ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 158.

¹³⁹ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 166.

family members for far too long.¹⁴⁰ The time has come for African American families to come together and pray through the circumstances that challenge who they are in Christ.

African American Christian families are far from a monolithic group. Still, an often-shared set of ideals, beliefs, and practices established in Christianity gives many African American Christians a forte not often captured in existing research.¹⁴¹ Through faith, they apply their Christianity to overcome challenging times, sustain their marriages, and cover their children in an experienced lived faith.¹⁴² African American spirituality canters on the parallel path of history and culture.

Their spirituality shaped itself through culture and within a historical and spiritual context. “For African Americans, this shaping history predicated on one foundational reality: the indelible effects of slavery.”¹⁴³ To understand the role of religious faith in the lives of Black people, it is important to understand the African American experience.¹⁴⁴ Barna recently reported, faith is considered a source of emotional strength, a perspective that has held steady among African American adults between 1996 (91%) and 2020 (87%). Moreover, nearly all African American churchgoers today (66%) strongly agree, while (26%) agree somewhat (see Table 2.1 below).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 164.

¹⁴¹ Millett, “Weathering the Storm,” 692.

¹⁴² Millett, “Weathering the Storm,” 692.

¹⁴³ Chandler, “African American Spirituality,” 161.

¹⁴⁴ Barna Group, “Most Black Adults Say Religion & the Black Experience Go Hand in Hand” *Faith & Christianity* (2021), 3, accessed 9/10/21, www.barna.com/research/sobc-21.

¹⁴⁵ Barna Group, “Most Black Adults Say Religion & the Black Experience Go Hand in Hand,” 2.

Black Adults on The Role of Faith In Their Lives

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “To understand the African American experience, it is necessary to understand the role of religious faith in the lives of Black people?”

	Agree	Disagree	Not Applicable
All Black U. S. adults - 1996	71%	25%	
All Black adults - 2020	79%	15%	6%
Black Church churchgoers	88%	9%	

Figure 2.1 N=772 U.S. Black adults, excluding those with no faith; March 1996. N=927 U.S. Black adults, excluding those with no faith, April 22-May 6, 2020. N=822 Black Church churchgoers' adults; April 26-May 6, 2020. Source: Barna Group, 2021.¹⁴⁶

However, the proportion of African American adults who say church involvement is “necessary” is on the decline, from 90% in 1996 (71% ‘very’ + 19% ‘somewhat’) to just 74% today (44% ‘very’ + 30% ‘somewhat’).¹⁴⁷ Young African American adults’ relationship to faith and religion is especially complex. Black Gen Z (67%) and Millennials (65%) are on par in maintaining Christianity, at about two-thirds, which makes them more Christian than their generational peers of other races but less Christian than older Black adults. Young African American adults also seem to be distancing themselves from faith, spirituality, affiliation, and institutions in general (see Table 2.2).¹⁴⁸

Black adults who say church involvement is necessary.

	Very	Somewhat	
Black Gen Z	71%	19%	
Millennials	44%	30%	

Figure 2.2 N=1,083 Black U.S. adults; April 22-May 6, 2020. Source: Barna

¹⁴⁶ Barna Group, “Most Black Adults Say Religion & the Black Experience Go Hand in Hand” 2.

¹⁴⁷ Barna Group, “Trends in the Black Church: More Faithful, But Not Immune to Decline” *Faith & Christianity*, ” 1, accessed 9/10/21, www.barna.com/black-church-trends-faithful-decline.

¹⁴⁸ Barna Group, “Trends in the Black Church: More Faithful, But Not Immune to Decline,” 2.

African Americans may be more faithful, but they are not immune to decline. Pew Research Center surveyed 8,600 African American adults (ages 18 and older) and found that young Black Millennials and members of Generation Z are less likely to rely on prayer. However, they are less likely to have grown up in Black churches and less likely to say religion is an essential part of their lives.¹⁴⁹

Conclusion

The research project presented an examination of literature collected to address the area of prayer in the life of African American men. After gathering and analyzing the literature available, many of the sources provided in this Literature Review give an in-depth view of the historical, psychological, and sociological reasons African American men are not the leaders in their homes when it comes to matters such as prayer. There is a cultural, historical, and spiritual context that involves a powerful shaping quality for the African American male and their entire family's foundational reality.

African American men have learned to survive the pain and trauma of their past using prayer. The prayer life of Black men has been guided through the strength of religious coping. As each generation of African Americans grew up in worlds with measurably different opportunities, their experiences impacted their worldviews. There is no wonder why young African American Millennials and members of Generation Z are less likely to rely on prayer.

The Silent Generation (1928-1945) suffered the full effects of the Jim Crow laws. The Baby Boomers (1946-1964) were the offspring of the Civil Rights Movement. Generation X (1965-1980) saw the dawning of the Fair Housing Act and the Black Power Movement.

¹⁴⁹ Mohamed et al., "Faith Among Black Americans," 3.

Millennials (1981-2000) benefited significantly from the success of these movements before them, despite the continuing realities of racism and discrimination.¹⁵⁰

Learning to survive the pain and trauma of ones' past is often a motivating factor in an individual's prayer life. In Tim Keller's book, *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering*, he says, "suffering is actually at the heart of the Christian story."¹⁵¹ Prayer could be attributed to pain and suffering worldwide, in religions of old and new. Human nature looks for spiritual healing when pain and suffering are in excess.

Whether considering the human response to mother nature's most tragic disasters, or individual responses to the loss of a loved one, it is normal and natural for people to seek spiritual guidance in these times of despair. Moreover, this nature may explain the African American man's decline in spirituality; however, the African American man's failure to lead in their homes is not the same. Therefore, it is imperative to be cautious and not confuse the two. There is a gap of information concerning the prayer life of Africa American men that can be covered more efficiently through detailed interviews.

Theological Foundations

Domestic life in the ancient world was not a trivial matter; therefore, even philosophers discussed household management.¹⁵² Aristotle regarded the household as the basic unit of the

¹⁵⁰ Akin Bruce, "Generational Differences Among African American in Their Perceptions of Economic Opportunity" *Kinder Institute Research* (2018), 2: accessed 10/9/21. <https://kinder.rice.edu/2018/07/04generational-differences-among-african-americans-their-perceptions-economic-opportunity>.

¹⁵¹ Tim Keller, *Walking With God Through Pain and Suffering* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2013), 77.

¹⁵² David E. Garland, *The Colossians/Philemon NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 241.

state.¹⁵³ The House Codes is the label assigned to those sections of Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Peter that instructs wives, children, and slaves, but also on the responsibilities of the more powerful persons (husbands, parents, and master).¹⁵⁴

The family in ancient Israel was a fluid and open community. The most common Hebrew terms (*mispaha* and *bet*, ‘house’) can designate the single household unit, and the broader circle of consanguinity is (Gen 24:38), the clan, the tribe, and the nation (Amos 3:1-2). The concentric custom suggests the role of the primary family in shaping the larger community.¹⁵⁵ The authority of the father was the strongest cohesive force.¹⁵⁶ The family provided one of the most used analogies for the relationship between Israel and God, as Father.¹⁵⁷ The solidarity of the family is the building block of the spiritual family of God. The unity specifies the way commands are to be accomplished within society’s most basic unit, the household.¹⁵⁸

Family worship should begin in the home. Joshua declared, “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Jos 24:15). Joshua boldly challenged the Israelites to choose between the gods of Ur beyond the river, the gods of the Amorites in Canaan, and Yahweh.¹⁵⁹ Christians must decide if they will obey the Lord, who has proven his faithfulness or obey the gods of money, social media, and status. Will they obey God or submit to their personal comfort?

¹⁵³ Garland, *The Colossians/Philemon NIV Application Commentary*, 241.

¹⁵⁴ Klyne Snodgrass, *The Ephesians NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 29.

¹⁵⁵ David F. Wright, “Family” *The Oxford Companion To The Bible* ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 223.

¹⁵⁶ Wright, “Family,” 223.

¹⁵⁷ Wright, “Family,” 224; see also Ex 4:22; Ps 103:13; Prov 3:12; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1-4.

¹⁵⁸ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter: Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 207).

¹⁵⁹ Donald K. Campbell, “Joshua” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado: David C. Cook, 1985), 369.

Prayer is expected from Christians because it draws one closer to God. He has given access to His throne room through prayer and the power of His divine authority as it relates to His promises.¹⁶⁰ Only heaven holds the answers and the authority to address whatever is lacking in the life of the African American Christian.¹⁶¹ When they go to God and ask for His divine intervention based on His Word, His promises, and His character, then He will intervene in response to their faith and submission to Him.¹⁶²

Whatever is plaguing the life of the African American Christian family in the physical realm emanates from the spiritual realm. Satan does not want Kingdom men to understand that if they want to address something in the physical, they must first address the spiritual cause.¹⁶³ Therefore, it is imperative that the family of God comprehend the promises of God. The power of prayer comes from holding God accountable for what He has already said He would do.¹⁶⁴

Kingdom Man

The path to a better man begins with aligning himself under the authority of God in every area of his life. By aligning their thought with His and then approaching Him through prayer, they can ask what they will, and it shall be done (John 15:7). Tony Evans calls this man a *kingdom man*. Evans uses Psalm 128 as his benchmark passage for manhood. He states, “Psalm

¹⁶⁰ Tony Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 42.

¹⁶¹ Tony Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 43.

¹⁶² Tony Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 44.

¹⁶³ Tony Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 43.

¹⁶⁴ Tony Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 43

128 is specifically written to men to tell them how they are to function as a kingdom man through four spheres of life, which include the personal, family, church, and community.”¹⁶⁵

The Psalmist wrote that good family life is a reward to those who follow God. The values outlined in God’s Word include love, service, honesty, integrity, and prayer. These virtues are vital to home life as they demonstrate the blessing of those who fear the Lord and follow His ways (Ps 128:1).¹⁶⁶ The kingdom man takes responsibility for his actions and the actions of those who follow their leadership. Even if they are not to blame for a problem, they are willing to take responsibility to address it.¹⁶⁷ They must have an attitude that is willing to listen to and accept God’s agenda.

Spiritual receptivity means submitting to the Holy Spirit’s urging to preempt pride. Every decision must be processed through prayer. Prayer opens perspective to help see things the way God sees them and do things the way He would do them. Prayer embraces a level of communion with God that will ultimately affect the family, church, and community.¹⁶⁸ Whitney notes a quote from Charles Spurgeon.

I trust there are none here present, who profess to be followers of Christ who do not also practice prayer in their families. We may have no positive commandment for it, but we believe that it is so much in accord with the genius and spirit of the gospel, and that it is so commended by the example of the saints, that the neglect thereof is a strange inconsistency.¹⁶⁹

In Genesis 18:19, the Lord said, “For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the

¹⁶⁵ Tony Evans, *Kingdom Man*, 145.

¹⁶⁶ Tony Evans, *Kingdom Man*, 146.

¹⁶⁷ Dondre’ Whitefield, *Male vs Man*, 25-26.

¹⁶⁸ Bailey, *The Spiritual Life Of A Leader*, 21.

¹⁶⁹ Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 15-16.

Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” Abraham was to teach his children righteousness and justice so that they might enjoy God’s blessings.¹⁷⁰

Perhaps one of the best-known texts in the Bible commanding families to teach their children is found in the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 6:4-7, this passage has been called the *Shema*, from the Hebrew word translated *hear*,¹⁷¹ and it provides the central theme of Deuteronomy. *Shema* sets a pattern to encompass the Word of God daily in believers’ lives. The Hebrews used the context of daily life to teach about God. The godly man loves God, teaches His commandments to his children, and lives each day by the guidelines in His Word.¹⁷² He is to teach the children diligently to see God in every aspect of life, not just those that are church-related.¹⁷³ Parents were responsible for meditating on the commandments and teaching them to their children.

She Is His Helpmate

In Genesis 3:16, the woman comes under God’s general curse; there came some major marring of her appointed roles as wife and mother because of the curse.¹⁷⁴ God told the woman she would bear pain in childbearing, and she would be mastered by her husband, whom she

¹⁷⁰ Allen P. Ross, “Genesis” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament* ed. John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1985), 59.

¹⁷¹ Jack S. Deere, “Deuteronomy” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament* ed. John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1985), 274.

¹⁷² Deere, “Deuteronomy,” 275.

¹⁷³ Deere, “Deuteronomy,” 274.

¹⁷⁴ Ross, “Genesis” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 33.

desired. No matter what people do to attempt to halt male dominion, agonizing labor, painful childbearing, and death, these evils will continue because they are the fruit of sin.¹⁷⁵

After the woman overstepped her boundaries and manipulated her husband, she was told, “He shall rule over you.”¹⁷⁶ The proclamation is the divine assignment of the husband’s servant-leader role. However, it must be noted; there is no indication that it was intended as a diminishing of the woman’s person or her abilities, but as a redemptive role assigned to the husband toward the wife to restore the original partnership, mutual respect, and dignity through Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁷ The proclamation gives husbandly responsibility for leadership in the marriage relationship. The declaration does not declare male dominance over females.

Women are not second to men in general, but a wife should endeavor to accept her husband’s leadership and not attempt to dominate (Gen 3:16). The husband must lead with mutual respect. The Bible does call for husbands to accept responsible leadership in the same spirit of self-giving and devotion Christ has shown for His Church (Eph 5:22-25).¹⁷⁸ God has given the husband the responsibility of spiritual leadership in the home. The household is vital to the life of the church. When a man can walk in integrity in his home, it spills over into his life in the church and community.

Headship

Jewish males greeted God each day in prayer, exalting themselves over others by beginning to give thanks to God for not being a Gentile, a slave, or a woman (Gal 3:28).

¹⁷⁵ Ross, “Genesis” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 33.

¹⁷⁶ Ross, “Genesis” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 33.

¹⁷⁷ Earl Radmacher, Ronald B. Allen, H. Wayne House, *New Illustrated Bible Commentary: Spreading the Light of God’s Word into Your Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1999), 13.

¹⁷⁸ Radmacher et al., *New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, 1539.

However, as a Christian, faith in Christ transcended all these differences affirming that all believers had become equals in Christ.¹⁷⁹ In Christ, race, rank, and sex distinctions neither hinder nor grant special privileges or fellowship (Gal 3:28). Common religious, social, and gender oppositions had been relativized in Christ, in whom a new unity is to be found. Paul asserts all are one in Christ Jesus.

The believers were forced to deal with the question of how members of the family were to relate to one another in the household.¹⁸⁰ Paul made it clear that there is a headship of the man over the woman (cf. 1 Cor 11:3), and there are distinctions in the area of spiritual service (cf. 1 Tim 2:12).¹⁸¹ The Christian faith requires serious practice. Paul encouraged Timothy to “train yourself in godliness” (1 Tim 4:7), and he told the believers in Philippi to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). The training in godliness surpasses physical training. To “train” (*gymnaze*) and “godliness” (*[pros] eusebeian*); the NIV translates the entire phrase by “to be godly.”¹⁸²

There is frustration in being told what to believe but not how to put those beliefs into practice. Some assume that perfect peace and prosperity will be achieved when the proper technique is applied.¹⁸³ In reality, it takes faith and endurance. Peace and prosperity takes “men and women who choose to place Christ over culture and conviction over comfort.”¹⁸⁴ There is no

¹⁷⁹ Radmacher et al., *New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, 1523.

¹⁸⁰ Radmacher et al., *New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, 1539.

¹⁸¹ Donald K. Campbell, “Galatians” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament* ed. John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1983), 600.

¹⁸² Walter L. Liefeld, *The NIV 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 1999), 158.

¹⁸³ Gerald L. Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs To Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 282.

¹⁸⁴ Evans, *Kingdom Heroes*, 19.

time for complacent Christianity if men are going to impact their families for the advancement of God's kingdom.¹⁸⁵

They Submit Together

Colossians 3:18-19 "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be bitter toward them." God ordained order in the church and order in the home. The household rules illustrate that Christians did not resist their culture's commonly shared moral standards concerning a well-ordered family life.¹⁸⁶

Submission is required of all Christians regardless of rank or gender. The directive addresses wives directly as ethically responsible partners, and the husband's obligation is in the Lord. When both are living under the lordship of Christ, there can be only harmony. If the couple is submitted to Christ, they will try to establish a home that obeys the Word of God.¹⁸⁷ Paul introduces Christ as the new goal and dynamic of the Christian's life, family, and behavior.

True spiritual submission is the secret of growth and fulfillment. Genuine submission is given by one human being to another; based on trust, that is, to believe God's Word and to be willing to learn to grow in relationships.¹⁸⁸ Mutual love and submission create an atmosphere of growth in the home that allows both the husband and the wife to become what God wants them to be.¹⁸⁹ When a Christian woman is submitted to the Lord and her husband, she experiences a release and fulfillment. Submitting is taking the divinely ordered place in a relationship.

¹⁸⁵ Evans, *Kingdom Heroes*, 19.

¹⁸⁶ Garland, *The Colossians/Philemon*, 242.

¹⁸⁷ Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* Vol. 2 (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989), 50.

¹⁸⁸ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 142.

¹⁸⁹ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 142.

Ephesians 5:23 does not focus on authority but the self-giving love of both Christ and the husband. 'Head' in this context suggests 'responsibility for.'¹⁹⁰ God established the family as the most basic unit of society.

Working Together

African American men have an enormous responsibility, as well as a right, to rule and manage their family, which God has placed within his dominion. They have the authority to influence and impact everyone within their realm, either negatively or positively. Yet, some men appear to run from the responsibility to lead their families spiritually. God has given them the authority, and somehow, they have lost their leverage by relinquishing their right to rule spiritually.

In 1 Peter 3:7, the apostle Peter is not referring to women as the "weaker" vessel in moral or intellectual inferiority, but physical limitations. God gave recall, devotion, and the power to practice self-control equally to both the man and woman. Gender-differentiated aptitudes make the husband and wife mutually dependent because the one is competent where the other is deficient.¹⁹¹ Peter recognizes that the well-being of the Christian household depends on the man recognizing the female as a coheir in Christ.¹⁹²

If a man is not considerate and respectful of his wife, his prayers will be hindered because a living relationship with God depends on the right relationship with others. According to Donald S. Whitney, this principle carries over into the entire family relationship.¹⁹³ Personal

¹⁹⁰ Snodgrass, *The Ephesians NIV Application Commentary*, 295.

¹⁹¹ Jobes, *1 Peter: Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 209.

¹⁹² Jobes, *1 Peter: Baker Exegetical Commentary* 209.

¹⁹³ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 26.

sin can affect personal prayer (Ps 66:18). God does not bless with His favor those in positions of authority who abuse and mistreat those under them.¹⁹⁴

In 1 Peter 3:7, the text speaks of mutual prayer. Peter assumes that Christian couples pray together. He expected Christian husbands to conduct family worship. God has given the husband, father, and grandfather a priceless gift, and with it comes enormous responsibility. But without authority, there is really no responsibility. Authority is empowered through the prayer life of the godly man.

Power and Promises

There are many biblical truths that Christians must adhere to, but this study will focus on the following scriptures. The first is Malachi 3:8, “Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.” Malachi urges the people of God to stop holding back their tithes, to stop keeping from God what he deserved. The people ignored God’s command to give a tithe of their income to His temple/church. Malachi 3:9 says, “You are cursed with a curse.” Failure to support God’s house through the temple was considered equal to robbing God.¹⁹⁵

There is a reason why so many families have seen generations of divorce, drug addiction, alcoholism, pornography, poverty, depression, and suicide.¹⁹⁶ In addition, Americans spend 23 percent of their money on debt.¹⁹⁷ 3 John 2 says, “Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.” It takes faith to tithe.

¹⁹⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Peter, Jude* Vol. 37 (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2003), 161.

¹⁹⁵ Craig A. Blasing, “Malachi” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1984), 1585.

¹⁹⁶ Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 13.

¹⁹⁷ Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 13.

Biblical truth two is Proverbs 18:21, “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” God framed the world by His words (Heb 11 and Gen 1). African American men will need to frame their worlds by their words (Pro 15:4). As a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Pro 23:7). Sometimes it can be difficult to call those things that are not as though they were (Rom 4:17) – when you are speaking that you are broke, sick, and without a spouse.¹⁹⁸ Speak to the mountains in your life, and by faith, they will move (Mark 11:23-24).

The mountains are symbolic obstacles, hindrances, or insurmountable problems. Jesus said in hyperbole that whoever says to this mountain, the Mount of Olives represented an immovable obstacle, go throw yourself (lit., ‘be uprooted’ and ‘be thrown’) into the sea (the Dead Sea, visible from the Mount of Olives), it will be done for him by God.¹⁹⁹ This hyperbole was a tangible obstacle that appeared as barriers against the accomplishment of God’s purpose through His children. Faith in God rests in unwavering trust in His omnipotent power and unfailing goodness.²⁰⁰

Believing prayer taps into God’s power to accomplish the humanly impossible.²⁰¹ Jesus taught the disciples to believe that they have already received whatever they requested in prayer. Faith accepts it as good as done even though the actual answer is still in the future.²⁰² Christians need to recognize that when they make a petition, it must be in harmony with the will of God.

¹⁹⁸ Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 17.

¹⁹⁹ John D. Grassmick, “Mark” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* ed. by John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck (Colorado: David C. Cook, 1984). 158.

²⁰⁰ Grassmick, “Mark” *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 158.

²⁰¹ Grassmick, “Mark” *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 158.

²⁰² Grassmick, “Mark” *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 159.

Prayer enables faith to receive the answer God gives. God responds to obedient believers' prayers when they petition Him knowing that no situation or difficulty is impossible for Him.²⁰³

The final biblical truth is Romans 7:8. There is a war between the flesh and the spirit. When a person is saved, their spirit gets saved, but not their flesh. "But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead" (Rom 7:8). Apart from the law, sin was dormant, but the law awakened a desire to do that which is prohibited, but that does not mean the law itself is sin.²⁰⁴

Paul knew sin as a principle and, specifically, covetousness as an expression of it, and that knowledge came through the law. Paul describes how it works; the indwelling principle of sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in humankind every kind of covetous desire.²⁰⁵ Simply put, the more they are subjected to 'dos' and 'do nots' without having the knowledge of how to yield to the power of the Holy Spirit to assist in fulfilling the requirements, the more they will sin. As a result, the hearts and minds of humanity are perverse and rebellious. Hence, it is the sin, not the law, that was to blame. God's law, reflecting His righteous moral principles, is holy.²⁰⁶

Through the motivation of love and gratitude toward Christ each man desires to do God's will. However, the Christian man cannot naively think that two hours on Sunday will be enough to ward off Satan's attacks. His attacks come through seductive images, pornography, food commercials, flirtatious women, social media, movies with homosexual content, and the latest

²⁰³ Grassmick, "Mark" *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 159.

²⁰⁴ John A. Witmer, "Romans" *The Bible Knowledge Commentary; New Testament*, ed. by John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck (Colorado: David C. Cook, 1984), 466.

²⁰⁵ Witmer, "Romans," 466.

²⁰⁶ Witmer, "Romans," 466.

gadgets that cost more than they can afford?²⁰⁷ The world is a kaleidoscope presenting exquisitely adjusted pictures of ever-moving thoughts.²⁰⁸ Each man must cease from his sinful thoughts and encourage good thoughts.

Prayer Is Expected

Prayer is expected, and it is imperative for African American men must understand that Jesus expects His people to pray. Jesus taught His disciples about prayer (Matt 6:5-15) and how to persist in prayer (Luke 18:1). God's Word makes it clear of the expectation of prayer.²⁰⁹

Paul urges his readers to pray. Colossians 4:2, "Devote yourself to prayer, being watchful and thankful." Two participles modify this statement in Greek: 'watching' (v.2) and 'praying' (v.3).²¹⁰ The participle 'praying' leads to Paul's trepidations about his ministry and the Colossians' part in it. Two concerns are revealed, both introduced by 'that' or 'in order that' in Greek. First, men who continue unwaveringly in prayer have devoted themselves to pursuing a Christlike life where prayer is an ongoing priority.²¹¹ Devotion to prayer implies unrelenting persistence. Second, Paul is warning the Colossians against spiritual lassitude so that they can resist the temptations that come upon them.²¹²

When a person makes something a priority, when they sacrifice for it, when they give time to it, it means they are devoted to it.²¹³ Persistence is an expression of faith that God

²⁰⁷ Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 17.

²⁰⁸ Allen, *As A Man Thinketh*, 30.

²⁰⁹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 81.

²¹⁰ Richard R. Melick Jr, "Colossians" *The New American Commentary: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 321.

²¹¹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 81.

²¹² Garland, *The Colossians/Philemon*, 271.

²¹³ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 81.

answers prayer. God expects Christians to be devoted to prayer. God sometimes delays the answer to increase our faith and devotion and accomplish His purpose at the right time. Faith.²¹⁴

Prayer is, in one sense, an expression of a Christian's unbroken relationship with the Father.²¹⁵ This verse does not mean that Christians should do nothing but pray: however, it is possible to always have a prayerful attitude. This attitude is built upon acknowledging dependence on God realizing His presence within each Christian.

Pray continually (1 Thess 5:17) emphasizes prayer as an activity, 'pray without ceasing' reminds the Christian that prayer is also a relationship. Continual prayer is not prayers that occur without interruption, but prayer that continues whenever possible.²¹⁶ "The Greek adverb for continually (*adialeiptos*, also in 1:3) identifies a hacking cough."²¹⁷ Paul spoke of maintaining continuous fellowship with God as much as possible during daily living in which concentration is often broken.²¹⁸

Therefore, it is vital to cultivate a focused devotion to Jesus, as the Christian's worship should encompass what Christ has done and is doing in the life of Christians in the present.²¹⁹ Although the person who has given their life to Christ is fully sanctified, they must remember God works from the inside out, sanctifying the entire being.²²⁰ Consequently, worship must

²¹⁴ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* Vol. 2, 146.

²¹⁵ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 81.

²¹⁶ Thomas L. Constable, "1 Thessalonians" *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* ed. John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1984), 708.

²¹⁷ Constable, "1 Thessalonians" *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 708.

²¹⁸ Constable, "1 Thessalonians" *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 708.

²¹⁹ Radmacher et al., *New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, 1582.

²²⁰ Radmacher et al., *New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, 1582.

originate from within, from the heart; it is sincere, motivated by love for God and gratefulness for all He is and all He has done. To walk with God assumes a shared nature. God is Spirit, and His people are to relate to Him spiritually, to walk with Him daily as a continuous form of exploration and communication.²²¹

Conclusion

Many African American men have suffered from the façade of religion. The time has come to live as kingdom men, to walk into miracles, change the world for good, and see the favor of heaven rain down on them.²²² First, he must believe God and worship Him the way He prescribed – with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind (Matt 22:37). Second, believing in God and His Word results in acting and making choices that reflect His will and His ways (Jas 2:22).²²³ Faith in God simply believes that what God said in His Word is true.

African American men must understand that simply showing up in church is not enough. Cain and Abel provide a setting that two types of men showed up for worship, but only one worship was acceptable.²²⁴ God designed and established worship to lead Christians into the presence of God. Through the posture of worship, Christian men can gain access to God's throne.

²²¹ Evans, *Kingdom Heroes*, 39-40.

²²² Evans, *Kingdom Heroes*, 32.

²²³ Evans, *Kingdom Heroes*, 32.

²²⁴ Evans, *Kingdom Heroes*, 27.

Enoch walked faithfully with God (Gen 5:24). First, he had to start by tracking where God was going. Then he had to take the necessary faith steps to join Him.²²⁵ When African American men desire to walk according to the Spirit's leading, they will walk step by step according to the Spiritual guidance based on God's Word. Walking in the Spirit is an ongoing, progressive decision made throughout their time on earth.²²⁶

Theoretical Foundations

The term "priest in the home" is not in the Scriptures; although some married women often say it.²²⁷ The husband and wife, or father and mother, bear equal responsibility in leading their children into godliness. The phrase "priest in the home" can have a negative meaning; however, it is not meant to strip women of equal access to going before God in prayer. Furthermore, it is not meant to place a heavy burden on the husband or father.²²⁸ Both parents are to train up their children. When married women use the term "the priest in the home," they speak of a spiritual leader.

There is little research on the methodologies of teaching African American history varied with family dynamics, mental health issues, and spiritual disciplines merging to create a godly man. The spiritual development of the Black man may confront some issues as they respond to the trauma of being broken while they yet try to maintain balance and security. A new creation in God requires time, and patience may be the source of quality control.

²²⁵ Evans, *Kingdom Heroes*, 43.

²²⁶ Evans, *Kingdom Heroes*, 43.

²²⁷ Maggie Turner, "Should the Husband Be the Priest of the Home?" *CBE International* (2016), 1, accessed 9/9/21 www.cbeinternational.org.

²²⁸ Turner, "Should the Husband Be the Priest of the Home?" 1.

A discipline of the mind is the greatest of challenges. Doing this will take patience toward taking a step to becoming a godly man and being that example of Jesus Christ. Developing an effectual prayer life and consistently reading the Bible can produce a deeply intimate spiritual life in Christ. To maintain a pure mind is impossible when watching television, internet-surfing, and video gaming. In one week, a person will watch more murders, adulteries, and perversions than their grandfathers read about in their entire lives.²²⁹

They must abandon everything that could burden them and rid themselves of every hindrance, every association, habit, and tendency that impedes godliness.²³⁰ There is some strenuous work involved in becoming a godly man. “The word *toil* means ‘strenuous work,’ and *strive* comes from the Greek word from which we get ‘agonize.’ Toil and agony are called for if one is to be godly.”²³¹

If African American men are to excel, the call to discipline demands that they train for godliness directing all their energy toward that goal (1 Tim 4:7).²³² When athletes train, they willingly undergo hours of discipline and even pain to win the prize. “The successful Christian life is a sweaty affair! No manliness, no maturity! No discipline, no discipleship! No sweat, no sainthood!”²³³ Training for godliness begins with reading and studying God’s Word.

The research will target African American men in the area of prayer. Unfortunately, there are not many models of the concept of prayer targeting African American men's households. However, examples of disciplines of godly men, holy living, humility, surrender, and spiritual

²²⁹ Hughes, *Disciplines of Godly Man*, 41.

²³⁰ Hughes, *Disciplines of Godly Man*, 20.

²³¹ Hughes, *Disciplines of Godly Man*, 21.

²³² Hughes, *Disciplines of Godly Man*, 20.

²³³ Hughes, *Disciplines of Godly Man*, 21.

formation can be incorporated into theoretical models centered on several theological principles. Therefore, this project will be explored in-depth to explain concepts of history, environment, and spiritual disciplines that connect the spiritual with the psychological that will produce a kingdom man, an African American kingdom man.

Impact of Slavery on African Americans

The theoretical model can be predicated on various theological principles, and it will begin with the history of the African American man. First, it is vital that African American men learn about their history and the direct effect slavery may have had on them emotionally. A Pew Research survey discovered 8 out of 10 Black adults believe slavery continues to impact Black people in the United States.²³⁴ In many ways, the emotional trauma of slavery has affected countless African American families, whether victims, perpetrators, or both. Black America has labored to recover from the dehumanization of bondage, the offense of peonage, the outrage of the black codes, the affront of convict leasing, the indignities of Jim Crow, and the ravages of poverty.²³⁵

Therefore, it is essential to understand some history of the African American man's culture. Subsequently, the second step would be to examine the mental and spiritual health of the Black man. Research shows that when one can recognize where they have come from, it becomes easier to acknowledge the pain of the past and move forward into the future.²³⁶

²³⁴ Juliana Menasce Horowitz, "Most Americans say the legacy of slavery still affects black people in the U.S. today" *Pew Research Center* (2019), 2, accessed 3/1/2022). www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/17/most-americans-say-the-legacy-of-slavery-still-affects-black-people-in-the-u-s-today.

²³⁵ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave*, 15.

²³⁶ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave*, 157.

The legacy of slavery affects the mental health of African Americans to this day. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concluded in a May 2014 research report undiagnosed childhood neglect or trauma is widespread among African American adults and is the root cause of mental health and behavioral problems in adulthood.²³⁷ Therefore, the National Council for Behavioral Health recommends integrating trauma-informed care into all assessment and treatment procedures.²³⁸

DeGruy describes the effects that the history of slavery has had on African American culture. She explains how generations of slavery and oppression have traumatized contemporary African Americans' legacy.²³⁹ Slavery yielded stressors that were both disturbing and traumatic, exacting a wound upon the African American psyche that continues to fester.²⁴⁰ Yet, the African American man should not forget the power of God showing up in his life throughout his history. He must have confidence that God can handle every challenge in his present reality.

As previously stated, Black men are not Westerners; but they are Africans whose past culture has been largely forgotten. DeGruy tells the story of traveling to southern Africa to build a corridor with Black women from both continents to share cultures. She was speaking to a group of African women using a translator. She told the group that she was with other African American women, and they were there to build and sustain a positive sharing relationship with

²³⁷ Alma Carten, "How the legacy of slavery affects the mental health of black Americans today" *The Conversation - The Impact of Slavery Today - Berkeley University Diversity* (2015), 3, accessed 3/1/22. <https://theconversation.com/how-the-legacy-of-slavery-affects-the-mental-health-of-black-americans-today-44642>.

²³⁸ Carten, "How the legacy of slavery affects the mental health of black Americans today," 3.

²³⁹ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave*, 97.

²⁴⁰ Evans, *Kingdom Heroes*, 115.

the African sisters. The translator proceeded to translate, and the people started to chant. DeGruy asked the translator what was going on? He said,

I told them exactly what you said, but when I got to the point where you said that you were African American women, I needed to explain what that meant. You see, many of the people in the audience are from small, isolated villages with limited exposure to outsiders and they thought that all Americans were white. So, I had to explain to them that the eight of you were the descendants of the ones who had been stolen away. They were chanting back to you, ‘Welcome home.’²⁴¹

One of the women told DeGruy, “you are African, 300 years from home, but you are African.”²⁴²

The past trauma must be healed.

Spiritual Leader

Prayer is the most ancient, universal, and intensive expression of the religious instinct.²⁴³

Prayer was the principal feature of Jesus' life and a regular part of His teaching. For example, Jesus instructed His disciples on the importance of solitude in prayer (Mk 6:46; Luke 9:28).

Mastering the art of prayer, like anything else, takes time.²⁴⁴ The time given will be an accurate measure of its importance.

God makes available His divine authority through prayer, and Christians have the right to come confidently before the throne of grace (Heb 4:16). Jesus promised His disciples; “I have given you authority...to overcome all the power of the enemy.” To believe such power is available in prayer is one thing, but another thing to practice it. The spiritual leader of his

²⁴¹ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 156.

²⁴² DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 156.

²⁴³ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 99.

²⁴⁴ Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 102.

household must use God's power to move human hearts in the direction he believes to be the will of God.²⁴⁵ Through prayer, the spiritual leader has the key to any complicated situation.

Paul told the Corinthian believers, "follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). A spiritual leader imitates Christ. He is sensitive to his family's needs and concerned for its spiritual welfare. He looks for ways to help his children and grandchildren grow in their relationship with God. Prayer builds a strong connection with God. Accepting responsibility for the family's spiritual needs must end somewhere if the household is to function smoothly and efficiently. The responsibility to bring up the children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord belongs to the father (Eph 6:4).²⁴⁶

Families need spiritual leaders who have a relationship with God. The African American man must learn to nourish his role as the spiritual leader in his home by supporting his family's maturity in godliness. He must mirror the interactive love that Christ has for His Church. After the death of Charles Spurgeon, his wife Susannah wrote a glance into their lives as a family.

After the meal was over, an adjournment was made to the study for family worship, and it was at these seasons that my beloved's prayers were remarkable for their tender childlikeness, their spiritual pathos, and their intense devotion. He seemed to come as near to God as a little child to a loving father, and we were often moved to tears as he talked, thus face to face with his Lord.²⁴⁷

African American men who are spiritual leaders in their homes, covering their families in prayer, can build a legacy showing their children and grandchildren that real men pray. They can create

²⁴⁵ Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 106.

²⁴⁶ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 24.

²⁴⁷ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 38-39.

a solid and faithful family structure through prayer by guiding, inspiring, and motivating their families to know the Father's heart.

Carey Casey stated, "One undeniable truth about fathering is that the present and the future are linked to the past. Though we might not like to admit it, upon reflection, most of us can see qualities of our fathers in ourselves."²⁴⁸ What reflection will the children see in their fathers?

There are many important responsibilities for African American men, but prayer is one of the most critical tasks in his home. An effective, godly man values the power of prayer. Unfortunately, Black Christian men who are spiritually disciplined are often the exception, not the rule. On the contrary, the politically correct culture of the new millennium often suppresses manliness, especially the masculinity and leadership of men who attempt to follow Christ.²⁴⁹

African American men should first transmit their faith to their children as genuine. Their testimony can be damaged if their lifestyle and actions are perceived as hypocritical and inconsistent with what they profess. When they enter prayer, they first seek God's forgiveness of any sin they have committed. Next, they must teach their children how to pray and help them to understand how to enter the presence of God.

African American men taking the responsibility of leading a family starts with being in a vital and flourishing relationship with God through Jesus Christ.²⁵⁰ Spiritual growth is primarily accomplished through prayer, not just any kind of prayer, but the kind of prayer that is Godward,

²⁴⁸ Carey Casey, *Championship Grandfathering: How to Build a Winning Legacy* (Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishing, 2017), 71.

²⁴⁹ Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, 21.

²⁵⁰ Mason, *Manhood Restored*, 106.

authentic, focused prayer.²⁵¹ Subsequently, it is imperative that African American men understand the biblical truths that will enable them to seek the face of God. Unfortunately, one of the problems many African American men encounter in their culture that keeps them from becoming kingdom men is that, either through silence or blame, they have relinquished their God-given right to rule or lead.²⁵²

African American Women Leading

Black women may be able to get the job done as well as a man (or, in some cases, better than a man), “but ability without authority is a moot point in God’s kingdom.”²⁵³ When the family discusses who will lead spiritual matters, that decision should not be based on who appears to be the most spiritual. Both husbands and wives should have the capability to teach their children the core values of faith, understanding the Scriptures, and how to pray. Spiritual matters in the home must be seen as an investment into the kingdom of God.²⁵⁴ When children are placed in the care of their parents by God, it is to be nurtured physically, emotionally, and spiritually; if neglected, there can be a severe deficiency in the home.²⁵⁵ Therefore, teaching spiritual matters to the children is not left to the church alone.

Husbands are to lead it is a responsibility placed on them by God. Therefore, the women in their lives must allow them to lead. The real question the women should ask themselves is

²⁵¹ Mason, *Manhood Restored*, 106.

²⁵² Evans, *Kingdom Man*, 29.

²⁵³ Lyons, “Black Women And The Appeal of The Conscious Community And Feminism,” 149.

²⁵⁴ Lyons, “Black Women And The Appeal of The Conscious Community And Feminism,” 149.

²⁵⁵ Lyons, “Black Women And The Appeal of The Conscious Community And Feminism,” 149.

why the men in their lives are not leading? Feminists and others with egalitarian interpretations of Scripture have attempted to persuade women to reject God's intention for male leadership despite the creation order and other explicit biblical references to male headship.²⁵⁶

Women must be cautious if the call to liberate involves the rejection of Scripture.²⁵⁷ To denounce Scripture is a trick of the enemy, and he is subtle. Instead, when African American women step back from their roles in leadership and help their spouses and sons excel in their leadership roles, the family's spiritual life will be transformed. Hence, Black women need to be the helpmate God called them to be. If they began to invite their spouses with a gentle and encouraging voice to pray, study, and read God's Word as a family, they would all become Christian leaders worth following.

Men leading the way in the creation order of humanity is just one picture of the leadership role; not to say that women cannot lead anything (the Old and New Testaments testify to these facts).²⁵⁸ However, in the home, a man has an obligation to lead his family in spiritual matters. Ultimately, when men and women seek the face of God and ask, "Are my views shaped by feminist ideologies, culture, sexism, church tradition, my own will, or a deep desire to interpret Scripture with integrity and the help of the Holy Spirit (despite the fogginess of our own understanding)?"²⁵⁹ If African American men respond to God's call and the gentle urging of their wives to be spiritual leaders in their homes, they can become unstoppable.

²⁵⁶ Lyons, "Black Women And The Appeal of The Conscious Community And Feminism," 148; see also 1 Cor 11:2-16; Eph 5:21-33; 1 Tim 2:11-15; 3:1-7; Titus 1:16; 1 Pet 3:1-7.

²⁵⁷ Lyons, "Black Women And The Appeal of The Conscious Community And Feminism," 148.

²⁵⁸ Lyons, "Black Women And The Appeal of The Conscious Community And Feminism," 148.

²⁵⁹ Lyons, "Black Women And The Appeal of The Conscious Community And Feminism," 150.

Transmitting Faith Across Generations

There are two social institutions most directly concerned with passing standards of moral behavior and the continuity of social order from one generation to the next. They are families and religion, and each has been functionally connected as long as there is a record of families or religion.²⁶⁰ For religious parents, it is crucial to those whose faith forms the core of what is most valuable to them in life, what has meant the most to them, and what they would like to pass on to their children.²⁶¹ In this same context, it is also important for churches and religious leaders because their community's vitality depends on parents in their congregations transmitting their faith across generations.²⁶²

In the context of many demographic and cultural changes, marital instability and single parenting have entered an era of extraordinary change. In addition, there is a growing cultural emphasis on individualism, declining adherence to religious traditions, media-driven youth cultures, and a significant difference in the degree to which families influence the younger generation's religious orientation.²⁶³ Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is a verse that exemplifies the work of discipleship done by parents within the home. Likewise, Deuteronomy 6:7 tells parents to speak about the Lord as they “sit at home and walk along the road, when they lie down and when they get up.” Reggie Joiner, the creator of the leading family ministry curriculum, states, “these verses are some of the ‘most frequently referenced by churches to explain the importance of family’

²⁶⁰ Vern L. Bengtson, Norella M. Putney, and Susan Harris, *Families And Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down Across Generations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11.

²⁶¹ Bengtson et al., *Families And Faith*, 4.

²⁶² Bengtson et al., *Families And Faith*, 4.

²⁶³ Bengtson, et al., *Families And Faith*, 4.

because of the critical principles contained in this passage that transcend every culture.”²⁶⁴ Jesus modeled this inclusions of all generations including children in the New Testament.

These instructions were given to the whole assembly of Israel, not just the parents that were present. Deuteronomy 4:9 reads, “Make them known to your children and your children’s children,” indicating there were multiple familial generations present when these commands were given. The commandments of the Lord extended beyond the nuclear family and into the extended family and larger faith community.²⁶⁵ Faith in God could be passed from one generation to another in the actions and interactions of everyday life.²⁶⁶ David said, “One generation shall commend your works to another, and they will tell of your mighty acts” (Ps 145:4).

The church has not been immune to the weakening of intergenerational connections within its community. Children and parents must share experiences so that they can nurture their children spiritually.²⁶⁷ Prayer is viable when considering what means can transcend generational and spatial boundaries and be accessible to all ages and walks of life.²⁶⁸ Prayer appears to have a tangible effect on feelings of contempt, hostility, and enmity and lessen emotional reactivity. Research shows that prayer increases one’s willingness to forgive and could affect the motivations of the one praying.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁴ Christina Embree, “Intercessory Prayer Across Generations: A Case Study” *Christian Education Journal* 14, no 1 (2017): 129, accessed 2/21/2022. <https://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAiB CB170424001826&site=shost-live&scope=site>.

²⁶⁵ Embree, “Intercessory Prayer,” 130.

²⁶⁶ Embree, “Intercessory Prayer,” 130.

²⁶⁷ Embree, “Intercessory Prayer,” 132.

²⁶⁸ Embree, “Intercessory Prayer,” 134.

²⁶⁹ Embree, “Intercessory Prayer,” 137.

Conclusion

Prayer could be used to create lines of communication between generations and facilitate an environment in the home where parents, grandparents, and children learn together about God and life from each other. A man's integrity is severely tested in adversity. However, they can learn through God's Word how to walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:16). The fruit of the Spirit is supernatural attributes that rest in the confidence in knowing and trusting in Jesus and passing that confidence on to the next generation.²⁷⁰ Walking in the Spirit is taking step after step according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit based on God's Word.²⁷¹

African American men will find it is never too late to begin to center worship on Jesus. When Black men give God the best they have to offer, He will position them for spiritual success. Walking with God could take some practice, but if they start an exercise program of focusing on God's Word and stay strong even when it feels pointless, every step they take can keep them connected to the Vine. Every step they take can bring them closer to becoming a kingdom man.

²⁷⁰ Tony Evans, *No More Excuses: Be The Man God Made You To Be* (Nashville: Lifeway Press, 2021), 87.

²⁷¹ Evans, *Kingdom Hero*, 43.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The researcher's methodology addressed the problem presented in chapter one; why most African American men at New Life Gospel Center are not leading their families' spiritual journey through prayer in the home. The researcher collaborated with the men participating in the interviews to help develop solutions that would effectively encourage them to increase prayer in their personal lives. The methodology chapter will explain the design of the project intervention within the context of a prayer class targeted towards African American men. The intervention design will include data collected through focus groups divided into four generations of men, one-on-one interviews, surveys, and one-on-one interviews with the women living with the men in the who participated in the project. The Methodology section will conclude with concrete details of the proposed prayer classes including hurdles and hindrances to answered prayer.

Intervention Design

The proposed intervention plan for the African American males at New Life Gospel Center addressed why most men leave prayer to the women in their homes. The plan included creating a teaching platform that encompassed an eight-week class to include the history and the effects of trauma on slaves in America, the mental and spiritual health of Black men, and what Scripture says about the identity of all men.

The focus of this action research project is to work collaboratively with the men participating in the interviews to help develop solutions that will effectively encourage them to increase prayer in their personal lives. With the participants' suggestions, a lesson plan was

adjusted accordingly to inspire them to discover what may hinder their prayer lives and continue developing spiritually into kingdom men.

There are moments in history that scream out for new discoveries of qualitative research that can inform the development of newly grounded theories.²⁷² These are the times in this age to listen sincerely to the participants' lived experiences to help empathically connect data from focus groups to individual interviews to simple surveys, all to provide a fuller picture of the prayer lives of Black men. The action research project concluded with understanding the purpose and power of prayer. Each class ended with practical exercises in prayer.

Method

The proposed research methodology is described as action research. Action research is a systematic approach to investigation that allows the researcher to find effective solutions to problems experienced in specific situations and localized settings they encounter in their daily lives.²⁷³ Action researcher also seeks to construct the knowledge needed to enhance professional and community practices and works to increase the well-being of the people involved.²⁷⁴

The researcher observed appropriate precautions of listening and allowing the participants to express themselves. The practicing of listening skills ensured that the researcher remained a catalyst to stimulate the participants to change by addressing the issues of prayer that may concern them now. The researcher needed to develop and implement strategies to encourage the participants to become an example of praying men in their households. The key was to

²⁷² Grier, *Care for The Mental and Spiritual Health*, 13.

²⁷³ Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA.: SAGE Publication, Inc., 2014), 51.

²⁷⁴ Stringer, *Action Research*, 51.

enable the participants in developing their own analysis of their issues. The desired effect was to formulate new ways of envisioning each situation and assist the participants on a profound inner transformational healing journey to guide them toward an intimate relationship with God through prayer.

Project Conceptualization

Through eight Men's Prayer Classes, the class accomplished the objective. The teaching on prayer targeted African American males at New Life Gospel Center. The recruitment announcement covered a brief introductory overview of the topics and what to expect in the classes (see Appendix L). The overview took place immediately after Sunday morning services in classroom #1 and via Zoom. The prayer curriculum was comprised of eight consecutive one-hour sessions on Sunday afternoons at 2:00 pm at New Life Gospel Center via Zoom. What made this study on prayer so unique was the journey it took to help African American males comprehend the hurdles they have had to overcome to find their true destiny in Christ.

The classes began by exploring slavery and the effects of slavery on the African American family and how slavery may have conditioned the mental, psychological, emotional, and spiritual ideology of the Black man. The expectation was to stir the men's curiosity and give them the incentive to want to return excited about what they learned and how it leads to prayer. The sessions began with the trauma of slavery on the African American family and ended with the African American men's role as the men God created them to be, as they enter His presence with a humble heart (see Appendix B).

The curriculum also focused on the mental and spiritual health, hope, healing, and intrapsychic realities of Black men.²⁷⁵ The class on the Kingdom Man prepared the participants to understand their identity (see Lesson 4 in Appendix B). Understanding Prayer rounded out the curriculum including hurdles, hindrances, and the power of prayer. Each class was two one-hour sessions on consecutive Sundays at 2:00 p.m. Except for Mental and Spiritual Health, there was only one one-hour session, and Understanding Prayer was three one-hour sessions (see Appendix A).

Furthermore, it was imperative that the prayer class be relevant to the participants' lives. Stringer noted that interpretive research can also furnish the basis for realistic proposals concerning the improvement or removal of certain events or problems. The research task was to interpret and render the problematic experiences being considered.²⁷⁶

Class Curriculum

The teaching notes were prepared according to the researcher's information compiled in the Literature Review section of this action research thesis (see Appendix B). In addition, the researcher provided definitions of some of the terms used during the course, Scriptures references, questions for reflection, applying God's principles, and a prayer in the study notes for each participant to take home and complete for the next class (see Student Notes in Appendix D). The teaching format included Microsoft Power Point presentations prepared by the researcher (see Teaching Notes in Appendix B).

The presentation of the prayer classes for the participants was as follows:

²⁷⁵ Grier, *Care for The Mental and Spiritual Health*, 13.

²⁷⁶ Stringer, *Action Research*, 136

1. *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* - The teaching notes began with DeGruy's study of trauma passed down from slavery. This session continued for two consecutive Sundays. DeGruy provided an example of a slave mother who attempts to protect her daughter from the slave master. She says to her master, "Naw, sir, she ain't worth nothin.' She can't work. She stupid. She shiftless."²⁷⁷ The mother's denigrating statements about her daughter were spoken to dissuade the slave master from molesting or selling her daughter.

For hundreds of years, this belittling of the slave children was to protect them. Yet what initially began as an appropriate adaptation to an oppressive and danger-filled environment has been transmitted down through the generations. History's role in producing these negative perceptions, images, and behaviors is often not addressed.²⁷⁸ This researcher addressed these issues with two classes on the trauma of slavery (see Lesson #1 in Appendix B).

2. *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome II* - The second part of the session continued with passing down the effects of trauma. There was a discussion of how an African American family can live under duress for generations and how they learn to cope and thrive despite the obstacles.
3. *Care For the Mental & Spiritual Health* - The focus of the next class was on the mental and spiritual health of the Black man. This class explored African American men's cultural and intrapsychic experiences by engaging some of the issues that affect his human flourishing. There was a time to confront some of the life experiences and

²⁷⁷ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 9.

²⁷⁸ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 8.

challenges of Black men living in contemporary society. In a focus group done by Grier, he noted how the men discussed being chronically disregarded, disrespected, discredited, feared, and devalued.²⁷⁹

These negative influences have impacted the lives of Black men and how they mentally process the emotions of feeling undervalued in their daily experiences. From slavery to the total black experience in the United States, trauma binds African American men to the painful past and can create a continual apprehension about the future. Additionally, trauma can override the intrinsic urge to connect with others²⁸⁰ (see Lesson #3 in Appendix B).

4. *Identity Restored* - The third area confronted was the issue of identity. This class was also in two sessions. The value and identity of the African American man was surveyed. The devil knows how dangerous it is not to know who you are in God. Eric Mason gives an example of a classic car with so many updates that it masked its identity. The further away from the original car, the lower its value. Black identity is an ongoing issue that needs to be addressed in the church.²⁸¹

Every thought sown or allowed to take root in the mind produces its own fruitage of opportunity and circumstances.²⁸² "A man is what he thinks, his character being the complete sum of all his thoughts"²⁸³ (Prov 23:7). "Human beings, made in God's own

²⁷⁹ Grier, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health of Black Men*, 25.

²⁸⁰ James S. Gordon, *Transforming Trauma: The Path to Hope and Healing* (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2021), 40.

²⁸¹ Mason, *Manhood Restored*, 42.

²⁸² Allen, *As A Man Thinketh*, 16.

²⁸³ Allen, *As A Man Thinketh*, 10.

image, have distorted the image of God by creating their own."²⁸⁴ Men must change their thinking and remember they are first made in the image of God. Their thoughts must align with who they think they are in God.

An exegetical study of the creation of man in Genesis 1:26 will give some insight and help them find the truth of the Word of God - that they are men of God. The men must begin to truly understand that they are made in the image of God and the sharing of many of His characteristics provides a solid basis for self-worth.²⁸⁵

Ultimately the fight isn't physical, intellectual, psychological, sociological, economical, or political – it's spiritual. All these things are contributors leading to the spiritual deficiency of African American men. When the participants understood how the enemy has used the things of this world to keep them from their rightful place as the spiritual leaders in their homes, they were motivated to learn about prayer and their true purpose within their families.

5. *Identity Restored Part 2: Kingdom Man* - For the second part of this session on identity this researcher utilized teachings from Tony Evan's book, *Kingdom Man*. The men discovered how a kingdom man claims his territory and apply his right to rule over his family (see Lesson #4 in Appendix B). As the African American males continued their journey of inner healing, their walk with God strengthened, and they were finding their vision restored. The time came to leave the past behind and advance into their destiny.
6. *The Purpose of Prayer Part 1*- The sections on prayer were formulated from Myles Munroe's book, on the purpose of prayer. Part 1 focused on the foundation of prayer.

²⁸⁴ Alexander Jun, Tabatha L. Jones Jolivet, Allison N. Ask, Christopher S. Collins, *White Jesus* (New York: Peter Lang, 2018), 115.

²⁸⁵ Barton et al, "Commentary on Genesis," 7.

What is prayer? defined by the participants. What does Scripture say about prayer?

Munroe provided questions for reflections and exploring God's principles and purpose for the life of prayer for the kingdom man (see Lesson #6 in Appendix B).

7. *Purpose of Prayer Part 2: Hurdles* -The second class on prayer addressed the hurdles and hindrances to prayer. By learning how to recognize and overcome the obstacles to answered prayer each participant realized the need to examine themselves and ensure they have the right motivation and perspective for prayer.
8. *Purpose of Prayer Part 3: Hindrances* -The final class on prayer encompassed the power of the Word of God, and how to use that power. Each participant needed to understand the impact of sin, fear, guilt, and feelings of inferiority can have on a life of prayer. Each class could be altered based on the response of the men's one-on-one interviews and the focus groups. The classes were a total of 1 hour, with 15 minutes for any questions or comments. Throughout the course, there was a comprehensive view of what the Word of God has to say about each subject matter.

Data Collection

Data gathering consisted of two sets of one-on-one interviews immediately after IRB approval. The first set of interviews consisted of male participants ages 18-80 (see Appendix E). The second set of one-on-one interviews occurred after the lessons concluded and involved the women who live in the homes with the participants (see Appendix F). In addition, there were four focus groups targeting four generations of men during week four of the classes (see Appendix G). Each focus group consisted of approximately 3-5 men. Finally, participants were asked to complete a survey at the end of the last class (see Appendix H).

Permissions

The researcher obtained approval of the project from Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before conducting surveys, questionnaires, and interviews. The researcher completed training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) to submit the IRB application. All interview questions, questionnaires, and surveys were submitted to the IRB along with the consent to participate forms (see Appendix I).

The research project began immediately upon approval by IRB. Once the researcher received approval for the application and to start live research, the researcher obtained written permission from the New Life Gospel Center pastor before recruiting any participants (see Appendix J). Therefore, the first step was to write a letter to the pastor of New Life Gospel Center informing him of the research project and requesting his permission to recruit some African American male members. The letter also requested permission to speak to the men over three consecutive Sunday services to continue to get the participants interested enough to sign up (see Appendix J).

Consent forms were issued to all the men who agreed to participate. The consent forms acknowledged this researchers' need to record each interview and give permission to collect and share the data needed to complete this research project. In addition, the consent form included a waiver confirming that each participant was aware that the answers to some of their questions may be discussed in a public forum (see Appendix I).

When the study completed, the researcher interviewed the women living in the homes of the men who participated. The women's interviews were necessary to help evaluate the outcome of the participants in a private setting. Therefore, there was a need for two sets of interview questions to be presented to IRB, one for men and another for the women. The women's

interviews also required consent forms, and their interviews were conducted through Zoom, and recorded (see Appendix I). The researcher gained the attendee's consent after a brief explanation of the thesis project.

Promotion and Recruitment

The first wave of recruitment included an announcement in the Sunday morning bulletins. In addition, the researcher placed the following announcement in the church bulletin, and posted the attached promotional flyer to the church's Facebook page and as well as a display in the church foyer for three consecutive Sundays before the first class. The announcement invited all African American men between the ages of 18-80 to participate in this researcher's DMIN project (see Appendix K). The researcher believed the best way to recruit men was by informing them of the need to have their help to create a teaching platform for African American men and prayer.

The best time to recruit participants at New Life Gospel Center was on a Sunday morning directly after the church service, as there was a significant number of men in attendance. The researcher asked the attendees to sign up using a sign-up sheet (see Appendix M). When each participant signed up, they were given the appropriate consent form to sign. The sign-up sheet provided the participants phone numbers so this researcher could contact them to schedule a one-on-one Zoom interview.

Once the researcher sent an appointment that had been scheduled on a Zoom invite to each participant, and the interviews began to take place. There were eleven interview questions total; the first six of the eleven were asked of every participant as outlined in the one-on-one

interviews below (see Appendix E for all interview questions). The researcher reminded each participant before the interview took place that interviews would be recorded. The women's interviews were conducted at the end of the project through Zoom.

Research Participants

There is a limited amount of research material to employ; therefore, this researcher needed to go directly to the source – African American men. The researcher listened attentively and focused on what was essential to the participant. This action provided an atmosphere to clearly articulate their stories and formulate new ways of envisioning their situations. Effective communication was paramount so that each participant felt they were allowed to cooperate in the process of acquiring knowledge and making decisions.

Effective communication increased the potential for creating an atmosphere to continue to enhance African American males' prayer lives. The research participants included multi-generational African American men who identify as Christians. Grier offered some sample interview questions that were able to engage the men to be interactive as they express their life experiences. Black men need to be heard as they voice their hopes and concerns. The aim was for Black men to find spiritual and emotional strength in their identity in Jesus Christ. No matter how society may present them, the truth remains, all men were created in the image of God.

This action research thesis was different because the approach taken targeted African American men only and it aimed to magnify the strengths and weaknesses of their spiritual prayer life. The men were offered a voice in contributing to their learning process. Ernest T. Stringer quotes Huyssens (1986), who stated, "he is critical of writers whose theorizing—

systems of explanation—presume to speak for others. He suggests that all groups have the right to speak for themselves, in their own voices, and to have those voices accepted as authentic and legitimate.”²⁸⁶ This researcher’s objective was to be an encouragement and to stimulate men to change by analyzing and addressing any issues they may or may not have with prayer. The objective was not to focus on solutions to problems but on *human and spiritual development*.²⁸⁷

Targeted Approach

When the participants signed consent forms, and the one-on-one interviews were scheduled. The researcher used triangulation through one-on-one interviews initially and then scheduled four focus groups. The researcher divided each focus group into four generations of men from 18-30; 31-45; 46-60; 61-80 (see Appendix G). According to the number of men at New Life Gospel Center, the groups were small. There are about 150 members, with the men making up approximately 25%. Therefore, the number of men in the age group targeted for this research was about ten young men between 18–30. The next age group ranging from 31-45, was about eight; ages 46-60 there are about ten; 61–80-year-old men there are about 8. The final group was the women who live with the participants.

The researcher attempted to get as many men and women to participate in the research project as possible to be prepared if some of the participants dropped out or refuse to participate. There would be enough volunteers to continue the research uninterrupted if that happened. All interviews and focus groups were videotaped on Zoom. The resources needed for this research

²⁸⁶ Stringer, *Action Research*, 51.

²⁸⁷ Stringer, *Action Research*, 10.

project were minimum and only require a small tape recorder as an extra precaution for all the interviews.

Measured Results

If Christian growth and maturity are best measured by those living in the home, then those in the home would observe the change. The research began with a plead from the wives of Christian men who wanted their spouses to take a leading role in prayer in their homes. A criterion for evaluating the success of this project was the frequency of prayer both corporately and privately upon completion of the prayer class.

Corporate prayer at New Life Gospel Center takes place five days per week. The results were measured by the men's attendance in prayer and on the prayer conference calls. Second, the females living with the male participants were interviewed through a Zoom meeting at the projects' conclusion. The interview assisted in determining if the intervention was successful privately in the home from the women's perspective. Finally, in the final class, each participant received a survey to gauge if they felt an atmosphere was sufficient to articulate their stories and formulate new ways of enhancing their prayer lives (see Appendix E). The survey inquired how often the men prayed before the class and how often they now pray.

Research Model

Myles Munroe created a study guide for his book *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer: Earthly License For Heavenly Interference*. Any worthwhile practice that is intended to create daily habits, the need to understand the foundation of prayer is essential. Munroe

addresses those needs in his book on foundational prayer and understanding the principles of prayer.

Tony Evans's book on the *Kingdom Man: Every Man's Destiny Every Woman's Dream, Kingdom Prayer: Touching Heaven to Change Earth* and *No More Excuses: Be The Man God Made You To Be* address some of life's circumstances that make it difficult for men to be all God called for them to be. Evans urges men to observe challenges as opportunities for success. He challenges men to grow in their faith and examine how 'cultural Christianity' may hinder them from giving God authentic worship.²⁸⁸

Chapter one covered the purpose and priority of prayer. This researcher covered several questions concerning prayer. For example: Does prayer work? Most people pray when they are scared or sick, but it is not a regular practice in life. Outwardly, they agree that prayer is meaningful, but secretly they wonder: *Does God really hear me when I pray? Why does it seem as if my prayers just hit the ceiling and bounce back? Is God mad at me? Is that why He doesn't answer me? Why is prayer so boring and fruitless for me? Shouldn't I expect my prayers to be answered?*²⁸⁹ At the end of each lesson, the men put prayer into practice.

Chapter two addressed questions such as: What is the purpose of prayer when God already (1) knows everything, (2) controls everything, (3) predetermines everything, (4) does not change?"²⁹⁰ The class discussed these areas, and the researcher prepared a teaching method around the answers to the purpose of prayer. In chapter 3, the group addressed the authority of prayer. The position and authority that Jesus attained have been given back to humanity through

²⁸⁸ Evans, *Kingdom Heroes*, rear cover.

²⁸⁹ Myles Munroe, *Understand the Purpose and Power of Prayer: Earthly License For Heavenly Interference* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2002), 19.

²⁹⁰ Munroe, *Understand the Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 29.

spiritual rebirth in Christ.²⁹¹ Munroe presented an approach to entering the presence of God. In God's 'perspective, the priesthood is ultimately not for a particular group of people but for all those who belong to God.²⁹²

The research plan built on Munroe and Evans's studies on prayer by incorporating DeGruy's study of *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* and Grier's study on the *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health of Black men*. Each class was interactive so that the participants were able to integrate their life experiences. The Bible study and curriculum proposed for the action research project included surveys before and after the prospectus to assess any transformations in theological knowledge and if any spiritual formation effects had taken place.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

Developing strong African American men will require biblical truths that the men can understand and utilize to address the problem. Black men must understand the power of their words, the blessings that come with giving back to God, and the battle the flesh has raged against them all their lives. If they can overcome the traps that the enemy places before them by the power of the Holy Spirit, they will no longer allow yesterday to define them. God does not want Black men to make excuses for the failures in their lives. Instead, he wants them to take responsibility.²⁹³ Then, he can take yesterday's mess and turn it into tomorrow's miracles.²⁹⁴

In studying the problem, it was wise to focus on what the finish line looks like after the teaching. The finish line of the study is for the African American Christian men to become

²⁹¹ Munroe, *Understand the Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 47.

²⁹² Munroe, *Understand the Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 71.

²⁹³ Tony Evans, *No More Excuses: Be The Man God Made You To Be* (Nashville: Lifeway Press, 2021), 13.

²⁹⁴ Evans, *No More Excuses*, 13.

kingdom men. A kingdom man places himself under God's rulership and submits his life to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Although he may start with regrets over personal, family, or spiritual failures, he must realize that God is still working in him if he is not dead.²⁹⁵

Paul understood the wisdom of forgetting his failures when he wrote in Philippians 3:13, "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." The time has come to forget what lies behind and look forward to what's ahead.

The difficulty in this researcher addressing why African American men at New Life Gospel Center do not lead prayer in their homes is better understood through the lens of African American culture. This project facilitated an understanding of the history of African American men that dates to slavery and helped them understand some of the issues that may hinder their prayer life. In gaining an understanding of some of the cultural issues in the African American family, these men can develop a lifestyle of prayer that promotes spiritual formation through the reading and understanding of the Bible. The researcher believes that men are more encouraged to read their Bibles and reflect on the Word of God as it brings clarity to their lives.

The researcher studied the difficulties concerning African American men and prayer through personal one-on-one interviews conducted over three weeks and an eight-week class presented to four generations of men who attended. The interview focused on the men's actual lived experiences, their interpretation of acts and activities, and incorporating the meaning they

²⁹⁵ Tony Evans, *No More Excuses*, 18.

make of events in their lives.²⁹⁶ This interview provided information on how the men were centrally affected by the issues of prayer or lack of prayer.

The researcher explored the men's experiences to gain greater clarity and understanding of prayer to construct effective solutions to any problems that may have been perceived. Participants were coequal as each man recognized the value and expertise of their own and each other's perspectives. The approach allowed the researcher to involve the men in the study and become co-inquirers to implement change in their prayer lives. Tim Sensing stated, "the participants have a voice. What people say allows them to co-author the interpretation with the researcher. Such hospitality on the part of the researcher will also give great weight to the findings of the project, while at the same time enhancing validity and reliability."²⁹⁷

Framework of Data

Sensing recommends the triangulation method for gathering data. Triangulation utilizes various data gathering methods designed to measure a single concept enabling a 'thicker' interpretation.²⁹⁸ In addition, triangulation provides a way to cross-check data and provide breadth and depth as it increases the trustworthiness of the research.²⁹⁹ Therefore, three different methods were used in the research: Interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. Sensing notes that "for qualitative research, three angles of vision are considered the saturation point to

²⁹⁶ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Stock Publishers, 2011), 56.

²⁹⁷ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 76.

²⁹⁸ Sensing, *Qualitative Research* 72.

²⁹⁹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research* 72.

support the criteria of trustworthiness.”³⁰⁰The first method for gathering data was personal one-on-one interviews (see Appendix E).

Sensing quotes Norman K. Denzin, who states that interviews can give a rich description of comparing and contrasting data.³⁰¹ Denzin identified four basic types of triangulations that augment our ability to see varying perspectives on complex issues and events. First, Data Triangulation uses a variety of data sources in a study. Second, Investigator Triangulation uses several different evaluators or social scientists investigating the same problem, Theory Triangulation uses multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data.

Finally, Methodological Triangulation uses multiple methods to study a single problem or program, such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documents.³⁰² For example, the researcher used Methodological Triangulation in the thesis to observe the increase, or lack, of prayer in the lives of African American men at New Life Gospel Center. Correlating the findings from a family systems approach with the data generated through personal interviews, focus groups, and surveys will sharpen the focus of data and enhance the validity and reliability of the research.³⁰³

The personal one-on-one interviews were scheduled and conducted before the first class, and each participant signed consent forms (see Appendix I). In addition, the participants were reminded that interviews, classes, and focus groups would be audiotaped through Zoom and kept

³⁰⁰ Sensing, *Qualitative Research* 72.

³⁰¹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 73.

³⁰² Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 74.

³⁰³ Sensing, *Qualitative Research* 74.

on the researcher's locked computer. At the end of the interview, each participant committed to a one-hour class for eight weeks, from April 24, 2022, to June 12, 2022.

The second evaluation method involved four focus groups divided along generational lines suggested by Sensing. The focus groups allowed participants to give feedback more freely according to the communication patterns and perspectives unique to their generation.³⁰⁴

Therefore, four focus groups were scheduled with the men midway through the eight-week course at week four (May 15, 2022). The first focus group was for the men 18-30, the second was the age group of 31-45, the third was 46-60, and finally, the age group of 61-80. Five questions were presented to each group (see Appendix G).

At the end of the eight-week class, each participant completed a survey. The surveys contained seven questions (see Appendix H). The participants rated their spiritual formation through the prayer class on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the highest and one the lowest. They compared their prayer life from the beginning of the course to the end. The surveys were attached to the personal one-on-one interviews of each participant

Finally, each participant's wives, girlfriends, and fiancées were interviewed using five interview questions concerning the progress of the males in their lives during the eight-week course (see Appendix F). Sensing denotes that the three angles of interpretation will not produce the whole picture; however, it is a metaphor to help illustrate the problem and the intervention.³⁰⁵

The personal one-on-one interviews with the women were compared with the men's one-on-one interviews and their surveys at the end of the course. Furthermore, it was important to

³⁰⁴ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 76.

³⁰⁵ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 76.

measure the results of how the women envisioned the spiritual changes of the men versus how the men perceived their spiritual formation.

Participants One-On-One Interviews

The researcher had the privilege of conducting fourteen personal one-on-one interviews through Zoom with African American men who identified themselves as Christians. The males ranged between the ages of twenty-two to seventy years old, and all have attended New Life Gospel Center in Cleveland, Ohio.

Each participant answered the following questions.

- How would you define a Christian?
- What is your practice prayer? (Ex: how often do you pray? Do you pray at certain times of the day?)
- What major obstacles stand in your way of a prayer life?
- Who is the primary person in your home that prays? Why?
- Is there a need for less or more prayer in your life? Explain
- When you were growing up as a child, who was the person who prayed the most in your household? (See Appendix E).

Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod stated, “in qualitative research studies, interviews are often quite open-ended, perhaps addressing one or a few central issues but otherwise going in different directions for different participants.”³⁰⁶ The researcher followed a semi-structured

³⁰⁶ Paul D. Leedy & Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (New Jersey: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall, 2005), 184.

interview with one or more individually tailored questions to get clarification or probe a person's reasoning.³⁰⁷

Although all interviews were audiotaped, the researcher took notes to capture the social atmosphere in which the interview took place as suggested by Sensing.³⁰⁸ All the participants except one who experienced prayer in his home while growing up stated that their mothers or grandmothers were their examples in prayer. Seventy-nine percent of the men surveyed who grew up in Christian homes noted the women did all the praying, and 14% said there was no prayer in their homes while growing up (see graphs in chapter 4). All the participants stated there is "definitely" a need for more prayer in their lives.

The researcher found it interesting that the men were initially willing to do the personal one-on-one interviews but unwilling to commit to the classes. Of the fourteen men, twelve wanted to know how long they had to commit and how long each class would be in length. The researcher discovered that older men aged 60 and above would not commit to the classes until the researcher contacted the men's wives. The older participant's wives responded by sending their personal email addresses for their spouses to receive the invites for the Zoom classes. The researcher sent reminders one day before and two hours before the scheduled classes to remind all participants to attend.

Focus Group

The fourth class was the midway point, and four focus groups were conducted as the men were divided into groups according to the generational guidelines set in the study (18-30; 31-45; 46-60; 61- over). The men were scheduled for focus group sessions after the fourth class in week

³⁰⁷ Leedy & Ormrod, *Practical Research*, 184.

³⁰⁸ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 181.

four. The first group, ages 18-30, met on Thursday, May 11, 2022, at 6:00 p.m., and there were four young men in attendance. The second group in the age range of 31-45 met for their focus group on the same day at 7:00 p.m., and there were four men in attendance. The third focus group was aged 46-60, set for 8:00 p.m. with two men in attendance. The final group, ages 61-80, remained in the Zoom meeting after the fourth class ended. Again, there were four men in the category, and each participant answered five questions (see Appendix G).

The men stated they were interested in learning more about *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*. In addition, the men fifty and under expressed an interest in learning more about *Care for Mental and Spiritual Health*. Each male in attendance talked about the how they have started to read their Bibles more, and they are establishing regular prayer time with their loved ones. Terrell stated, “I knew that we didn’t pray because we didn’t know the Bible. I can count on my hands and toes how many times my dad went to church. I feel like if I saw my father pray, I would be more comfortable with prayer.” All the men have started some type of prayer practice with each other, their wives, and their children.

Surveys

Once the men completed the classes, the researcher gave surveys to each participant, to fill out a written questionnaire form. Leedy and Ormrod state, “survey research involves acquiring information about one or more groups of people – perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences – by asking them questions and tabulating their answers.”³⁰⁹ The researcher posed questions to participants, as noted by Leedy and Ormrod (see Appendix H).

³⁰⁹ Leedy & Ormrod, *Practical Research*, 183.

Women's One-on-One Interviews

The women who lived with the participants were scheduled for one-on-one interviews to gauge their opinions of their husbands, boyfriends, and fiancées' spiritual change, if any, in the home, the researcher scheduled and conducted interviews when she received the consent forms. The researcher interviewed the ladies for over a week, from June 14 to June 17, 2022. Nine women were interviewed using six questions (see Appendix F).

Classes

Week One. The researcher taught the first *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* class on Sunday, April 24, 2022. Each participant in the project received student notes outlining the class, definitions, and homework assignments, including a reflective question (See Appendix D). In addition, each participant wrote a letter to God. Fourteen men were in attendance for the first class: 4 men from 22 to 30, 2 men from 31 to 45, 3 men from 46 to 60, and 5 men 60 and over.

The older men were quite vocal as they spoke of racial issues that have formed their behavior and that of their parents. There was a discussion on Judges 6:1-16 on how God saw in Gideon what no one else could see, not even Gideon, a mighty warrior. There was a discussion of the definition of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome and how attempts to protect children, especially girls, with denigrating statements were appropriate during times of slavery but continued to be transmitted through generations when it was no longer necessary.

The researcher was able to gauge the comfortability of the men's ability to be vulnerable with a female presenter. The researcher was surprised how the men responded with openness about their experiences. Each participant was to write a letter to God and be specific concerning the person they wanted to be in Jesus. The men were asked how much time they spent in prayer

and Bible study daily. The researcher would ask the question each week to gauge if prayer and Bible study time increased (see Figure 1 in chapter 4).

Week Two. The class was part 2 of *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*. The pastor of New Life Gospel Center taught the class while the researcher observed. There were fourteen men in the class. The age groups consisted of 4 men 18-30, 2 men 31-45, 3 men 46-60, and 5 men 60 +. Darnell (26) did not attend the classes; however, Bernard (74) joined the ranks.

The men continued to discuss the definition of trauma, how they believe their ancestors passed down trauma to them, and the trauma they think they may have passed down. The men seemed to understand how epigenetics has revealed that the environment can influence their genes and how trauma can be transmitted over generations.

Jerry (62) challenged the men to become “Black Praying Men” (BPM). The researcher inquired about time spent reading their Bibles and praying. Each had increased his time with the Lord. Some went from not spending time in prayer and Bible reading to at least praying over their meals.

Week Three. Lesson three was *Care For the Mental & Spiritual Health*, and the researcher taught the class. There were sixteen men present in the class. Four men in the age range of 18-35; 3 men from 36-45, 2 men from 46-60, and 7 men from 61+. The interviewed participants invited the additional men that were in the class.

There was a discussion on the stigma of therapy in the Black family. The older men (50+) discussed how Black families didn’t go to a psychiatrist or therapist. The older men saying, “what goes on in this house stays in this house,” was always preached in Black households. You didn’t discuss family drama outside of the family. However, the younger men (50 and below) were more open to going to therapy. The problem they have is finding Black therapists,

especially Black male therapists. All the men stated they do not have a problem seeking pastoral counseling. Alphonzo (44) and Leslie (45) are seeing a secular therapist, and Malik (23) is seeking therapy but has been unable to get a callback.

When the group discussed the subject of mental health, Chuck (71) confessed how he had been a victim of molestation. He never had counseling because of the belief that Black people don't see psychiatrists or seek therapy. The subject caused Dewayne (45) to become vulnerable as he began to cry, stating, "this class has given birth to me and challenged me to read my Bible." Maurice (46) said he liked the transparency and how the class was bringing generational curses to light.

Week Four. Lesson 4 was *Identity Restored Part 1*, conducted by a male participant training for leadership. There were thirteen men present in the class. Three men from 18-35, 3 men from 36-45, 3 men from 46-60, and four men from 60 and over. Each week the men were asked to present their letter to God. For example, Dewayne (45) stated that he has started journaling and read his first entry to God.

Because of what Christ did, I can confidently stand and say that I am in Him, and He is in me. Though I live in this earthly body, my spirit has been regenerated. I have been redeemed. I have a glorious future ahead of me, and it is by faith I believe this and continue to live out the will of God for my live. I live a life of faith now, of total trust in my Savior, Jesus Christ, the Son of the Almighty God, our Father, who never stopped loving me and never will.

Most men found it difficult to write a letter, and most did not. They were encouraged to continue to try to put something on paper.

Week Five. Lesson 5 was Part 2 of *Identity Restored: Becoming a Kingdom Man*. There were fifteen men in attendance. There were four men from 18-35, 4 men from 36-45, 3 men from 46-60, and 4 men from 60 and over. There was a discussion concerning the concept of what a

Kingdom Man is and the components of his kingdom. The men talked about being a ruler over the realm of his subjects (family) while he followed the rules governed by God.

The cry for a Kingdom Man is loud, and it can be heard in the chaos of the culture activating the cry to rise from the homes, schools, neighborhoods, communities, states, and every shattered soul affected by the absence of God's Kingdom Men. They can be silent no more. The men challenged each other to pray with their spouses, children, and nephews and become a mentor.

Their challenges continued into the realm of allowing God's Word to be the central focus of their lives. The single men partnered with some of the other men to be accountable for prayer and Bible reading. Each participant gave an account of how much time they spent in prayer and reading the Bible. They encouraged each other and offered a gentle rebuke to those who made no progress.

Week Six. The Purpose of Prayer: The Foundations Part 1. There were fifteen men in attendance. Four men ranged from 18-30, 5 men from 31-45, 4 from 46-60, and 2 from 61+. A few new men signed into the class between the ages of 31-45, but some older men 61+ were not in class. The class covered the subject of prayer, and the researcher wanted to know, "What is Prayer? And what is keeping you from developing a daily disciplined prayer life?" The men were provided with the following three scenarios and asked which one best fitted them.

First, worship and intercession can seem unnatural acts and thus, become difficult challenges. The men all agreed that was not something they struggled with because they were all raised in the church. Therefore, it was something they had observed their whole lives. Jerry was the only one not raised in the church and stated he has no difficulty with prayer feeling unnatural.

The second reason was that worship and intercession are by nature acts of admissions of personal weakness. To enter the act of prayer, they must acknowledge that they depend entirely on God. William (48) said he needs to figure it out himself. “If I can figure it out, it doesn’t take as much faith.” Each man began to confess that it is the sin of pride that makes them independent.

Finally, God’s answers to prayer do not always come in forms or on schedules they would design. Curtis (45, and new to the class) said, “we live in a microwave age, and we want everything done right away.” Maurice (46) stated that it is confidence in the Word for him. “Here is where it takes the study of God so that I can be more confident. It’s about me having confidence in what I’m saying.”

Week Seven. The Purpose of Prayer Part 2: Hurdles and nineteen men were in the class. There were five men from 18-35, 4 men from 36-45, 5 men from 46-60, and 5 men from 60 and over. There was a review of last week’s class and the definition of prayer before moving into why prayer is such a challenge. Most men agreed that there is no such thing as unanswered prayer. William (48) noted that most people will agree with the Word but do not believe it. There was a discussion on James 1:22, “Do not merely listen to the word, and deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

The researcher talked about meditating on the Word of God. The men were surveyed to find out how they did with reading the Bible and Prayer. Everyone in attendance increased in reading the Bible and prayer except for two older men 60+. The new participants who joined the class said they connected with the person who invited them to the class and prayed and studied with them.

Week Eight. The Purpose of Prayer Part 3: Hindrances and there were nineteen men in the class. There were five men from 18-35, 4 men from 36-45, 5 men from 46-60, and 5 men from 60 and over. The researcher presented possible hindrances, such as sin, fear, guilt, wrong motives, etc., along with Scripture, and the group discussed each subject.

The men were asked to volunteer to open in prayer before class and end in prayer after each class. In addition, each person had to pray at least one time. In the first two classes, the researcher assigned someone to open and close in prayer; however, by class three, the men were volunteering. If someone missed a class, they called the researcher and asked her to email the recorded class to them.

Conclusion

During the last class, the men came together and agreed they would need accountability, and the best way to achieve that was to continue the Zoom prayer class. The researcher scheduled the Zoom class for the men for Sunday, June 19, 2022, at 2:00 pm. She set them up and then allowed them to continue alone. When the researcher signed off, there were eleven men present. The men had already discussed the agenda and who would lead the class for the week. They would begin by asking if anyone had anything they wanted to share with the group, and then they offered encouraging words. After that, each man would pray.

The presence of the Holy Spirit causes all those in whom He resides to hunger and thirst for His righteousness, for they will be filled (Matt 5:6). These men have a new holy hunger they did not have before. The purpose of the classes was to stir the men to desire to grow in holiness, seek the Father's face, and find his strength in Him.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The DMIN thesis project is aimed to develop and implement strategies to encourage African American men to desire a prayer life designed around their families. If they first see the need to be an example of a praying man in their households, they can endeavor to be that man. The approach enabled New Life Gospel Center's men to maintain the momentum of what they learned and put it into a habit that will remain with them for the rest of their lives.

The new methodology reminded African American men at New Life Gospel Center that they are a catalyst to God on behalf of their families, churches, and communities. By implementing the African American history of slavery and understanding the trauma passed down through the generations, they understood why their spiritual lives had formed the way they have. Furthermore, exposing the men to this information alleviated any shame associated with their experiences, encouraging them to be transparent and vulnerable. As a result, the men understood their spiritual value in their homes and churches.

The outcome of the implementation of the project is for African American men to realize there is strength and power in a man who walks with God. Once they face the past, they can move forward into becoming the spiritual men God called them to be *image-bearers* (Gen 1:27; 2 Cor 5:20). African American males at NLGC will no longer allow their faith to be stolen or their character destroyed.

The thesis project targeted African American men who feel they are bound in their spiritual journey. The purpose was to remind them that Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy the souls of African American men and their families (John 10:10). Understanding Satan's tactics and being ready to fight the offensive fight is imperative. African American men must realize

that God has already placed in them everything they need to win the war. So much is happening in life, but they can face anything through prayer. The researcher believes they have learned to see prayer as an intimate time with God. They now understand that they do not have to fix everything. They just need to entrust everything into the hands of God.

The thesis project has given African American men at NLGC the foundation to follow their destiny by becoming the kingdom man that lies deep within them. They may know they need to do better but do not know how to do better. The thesis project has led them into a lifestyle change. Charles Spurgeon once said it would be most appropriate ‘to stimulate Christians to diligence in family prayer... I esteem it so highly that no language of mine can adequately express my sense of its value.’³¹⁰ Prayer should be the norm for every Christian household.

Participants’ Profiles

Fourteen African American men agreed to participate in the personal one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and surveys and to attend the eight-week class on African American men and prayer. All but one participated in the classes. The participants included three sets of father and sons, seven single men (divorced or never married), and three men, Terrell (23), John (22), and Terry (61), who do not have children. According to Sensing, “researchers often find talking field notes (or asking a trained participant-observer to take notes) the most efficient way to gather their angle of evaluation.”³¹¹

³¹⁰ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 26.

³¹¹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 180

The researcher observed how the men seemed to become more comfortable with each other. When asked if they preferred a male or female leading the classes, they all said it didn't matter. Leedy and Ormrod noted that when the researcher is likable, friendly and shows a genuine interest in what the participants say, it is easier to gain their cooperation.³¹² The researcher could achieve the participants' collaboration and encourage them to respond honestly to the questions because she had established a rapport with each of the men.

Interviews

The interview section focused on the participants as they express their perspectives on God, prayer, and family during the one-on-one interviews. While they cross generational lines, the traditionally defined age groups will share cultural experiences that have shaped their lives. Although, some men struggle to articulate their beliefs, which may reflect their understanding of religion and Christianity, they are all Christians.

For example, when asked if he considered himself a Christian, Terrell, a twenty-three-year-old male, stated, "I would not say I am a Christian." However, by the end of the eight-week classes, it was clear that Terrell's struggle was with religious people who do not practice the love of Christ. He has learned that there are people who sing, shout, and wave their hands on Sunday but demean and gossip about you once they leave the church edifice. The researcher explained to Terrell that being a Christian is about each person allowing the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth. The Apostle James said, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22).

³¹² Leedy & Ormrod, *Practical Research*, 184.

All the men confessed to being Christians (except for Terrell in the beginning). The men view the women in their lives as Christians, and most of them believe the women are more passionate in spiritual matters. They have seen their mothers and grandmothers lead in fervent prayer, and they believed it was the women who were to pray concerning family matters.

Generation Z (2001-)

John is a twenty-two-year-old fireman who is recently engaged. Neither he or his fiancée have children. John grew up in a Christian home listening to his mother pray about everything. He stated, “even with the cards she’s been dealt, she still talks to God about everything.” John has seen faith in his mother in every area of her life. His prayer rituals are consistently changing based on how his day is going.

He understands that he needs to lead in prayer, hence he stated that when he has children, he wants to teach them to pray when they are still in the womb. John trusts in prayer because he knows God answers his prayers. He believes prayer and Bible study are the way to draw him closer to God, and he desires to have an intimate connection with God.

Millennials (1981-2000)

Terrell is a twenty-three-year-old single man with no children raised in a Christian household. Terrell attended college for two years, but he now works full time. He cohabitates with his girlfriend of two years, who does not pray. Terrell still attends church but stated he would not say he is a Christian. He stated he does pray to God, who is his higher power. However, Terrell was having a hard time with Christianity because of how his mother was treated in the church. He stated the people who mistreated his mother were supposed to be

Christians in leadership. “They would come over to speak to me and act like they cared about my mother. I could tell they didn’t want to pray for my momma; we are in here preaching we love each other and acting like that in the church. I was little, but I remember how they treated her. If that is how Christians were supposed to behave, I don’t want any part of it.”

Christopher is a twenty-five-year-old college graduate and police officer.

Christopher is a recently divorced father of two; his son is three years old, and his daughter is nine months old. He has relocated from Cleveland, Ohio, to Atlanta, Georgia. He considers himself a Christian because he tries to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. Christopher stated, “Christians keep God first in their lives and believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

Malik is a twenty-three-year-old with six children. Malik has never been married and has five boys and one daughter. Malik served a tour of duty in Afghanistan and is now a full-time student, and he is still in the Army Reserve. His parents met at church, where they were part of a youth group. Malik’s parents were teenagers when he was born.

When asked if he considers himself a Christian? He stated, “absolutely, but I am not a good Christian.” When asked what he means when he says he is not a good Christian, Malik replied, “I mean, I don’t feel like I’m doing what I am supposed to do, and I don’t know-how. I feel like I self-sabotage. I need to get past the mental chokehold and tap into the Holy Spirit. I’m not a good Christian; I hurt a lot of people. I’ve killed people; I hurt women.” When asked if he thinks he has been forgiven, he answered, “I think God looks at me with disgust because I listened to the white man and fought in his war.”

Malik stated he does not pray with his family at all. However, he believes praying with his kids will help his co-parenting skills. Malik feels that “most Americans don’t care about what

we need; they don't focus on African American men and what we need. They don't pay attention to us, and we don't get the help we need."

Darnell is twenty-six years old. He has never been married and has four children, three girls and one boy. Darnell works full time and spends all his time off with his children. He defines a Christian as someone highly devoted to the Word of God and walks in the way that God leads. A Christian is someone who repents daily and stays in the Word of God.

Darnell only saw his father pray when they attended church. He believes prayer is a powerful weapon that is misused because it is only used at the high or low times in life. He said he tries to keep his prayer consistent. When asked how often he prays with his children? He said, "It is very seldom." Darnell was the only interview participant that did not attend the prayer classes.

Generation X (1965-1980)

Leslie is a divorced, forty-two-year-old college graduate with one son, who just graduated from high school. He remarried two years ago to William and Aphonzo's sister a young lady with three children, an adult son and two daughters in college. Leslie is Malik's stepfather, and John is engaged to his stepdaughter, Ashley.

Maurice is a forty-six-year-old nurse who has been married for twenty years. Together he and his wife have three girls and two boys. Maurice and his wife met and grew up in the church (both are PKs). Maurice said he and his wife generally do not pray together. He knows she prays, but they do not pray together. Maurice desires to teach his two youngest daughters to pray and be an example. He believes he missed the opportunity with his two older sons and daughter.

Maurice is the father of Terrell and Darnell and the brother-in-law of William, Alphonzo, and Leslie.

William is a forty-eight-year-old male, who has been married to his wife for fifteen years. William was married before and has two sons. He works in administration at a hospital and has earned two master's degrees. Together, William and his wife have three sons and one daughter. Two of their children are adults and two sons who are in high school. Christopher is William's oldest son, and he has a teenage son from a previous marriage. He has a grown daughter, and a teenage son who still lives with him from his second marriage.

William stated, "the primary person in my home that prays is me. I know my wife prays, but we don't pray together like we used to. We were just talking about starting to pray together again. We would list what is important to each of us, and then we would lift her list, and then mine, and I would close out the prayer. When we prayed together, it was generally at night." William believes God hears him when he prays. He said, "the answer may not always be what I want it to be, but I know He answers my prayer. Do I always recognize when He has answered my prayer? No."

William was asked if he included his teenage son that lives in the house in the family prayer when he prayed with his wife. "I guess I never really thought about it," he replied. When asked if prayer was confusing or unclear to him, he answered, "I wouldn't say prayer is confusing or unclear to me, but a lot of times, you don't know what you don't know." When asked how prayer has changed his life, William responded "Learning about prayer established a way of communication. I teach my children the Bible and how to pray.

We used to have Bible study, and I used that time to have our children read the Bible. I would ask them if they understood what they read. I would then have them write a prayer based

on what they had just read. Finally, based on our study, I would ask them how they would pray for someone else.” William is the brother of Alphonzo.

Alphonzo is a forty-two-year-old married man with two daughters who just graduated college, and one daughter and a son from a previous marriage. Alphonzo is a college graduate and the CFO of a mental health facility. Alphonzo stated, he is the primary person in his home who initiates prayer.

Dewayne is a forty-five-year-old male married with two girls. He is a college graduate and owns a cleaning company. His oldest daughter is grown, but Dewayne still has a 10-year-old daughter living with her mother from a previous marriage. Dewayne often prays with his youngest daughter. His oldest daughter, who he acquired through marriage, is his wife’s biological child, so he was not around for her upbringing. Dewayne stated that prayer has changed his life in the areas of healing and providing opportunities.

Dewayne is the person who prays in his home, but he admits he and his wife do not pray together. He takes responsibility for not leading prayer in his house because “I haven’t created the habit to pray. I just don’t take the time to start.” Dewayne stated, “It’s a blessing to be called a man - being a provider in many different ways, not just finances. But it is important to have a conversation about the things that concern my wife and in the area of intimacy.” He spends time praying with his younger daughter even though she lives in a different state. Dewayne said his mother still sends him a prayer every morning.

Wayne is fifty-five years old and married for twenty-five years, with children and grandchildren; Wayne also works as a TSA officer. Wayne and his wife pray together about family issues; however, they do not pray regularly together. Wayne believes there is a need for

more prayer in his life because he wants to increase his prayer time with his wife and set a family prayer time with his children and grandchildren.

Wayne seemed a little embarrassed when he said he understood the aspects of prayer, and it wasn't confusing to him, but he just needed to do more of it. "I recognize things I've missed when it comes to staying connected to God and teaching my children and grandchildren to pray.

Baby Boomers (1946-1980)

Charles is a seventy-two-year-old college graduate who is retired from a radio career. He prays every day, all day. Charles has been married for 22 years, and his wife has influenced him spiritually. His great-grandparents raised him, and they prayed often. By the power of the prayers of his great-grandmother, he is who he is today, Charles claims. He watched his great-grandmother have an intimate relationship with God. Charles has children from a previous marriage, and he stated their mother taught them to pray.

Terry is a sixty-one-year-old who has never been married and has no children. Terry works at a bank, and his interest in the research project was to understand prayer in the lives of African American men. Although he has no children, he does consider himself a mentor, and passing on the gift of prayer is vital to him. Terry said he knows prayer works because the things he has asked for have manifested.

Jerry is a sixty-two-year-old single male who has two daughters and grandchildren. Jerry is a retired carpenter who still does jobs around the church. Jerry states he prays all the time. He generally prays around 3:30 a.m., and in the summertime, he sits on his porch and prays. Jerry was addicted to crack cocaine about thirty years ago, but God delivered him. Jerry was not raised in a Christian home, so he did not have the experience of witnessing prayer in his home. Jerry

understands there is room for growth in his life, especially regarding prayer. Jerry stated he does pray with his grandchildren.

Analyzing the Data

In analyzing the data, it is imperative to clearly articulate the problem to keep the project focused. Sensing noted, ‘data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the complicated mass of qualitative data that the researcher generates during the research process.’³¹³ As the personal one-on-one interviews went forward, the researcher created charts to prepare, analyze, and record the data collected. The interviews gave life to events remembered by the participants.

All the men identified a Christian as someone who has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They believe he died on the cross for our sins; Jesus was raised from the dead. Christopher stated, “A Christian is a person who walks according to the Bible, realizes they have sinned, and is willing to accept Jesus Christ as Lord. A Christian is one whose mind and spirit are devoted to the Lord. For some of the men, there seemed to be some struggles to articulate their beliefs. For example, Terrell previously said he was not sure if he would call himself a Christian. Yet, by the end of the last classes, he was sure he is a Christian. Malik describes a Christian as someone who believes in Jesus Christ, “if you don’t believe in Jesus, there is no way you can be a Christian.”

William defines a Christian as someone who has accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. When asked if he believes Christians must live a certain way, he stated, “yes, they must follow the concepts of Jesus Christ by following the Word of God and through prayer. There is evidence of Christianity in how a person lives their life.”

³¹³ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 194.

There were three sets of fathers and sons in the initial fourteen participant interviews, two sets of brothers, four brothers-in-law, and several cousins. All the men were familiar with each other as some represented two generations of family members and were all members of New Life Gospel Center. There are three sections that will show the impact of the research project: the prayer activity among the groups, identifying the obstacles of prayer; and finally, the impact of prayer as seen by the women in the home.

In a culture with a significant change in the degree to which families exert influence on the religious orientations of younger generations, there are increases in marital instability and single parenting.³¹⁴ Most of these men have been married more than once, and the younger millennials have several children without the benefit of marriage. The African American family must bridge the “generation gap” that is causing a divide along generational lines that can separate the younger generation from their parents and grandparents.

Prayer Activity

During the questioning of the participants, it was imperative for the researcher to understand if the participants grew up in a household surrounded by prayer, and if so, who was the main person conducting that prayer? Most of these men watched their fathers attend church but never really saw them reading the Bible or spending time in prayer. All the men said they consider prayer as communicating with God. Most men admitted to praying when they woke each morning, as each person would ask God for grace and safety to get through the day.

As the men described their prayer experiences, John says he consistently prays about four times daily. Terrell said he prays daily to God, whom he considers his higher power. Malik prays

³¹⁴ Wright, “Family” *The Oxford Companion To The Bible*, 223.

throughout the day, seeking God's direction. He stated, "I feel like I'm talking to Him 24/7, but I'm not doing the formality part of it."

The researcher followed up on Malik's response with this line of questioning: "Do you think it is necessary for formality?" He replied: "I do, but I don't practice it. I wish I had a set time for prayer and some type of formality when going before God. It feels like I'm distracted all the time. I would like to get on my hands and knees. That's the respect part, kneeling before Him, and I need to set a time. I ask God to make me a better person. I feel like I judge people."

The men have several different routines of prayer; Alphonzo prays every night. Sometimes he kneels before God; other times, he lays in bed and prays, but his formal prayer time is at night. He describes his prayer life as having a structure built around it. First, he starts prayer with thanksgiving and moves on to ask for forgiveness. "I try not to pray selfishly," he says. "I take pride in being able to talk to God. I think rituals have their place, but we also need to be able to go to Him as our Father."

Distractions occur easily for Dewayne. He believes he needs to learn to pray for others more. He prays first thing in the morning before getting up and continues praying throughout the day. However, he states it can be challenging to create a pattern because of all the distractions. Leslie feels a need to make more time for prayer in his life. He admits he does not know much about prayer.

Prayer provides clarity of thought for William as he always finds himself in silent prayer. He prays every morning before getting out of bed. "Sometimes, I find myself praying before I even realize it. I mean, I am not focusing on anything in particular; I just start to pray. I pray on my way to work. I don't have a set prayer time; I just pray when I want to talk to God. I am

praying throughout the day. Prayer for me is having a conversation with God, and I do that throughout the day.” William believes in prayer without ceasing.

Prayer is a deliberate and disciplined choice a man must make. First, he must decide if he will develop a practice of prayer. Darnell, Christopher, and John all admit to starting their day off with prayer in the morning. John asks God for guidance, and he thanks Him for the day at night. Darnell said, "Sometimes I pray in the morning and sometimes at night, but always before eating. I read the Word on my phone, and I summarize what I believe the Scripture means to me.” The researcher asked Darnell if prayer has changed his life? He stated, “prayer has brought me from being an 18-year-old father to a 26-year-old father with the hopes that I wouldn’t fail as a father.”

There is a way to come to God, and John understands that he must come with clean hands and a pure heart (Ps 24:4). John said, “I start just talking to God, and I ask God to forgive me for my sins.” When asked, what makes him believe in prayer, he said, “There are times I doubted myself, and I prayed, and things happened.” Finally, the researcher asked Christopher if he would teach his children to pray by example; he stated he would like to learn how to teach them.

Christopher said, “When I pray, I just walk and pray.” The researcher then asked how prayer has changed his life. Christopher responded, “I think it changed my life by God giving me signs.” When asked to expound upon the previous answer further by explaining what he meant by “signs,” Christopher said, “it would be about something I just prayed about, and I would read my Bible or a script online, and God would give me the answer.”

When asked, “do you ignore Holy Spirit when He speaks to you?” Christopher answered, “Yes, I have ignored Him, but lately, I’ve been listening and following what I hear.” As questioning continued, the researcher asked: “In what way has prayer put you on the right path?”

Christopher replied: “For example, school. I wasn’t going to go back. Then I prayed, and the Holy Spirit told me to go back to school, and things began to come together.”

In a conversation regarding teaching his children to pray, Christopher stated he would show his children how to pray by example. When asked if he thought it essential for children to learn to pray early in life, he responded, “Yes, my wife and I used to pray together, but we stopped going to church, stopped reading the Bible, we just stopped altogether.”

Prayer is a spiritual process that goes beyond words. Malik described prayer as “something spiritual; it's tapping into a special level where only you and God can be reached. No one can intervene between the two of you. For example, in the Beats commercial, you put on the headphones, and it’s just you and your music. It’s the same concept. Prayer and worship are my favorite part of church. Prayer has helped me to realize I don’t know everything.”

Prayer and meditation must be a significant part of life. Maurice feels he needs more one-on-one time with God and knows he must prioritize his life for that to happen. Maurice admits there are aspects of prayer that can be confusing to him. But, when asked if prayer has changed his life, he said “yes.” Maurice further expressed, “I think it’s about praying by faith. For example, I have asked God to help me with my temper. I’m learning to be quick to listen, and I know it’s a result of prayer.”

Dewayne and John stated there is nothing confusing or unclear about prayer. Dewayne believes prayer needs to occur in whatever way you communicate with God. John said, “I think it’s pretty cut and dry.” John said prayer helps him understand the greatness of God. He admits that he and his fiancée, Ashley pray together all the time, but she is the one who leads prayer. When asked why she leads prayer, he stated, “I guess that’s what I’m used to.” Christopher said there are not many aspects of prayer he does not understand.

Primary Person Who Prayed Growing Up

The researcher asked the men who were primarily responsible for praying in their family home as children, and 65% said it was their mothers, while 14% said it was their grandmothers (see figure 4.1).

During the interview, Malik stated, “My mother was the one in my house who prayed when I was growing up. I never really saw my dad praying. I think he prayed, but I’ve never seen him.” When asked if he believed seeing his dad pray would have helped him develop a prayer habit of his own, Malik replied, “Absolutely, I think it would have shaped me differently as a man. It would have made me seek God differently. I feel like if I had grown up seeing a man pray, it would have had a different effect on me. I feel like that could have changed the whole trajectory of my life. I believe I can definitely impact the lives of my sons if I begin now to teach them to pray.”

In developing and maintaining a prayer life, two brothers Darnell and Terrell, have memories of their mother entering their bedroom and praying over them every morning before they got up. These memories have triggered a need for an active prayer life in both men. However, Darnell said he feels a significant need for more prayer in his life. “But I figure my mother and grandmother’s prayers cover me.”

Terrell and Darnell stated their mother was the primary person in their home who prayed when they were growing up. Their parents are Christians and Preachers’ Kids (PKs); however, they do not recall their father praying in the home. Terrell was asked how prayer has changed his life; he stated, “It has added patience. Do you know how in therapy they tell you to count to settle yourself down? That’s my prayer. I pray to calm myself down and just be patient.”

The researcher observed what appeared to be deep loneliness in Leslie's life as he spoke of the death of his mother last year. She could sense he was having a difficult time dealing with her death. Leslie did not grow up in the church, but he remembers his mother praying throughout his lifetime. Wayne's mother was the person in his household who prayed for the family. As he reminisced about his childhood, he shared the following, "Yeah, I can remember my mother taking us to Sunday school. She prayed, but at first, not so much in the beginning but down through the years, she started praying all the time."

Regarding spirituality and having a connection with God, Maurice states it was his mother who was strong in that area. He recalls growing up hearing his mother "singing and praying throughout the house as she would do chores." He said, "I never really saw my father praying, but it was a regular practice for my mother."

Raised by single mothers, Terry and Dewayne said they grew up listening to their mothers' prayers. Terry stated, "It was my mother and grandmother who prayed throughout my childhood. I never really knew my dad."

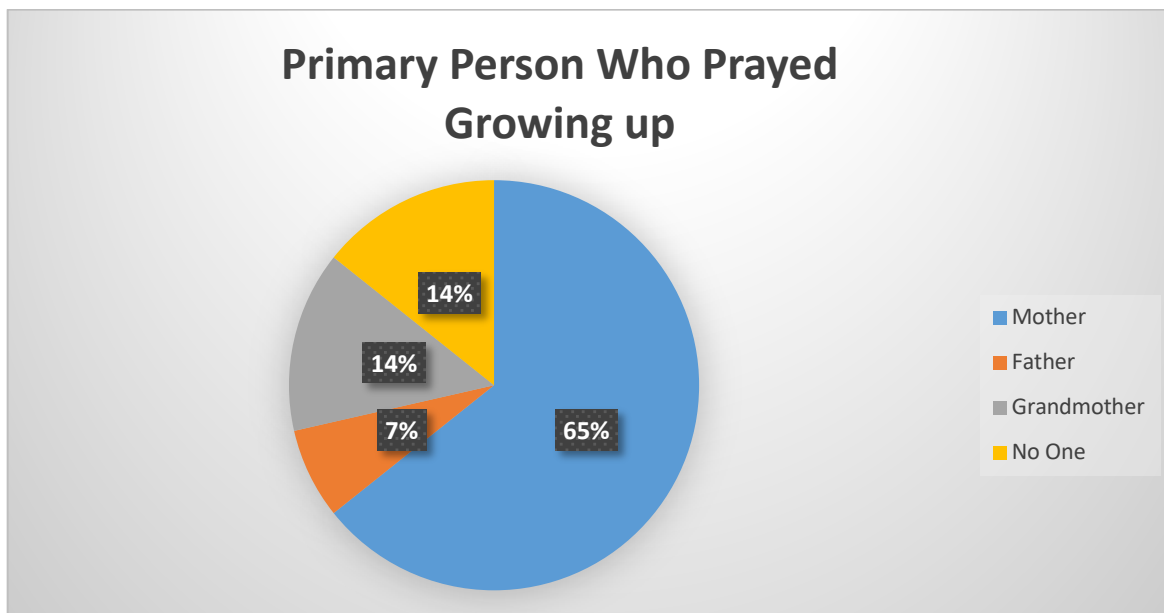


Figure 4.1. *Primary Person Who Prayed Growing Up*. The largest population of men said it was their mothers (65%) who prayed when they were growing up. Grandmothers made up 14%, fathers 7%, and 7% of the men said no one prayed in their household growing up.

Two brothers, Alphonzo and William, noted different experiences. Alphonzo, the younger of the two, said it was his mother who prayed primarily in his early, but later it was his father. When his father gave his life to Christ, he began to pray as fervently as his mother. William is the older brother and does not have the same memories of his parents praying that Alphonzo does. William said, “There was no particular person in my house who prayed when I was growing up. My mother didn’t get saved until I was about 15, and I left for the Navy when I was 18. Al [referring to Alphonzo] will remember more than me” William went on to say, “I do remember gospel music playing all the time when I was growing up, but I don’t remember seeing my parents pray.”

The next generation is Christopher, the son of William, who stated, “My dad was the person in my house who prayed when I was growing up. I saw my dad praying all the time. It was not unusual to see my father in prayer. When I was with my father, we had to pray before every meal and before bed.”

Christopher can remember Bible study taking place regularly at his father's house. However, there was no prayer or Bible study practice in his mother's house. Christopher's mother raised him, but he regularly spent time with his father and only remembers his father praying. Christopher was the only man interviewed who said it was his father who prayed when he was growing up.

The son of a pastor. Maurice is a PK, but he does not recall seeing or hearing his father pray; however, he vividly remembers his mother and grandmother praying. Maurice's son Terrell said, "I knew that we didn't pray because we didn't know the Bible." Although Terrell's father is a PK, he didn't attend church much. Terrell stated, "I can count on my hands and toes how many times my dad went to church. I feel, if I saw my father pray, I would be more comfortable with prayer." Terrell said he wants to learn as much about prayer as he can.

Through the information, the researcher guided the men on a journey through Scripture describing the House Codes in Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Peter that instructs them on their responsibilities as men of God and spiritual leaders in their homes. The husband is the *paterfamilias* (the head of the household), and as such, he is the one reminded of his obligation 'in the Lord.'³¹⁵

When asked who is primarily responsible for praying in their homes now concerning family matters, the single men said it was them. The married men all said they prayed; however, none of the men prayed with their wives or girlfriends except John, who is engaged to be married. Several of the men confessed that there was a time when they prayed with their wives, but at some point, they stopped. However, none of them had a reason for quitting.

³¹⁵ Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary*, 244.

The single men said they pray, but they do not come together with anyone in their families, nor do they have a consistent prayer time with their children. Several married men admitted their wives actively covered the family in prayer. Wayne and William said they pray with their wives, but not as often as they should (see Figure 4.2).

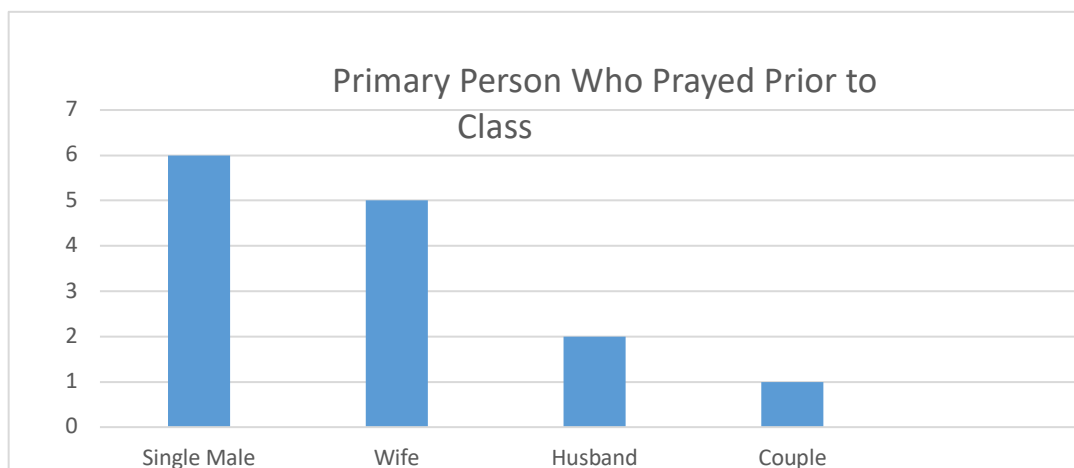


Figure 4.2. *Primary Person Who Prayed Prior to Class*. There were fourteen men surveyed. Six of the single men stated they were the ones in their homes who prayed. Five of the married men stated their wives lead prayer in their homes. Two married men said they lead prayer with their wives, but only occasionally. One of the males prays with his fiancée.

Identifying Obstacles of Prayer

Under the collaborative setting of the class, the men addressed the obstacles hindering prayer in each of their lives. In addition, the open discussion forum presented opportunities for the men to share candidly about the issues they were encountering and draw encouragement from one another.

The young men described to the older men how they are made to feel in a religious setting. Malik, 23 years old, stated, “Sometimes, I feel like I’m the only person there [church] with issues. You guys appear as if you have it going on. Now, I am finding out we all have issues, and some of them haven’t been shaken yet.”

The older men talked about some of the issues of life they still face because they haven't completely turned everything over to God. Charles, 72 years old, admits he never prayed with his children when they were younger and shared this: "Most of the time, my ego gets in my way. I have to remember I don't have to care for everything" Despite this, he revealed he is trying to learn to pray with his wife. "Although it can be difficult because she knows so much more than I do, but I try."

Malik believes keeping his focus is the main obstacle in his way regarding prayer. He stated, "I am focused on everything else but God." He is the primary person in his house who prays because he lives alone. Malik said he has issues that people cannot see. "Mentally, I'm going through a war zone. However, I trust God because He always comes through." Malik has suffered from PTSD since serving in Afghanistan, where his Humvee hit a mine, killing two of his friends and severely wounding a third; Malik walked away with minor abrasions.

Hearing Malik's story provoked a proactive response in the class participants. Rather than simply talking about praying, the men put what they were learning into practice. Leslie, a fellow participant who is also Malik's stepfather, began praying with his wife and father-in-law about Malik's PTSD and the lingering effects of his condition. Additionally, in an act that seems to summarize the sentiments of solidarity and brotherhood that developed between the participants, the men brainstormed a new acronym for PTSD – "Prayer Through Scripture Delivers."

In continuing the questions about obstacles, the researcher asked Darnell what major obstacles stood in the way of a prayer life for him. He responded, "Drugs, alcohol, and lust. Those things take away my focus." When asked "what stops him from praying first thing in the morning," he shared that he often checks the social media applications on his phone and

sometimes smokes marijuana. As someone who lives alone, Darnell is the primary person in his home who prays.

As for some of the other men, Terrell stated he does not believe any obstacles hinder his prayer life, but he admitted he could use some of his time on social media to read and study the Word of God. For Leslie, his biggest hindrance is not designating an appointed time for daily prayer and connection with God. Finally, Maurice credited procrastination as one of his most significant obstacles; he noted that he often begins tasks and loses track of time, ultimately delaying his prayer time.

Similarly, Dewayne noted that he “can get so wrapped up in business that I get distracted.” According to Dewayne, William, and Christopher, “life” is a primary hindrance. Each expressed, in varying degrees, the rigors of their daily responsibilities and the unplanned circumstances that can crop up at any given moment and drain their motivation to pray.

William explained the sentiment by saying: “I would say if I set parameters around the times, I wanted to pray, life becomes the obstacles.” He added that he sometimes feels he is not touching heaven with his prayers. “Sometimes, during prayer, I feel like I don’t touch enough areas in prayer. I feel like my prayers can become routine like I’m just praying the same thing repeatedly. I am praying more of the Bible, giving God His Word back.”

For others, like Alphonzo, he is the primary person initiating prayer in his home; the obstacle that stands in the way of his prayer to God is stress. “When I am stressed, I don’t want to think about the problem at all, not even long enough to pray about it.” Similarly, John noted that sin prevents him from praying, saying in part: “When I know that I did something I’m ashamed of, that stops me from prayer.” Finally, rounding out the responses is Jerry, who noted

his short attention span as a significant obstacle. However, he is now learning to wake up early to pray.

Throughout the fourteen interviews and eight group classes, the researcher discovered the following trends as it relates to the participants' obstacles to prayer: three of the men displayed a dependence on alcohol and/or drugs (marijuana); eleven of the fourteen men identified social media as an obstacle to prayer; and lastly, despite minimal admittance at the start of the study, shame and pride emerged as pivotal areas of concern among many of the men during the class discussion (see Figure 4.3).

Through it all, the men came to a common agreement; prayer is their greatest weapon. By identifying their greatest obstacles, they began to address the challenge of building their confidence in prayer. They understand the only way to become more confident in prayer is to read and study the Word of God. Through the Word of God prayer is birthed.

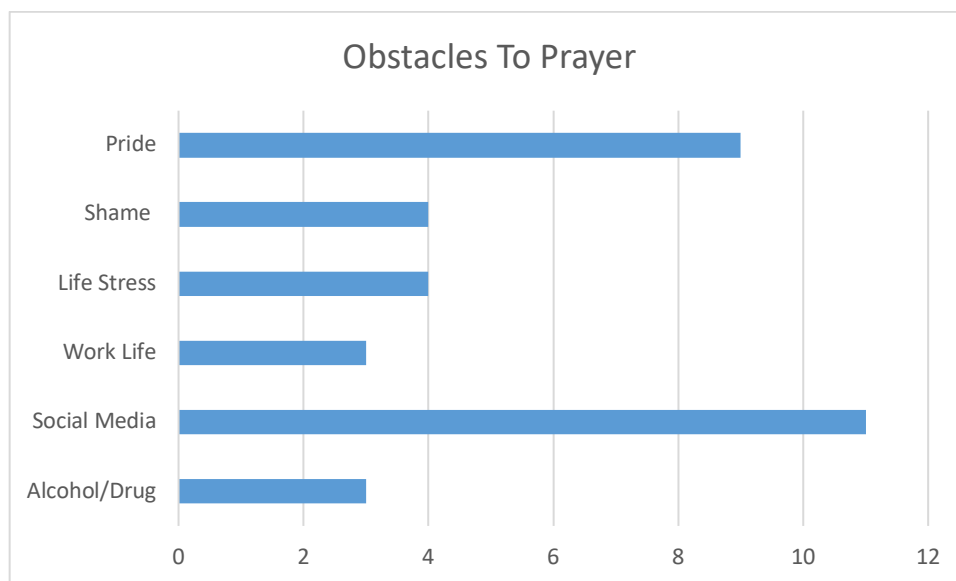


Figure 4.3. *Obstacles To Prayer*. The above chart displays obstacles to prayer the men admitted to during their initial one-on-one interviews and throughout the eight-week classes.

Impact of Prayer in The Home

The women interviewed in the project have seen a spiritual transformation in the lives of the male participants, specifically those who are married or engaged. When conducting follow-up interviews, the researcher discovered the men are now praying with their spouses.

For example, as a result, *Nicole*, Leslie's wife, said she has observed Leslie routinely praying with their sons weekly for the last several weeks. "He calls the boys on three-way, and they pray together. He never led prayer; he just always waited for me to do it." Additionally, Nicole says the couple prays together for their children. As a further testament to the transformation in her husband, she says Leslie leads the prayer, something that rarely happened, if at all, previously.

Leslie, Maurice, and William started prayer groups with their sons, who also participated in the classes. These men have become more intentional with prayer as they have gained an understanding of the charge on their lives to pray for and with their families. When asked how often the men prayed before the class, *Lilly*, Maurice's wife, stated that her husband prayed daily before the class, but now his prayers are more methodical. "He has not only been praying with the boys in the morning, but he is praying with daddy" [Lilly's father], and "he has returned to studying the Word of God."

The women involved in the research project noticed incredible changes in their husbands' relationships with their sons. Alphonzo's wife, *Gizelle*, shared that Alphonzo's new prayer habits have greatly impacted his relationship with his teenage son. Gizelle shared this: "We have Christian [Alphonzo's 15-year-old son] for the summer, and he prays with him every night. A few times, he missed praying with Christian, and he [Christian] came to our bedroom and said, 'Dad, we didn't pray.' His dad got up, and they went into Christian's bedroom to pray."

Gizelle also noted, “We didn’t pray together on a regular basis. I thought it was ironic that the classes came up because we were just talking about prayer. But, since the class, we pray together about three to four times a week.”

Many wives have noticed how deliberate their husbands have become toward prayer. *Joy*, William’s wife, and *Shantae*, Dewayne’s wife, have noted their husband's spiritual shift in prayer. Joy said William has always been vocal in praying. However, she has noticed he is more intentional with prayer and reading his Bible daily. “I can hear him in the bathroom praying,” she shared anecdotal evidence of the shift in her husband’s prayer habits.

The men are becoming more secure in their private prayers at home. *Shantae*, Dewayne’s wife, noted her husband wants to pray with her. When asked to share further, she responded: “I think he thinks I’m a heathen. At first, he used to send me inspirational prayers; now he wants to pray with me.” According to *Shantae*, Dewayne has always been the spiritual person in their house, “but this class has set him on fire.”

Additionally, she believes her husband and his relatives, Maurice and William, are more committed to prayer. “They are talking about it all the time now. We were all together, and they brought it up, and we all talked about it. Finally, Lilly said we [the wives] need our own class.”

As each man is learning to affirm his identity in God, some are growing confident in prayer publicly. *Ashley* is John’s fiancée. Ashley stated she had noticed a transformation in John as he has become more assured in his ability to pray. She said, “he is more open and concise about prayer.” When asked how often they have prayed together since the class, she stated, “I can’t keep count anymore. He loves praying.” The couple now prays in the mornings together before they leave for work, and John will call her throughout the day when he is available to pray.

Not all the men were comfortable praying in public, but *Lashall*, Wayne's wife, said he calls in on the prayer line on the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning prayer, and he is on the schedule to pray this month. In addition, Wayne and Lashall have prayed together daily for their family, and he teaches a Bible study group with their family twice a month. Lashall stated the only change she has seen in Wayne is his commitment to have a "formal" prayer where the two of them get on their knees to pray. In addition, the couple has started praying together every night.

While most of the men appeared to be off to a good start, some moved slower than others. *Lynn* is Charles's wife. Lynn noted that Charles's prayers seem to be longer since he started the class. She interrupted his prayers several times because she thought he was finished, but he would still be quietly sitting and praying. However, Charles does not pray with Lynn, but he has begun to ask her questions about Scripture when he is reading.

The researcher continued to probe into the spiritual relationship between Terrell and his girlfriend, *Courtney*. Courtney shared positive feedback about her significant other's prayer habits. She says Terrell's prayer life has notably increased to the point she has woken up in the middle of the night to discover him praying for her. She has not observed him reading Scripture; however, she has witnessed him praying with his dad over the last few weeks.

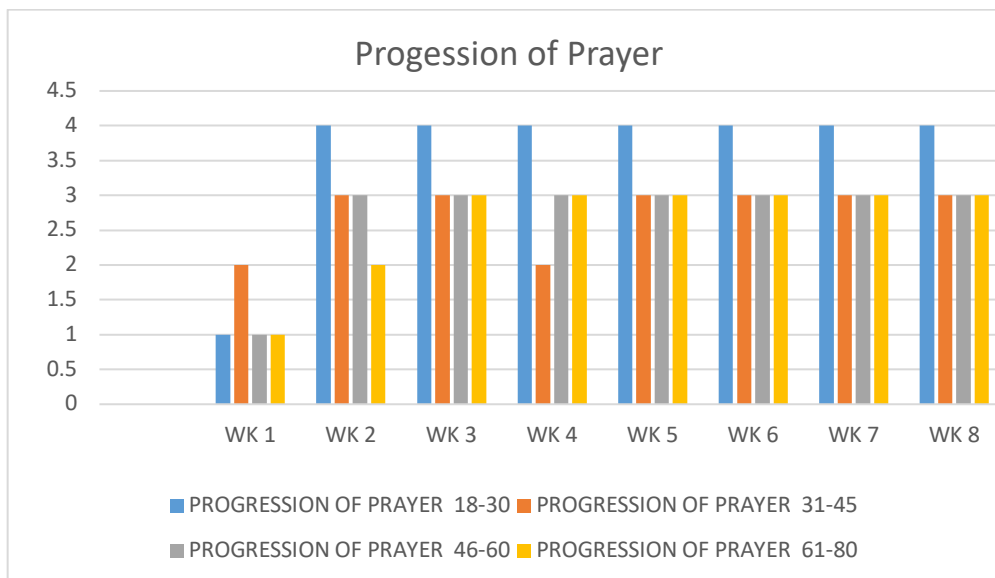


Figure 4.4. *Progression of Prayer*. The chart shows the progression of prayer for each age group week by week as the classes continued.

As part of their participation in the study, the researcher challenged the men to pray with their wives and children. At the start of the eight-week class, the men were assigned to pray with someone. By week three, all the men were praying with their family members, and the single men connected to someone in the class. As the classes progressed weekly, every participant also increased their prayer; however, while the men's prayer lives did increase at home, it did not translate to an increase in corporate prayer at church.

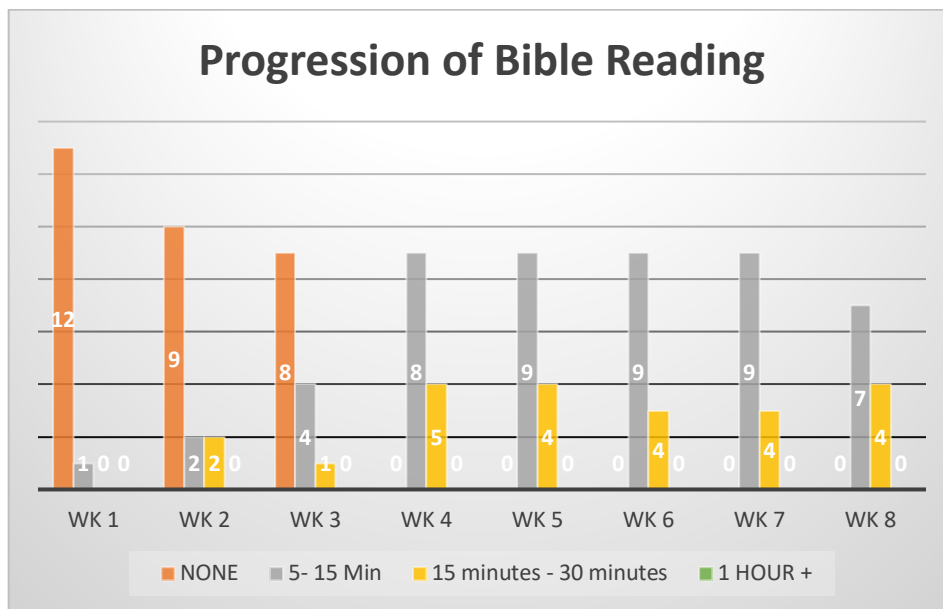


Figure 4.5. *Progression of Bible Reading*. The chart shows the progress of the participants in Bible reading throughout the eight-week class.

While individual prayer began to increase rapidly, Bible reading time improved at a slower rate (see Figure 4.6). This improvement is because the men had to be encouraged to read and study the Bible. Nevertheless, by week three, all the men were reading their Bibles and praying consistently with their families. In addition to the prayer assignments, the men were also challenged to read the Bible.

Transformation

The researcher asked the women if they observed any other spiritual transformation in the lives of their husbands. Lilly has noticed considerable changes in Maurice, namely that her husband has started fasting, reading his Bible, and even removing other unhealthy habits from his life. “Maurice gave up fried food and hasn’t smoked for four days,” Lilly shared with the researcher.

Similarly, Nicole says her husband, Leslie, is reading the Bible more and incorporating additional spiritual edification into his daily routine. “I was looking at his phone, and I noticed he was reading the Bible. Now, he has a small Bible that he carries to work with him, and he is listening to a book on Audible by Tony Evans. I don’t see a change in him personally, but I see him wanting to make the change.” When asked how often they prayed together before the class, Nicole answered: “Every blue moon, not often at all. Only when I was leading the prayer.”

Many other women also describe positive transformations in the men, including Joy, Shantae, and Ashley. Joy’s husband William participated in the class with his son Christopher, who now prays with William’s other two sons, David and Jeremiah. Shantae said she did not understand the transformation in her husband Dewayne at first. “I would see him on his knees in the morning praying,” she shared.

Ashley, too, has noticed a dramatic change in her fiancé, John, especially in spiritual boldness. Since the class, she has witnessed him engage strangers in conversation about the Bible and pray with them; he is reading the Bible more, and she says participating in the class has “opened him up.” “I think a lot of men think women are the spiritual ones, but now he knows, he understands his place in God, and he is more comfortable,” Ashley shared.

The impact of prayer on the spiritual lives of the men demonstrates how well they can flourish in growing into Kingdom men. Lynn noted that her husband Charles reads the Word more frequently and asks questions as he prepares for each week’s class. Gizelle’s husband, Alphonzo, has begun to incorporate worship into his regular prayer routine, something he never did much of before. “I noticed that he was worshipping as well as praying. Gizelle explained. “That stood out to me because he will pray, but I never really saw him worship. Also, he and

Dewayne have been praying together since the classes started. I can tell he is working on himself.”

The men shared their experiences with each other. Lashall has noticed that Wayne prays with their grandsons since class started. “He talks to them about things he has gone through,” and he has encouraged them to join the church’s 6:00 a.m. conference prayer calls on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Finally, Courtney, who is Terrell’s live-in girlfriend, recounted that although she has not seen Terrell’s spiritual habits change, his conversation is different. “He wants to talk more about prayer and Christianity in general. It’s a conversation we are spending a lot of time talking about.”

Courtney has spent much of her life in church environments and witnessed Christians' misconduct. The bad behavior perpetrated by the church people she calls “hypocrites” has caused her to turn away from Christianity. As a result, she has many questions concerning Christianity and the Bible. While conducting the follow-up interviews, the researcher took the time to address some of Courtney’s questions and concerns.

Surveys

At the conclusion of the classes, the men completed a seven-question survey (see Appendix H). The first three questions were scored on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the highest and one the lowest asking how they would rate their spiritual formation through the study. According to the responses, all the men felt responsible for their family’s spiritual growth as they rated their answers on a scale of eight to ten. They all rated a ten on their comfortability in sharing the information they have learned in the class. When asked if they would recommend the class to others, they rated their responses as eight, nine, or ten.

The last four questions provided the answers: “not much,” “a little more than before,” “a regular routine,” and “a lifestyle change.” All the men stated they had begun a routine of praying since the class started. When asked how confident they are praying in corporate prayer, all but one said a little more confident than before. One person said corporate prayer could become a lifestyle change for him. Finally, the researcher asked the men if their desire for prayer had increased, and eight stated their prayer life had become a routine. Two said they had made a lifestyle change in their prayer habits, and three said their prayer life had increased significantly more.

A Word from the Focus Groups

The first focus group included four male participants aged eighteen to thirty. All the men said they have begun incorporating prayer into their daily lives since completing the class. The researcher discovered the young men enjoyed the subject of Post Trauma Slave Syndrome. John stated understanding Post Trauma Slave Syndrome felt like being released from the pressures of always having to take the blame for things happening. He now understands that many bad habits may have been passed down through trauma from his ancestors. John stated, “I see how important it is to raise my kids with prayer.”

Malik said he never really understood the power of prayer to break curses or the power that words have when spoken. Prayer is something he will instill into his life to pass on to his children. “I feel like I have something to give me hope. My children need me to help them get to the next level spiritually, just like I needed my dad. Except I need to be here to help them.”

Christopher said, “I started praying with my daughter every night now. So, I am more consistent with prayer.” Christopher wants to have a daily dependence on the Holy Spirit. He

realizes he needs the Holy Spirit to understand and apply the truths of God's Word in his life. Christopher said he could no longer rely on what he knew rather than learn to listen to God's voice through His Word and prayer.

The second focus group consisted of four males aged thirty-one to forty-five. These men wanted to understand more about the generational curses passed down and how to break them by ensuring they were not the channel used. Wayne stated, "I came off social media and gave that time to God." Maurice said he is learning to pray in agreement with his family. He said the class had given him accountability.

Leslie prays on the way to work, and he and his wife read the Bible together four days a week. Alphonzo noted that the class reinforced his leadership role in his household. He stated, "My family will follow me if I lead; they will follow. This was a reminder that we all have a charge on us, and I have a responsibility to my family." The group of men noted that it is not their goal to be religious but to be used for Christ, with a spiritual passion that only comes through the evidence of faith.

The third focus group included two participants aged forty-six to sixty years old. William said being a "Kingdom Man" is his goal. He understands that for this transformation to happen, he must be spiritually sensitive to the Holy Spirit to prevent pride from entering his heart. He realizes that "everything must be processed through prayer." Wayne stated the classes remind him of what he already knows; now, he must put it back into practice. "I learned just how much prayer opens up my perspective to see what God sees and to have the courage to do things the way God would do them."

Lastly, the fourth focus group included three men aged sixty-one and older: Charles, Terry, and Jerry. Each of them said they wanted to be mentors to other young men, but to do so,

they must know the Word of God and be able to pray. Jerry has started to talk to the young men who live in his neighborhood, many of whom he has employed as assistants in his carpentry business, about giving their lives to Christ. He just gave his Bible to his daughter-in-law because she was interested in learning about the Lord. Charles is the only person in the focus group who is married. He revealed he never prayed with his children but is trying to learn to pray with his wife, although he says, “it can be difficult because she knows so much more than I do, but I try.”

Conclusion

Through the above interviews and focus groups, the researcher built a rapport with the men encouraging them to speak openly in front of others. The interviews also gauged a cycle of female dominance concerning prayer in the lives of men. Most men saw no need to be spiritual leaders in their homes because they saw no example of that type of behavior. Darnell was the only interviewee who did not attend any classes and said he believed his mother and grandmother’s prayers were enough.

Before the study, the men did not understand their roles as spiritual leaders in their households. Like their fathers and their grandfathers, the men allowed the women in their lives to fill that role. The pattern indicates the primary family’s role in helping shape the core values of faith that carry on to succeeding generations. The African American Christian men learned that growing spiritually through reading the Word of God and prayer will transform their leadership roles in the home.

The researcher’s approach to interviewing multi-generational African American men about their prayer life created an awareness of their value in God. They have learned that their spiritual state must be reinforced through the power of prayer, the diligent study of the Bible, and

total surrender to God. The men are now aware that through prayer, they can impact heaven and earth and fight for the souls of their loved ones.

African American families must find the balance needed to keep the entire family spiritually growing and transforming into the people God called them to be. Terrell and Courtney have pulled away from religious affiliation and rejected religious beliefs and practices because of the contradiction in the church between what people preach and what they do. Yet, Terrell followed the practices and beliefs of his mother as he prayed over Courtney while she slept.

Malik confessed to having a drinking problem to cope with his PTSD, and he has been arrested for DUI. As the classes continued, it was discovered that other group members were suffering from other traumatic issues. Dewayne admitted that it was Malik's confession to having a drinking problem that gave him the courage to admit to the group he also has been hiding a problem with drinking.

African American men must build a strong religious foundation. They must be their children's religious role models and be consistent in their lives. When this happens, the children may leave the church, but they will find their way back (Pro 22:6). The Bible provides a clear precedent of the need for fathers to teach their families the priority of prayer by doing; Jesus serves as a chief example as He often prayed for and with His disciples. The study of African American Christian men ultimately revealed a crisis between belief and action.³¹⁶ African American men are ready to accept their roles as kingdom men when presented with opportunities to develop the foundational principles that will guide their spiritual growth.

³¹⁶ Jerry Pipes and Victor Lee, *Family to Family* (United States: 2005), 10.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Understanding God's design in creation will help the African American man explore his unique portrait as a distinct *image-bearer* of the glory of God on Earth. Without the gospel, there is no authentic empowerment to implement what God has placed inside man. The thesis project has helped African American men understand their past and help them move closer to becoming kingdom men.

The thesis project was directed toward African American males and their spiritual development in prayer; it intended to meet the need of the life-giving, identity-establishing, purpose-defining gospel of Jesus Christ.³¹⁷ The outcome is for African American men to understand and practice how to relate to God and others in a spiritually healthy way. Prayer is a critical principle, and it is vital to the Christian walk.

As African American Christian men start to understand what may hinder their prayers, they can combat the obstacles that stand in their way by using the Word of God. As they learn to submit their inadequacies and lean on God's promises of provision and power, their prayers will rise before God as a sweet fragrance (Rev 8:4). In addition, their wives and children will begin to see a "kingdom man" emerge. The result is a change in their family life as the men take their place as the leaders in spiritual matters in the home; to achieve this result, they must first establish an active prayer life. Kingdom prayer is all about authority.

One of the things the enemy would rather the children of God never discover is the power of prayer. Prayer is the most powerful weapon a child of God has in their arsenal. The believer who develops a consistent prayer life releases the power of God in the heavens and the earth. Prayer is the result of God's ability to bring change to a person, place, or circumstance. As stated

³¹⁷ Mason, *Manhood Restored*, 1.

before, prayer gives God the legal right and permission to interfere in the earth's affairs. Prayer is a terrestrial license for celestial interference.³¹⁸

In the book of Matthew, Jesus said, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matt 16:19). The keys of the kingdom of heaven were a sign of authority. A trustworthy steward kept the keys to his master's possessions and dispensed them accordingly.³¹⁹ Jesus also said, "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (Matt 18:18-20).

African American men are learning to develop a daily, disciplined prayer life as they discover one of the most challenging things they will ever do: becoming a Christ-follower totally and completely. As men, they must understand the first emotional bonds of a child are to the parents, and the nature of these bonds influences their children throughout their lives and subsequent generations.³²⁰ Parents have been the primary influence on their children's spiritual and religious development, and their relations with their parents' link to their first conceptions of God.³²¹

The study has helped the African American male participants understand what behaviors or habits, or lack thereof have hindered their effectiveness in the home as spiritual leaders; then,

³¹⁸ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 15.

³¹⁹ Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew" *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament* ed. John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1983), 58.

³²⁰ Vern L. Bengtson, Norella M. Putney and Susan Harris, *Families and Faith: How Religion is Passed Down Across Generations* (New York, Oxford Press, 2013), 71.

³²¹ Bengtson, et.al., *Families and Faith*, 71.

the study challenged them to conquer those issues. Studying the hindrances of generational baggage and acknowledging each participant's story made the study effective; it helped the men to solidify their spiritual growth as they grew in prayer both corporately and privately upon the completion of the prayer classes. As a result, the men's zeal for prayer and spiritual discipline increased their desire to become and remain kingdom men.

New Life Gospel Center's prayer members are primarily the women of the church. The men languished in the shadows, as the women prayed for their church, families, finances, etc. Through Scripture, the thesis project showed the men that it is their responsibility to go to Jesus Christ on behalf of their families and churches. The new approach involved learning together from each story and discovering how they all connect to Scripture. The African American man realizes God did not bring them this far to abandon them (Phil 1:6).

Any Bible teacher can replicate the thesis project to present it in a classroom setting. However, many questions raised to the participants in the one-on-one interviews will require additional investigation based on the answers given by the participants. Nevertheless, it provides the participants a voice in their goal of replicating themselves into the image of God. The men shared in their brothers' pain without allowing emotions to govern the Word of God. They offered advice to the problems presented by replacing logic with faith but remembering that logic was necessary, especially in Malik's situation.

Malik admitted he was suffering, and the men came together to pray for him but did not stop there. They found an Alcoholics Anonymous group for him to attend, and his stepdad and brother-in-law have committed to praying with him once a week. In addition, all the men have committed to praying every day and praying more consistently with their wives.

The research addressed the issues of prayer, or lack of, among African American Christian men by allowing them to express their cultural understanding of their positions as leaders in the household. Jesus is the perfect example in all matters. Jesus used the parable of the persistent widow to teach His disciples they should always pray and not give up (Luke 18:1-8).

As previously stated in the implementation of the intervention design, it is imperative that the research focused on the desired results of the men's maturity in spiritual matters in the home and the church. African American men must recognize the planned attacks of the enemy of their souls, Satan. The more educated they are in the tactics of Satan, the more they can combat his plan and mount an offensive attack. The only attack that can defeat Satan is prayer. When Jesus was tested in the wilderness, His defense was the Word of God (Luke 4:1-13). The enemy knows each man's weakness, but they must be equipped with the Word of God to stand against the wiles of the evil one.

Biblical truths addressed the problem of men's roles in prayer. The men at NLGC learned biblical truths that addressed the issues of their lack of prayer in their households. As a result, they are learning to seek God in His Word for themselves. The African American men in the study now understand the importance of their role as kingdom men, and they know it begins in trusting God. They comprehend the significance of reclaiming their identities as God's *image-bearers*.

So, where does the research project go from here? First, it is imperative to allow African American men to construct effective solutions to the obstacles that hinder them from drawing closer to God. Next, they must discover what obstacles draw them away from taking the time to study the Word of God and seek His face in prayer. The researcher has also learned that accountability between the men proved vital to their individual and collective success. Once the

men opened their hearts and expressed their fears, they could overcome the obstacles that hindered them. When the men began to reveal their fears, they found that others were facing similar struggles. Their collective battle became defeating fear with faith.

The researcher has no similar situations to compare with the results of the project. Unfortunately, little research has looked at the extent of linking slavery, mental health, and cultural transmissions to the spiritual transformation of African American men. Therefore, there are questions that need additional investigation, such as the transmission of religious values from one generation to the next. There should be a focus on family experiences within intergenerational cohesion or conflict, including parenting style, the role of grandparents, and the impact of marriage, divorce, and remarriage on religious transmission.³²²

As noted above, several of these men have been married more than once. Additionally, Generation Xers and the Millennials are having several children outside of the benefit of marriage. This begs the question of what influence does intergenerational religiosity have on young adults? Each generation is observing the importance of religion and spirituality that are carried from one generation to another.

Research Implications

The men were embarrassed because they did not know the Word of God; however, when they observed there were other men present who struggled with prayer, they were more open to praying among the group. In his letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, “I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling” (1Tim 2:8). The hands were lifted and spread out toward heaven as a posture of surrender. This verse does not enforce the

³²² Bengtson, Putney, and Harris, *Families and Faith*, 217.

concept that men are weak; the emphasis is on humility, gentleness, and patience in the lives of men, as they admit God is their helper.

African American men must be concerned with passing on a strong religious faith that includes moral behavior to the next generation in this rapidly changing society. The time has come to emphasize the importance of putting spiritual principles into practice. This emphasis is essential for Black men as they learn to focus on the influences that have represented historical time (period), biographical time (age), and generational time (cohort) and the way these have intertwined with molding their spiritual experience.³²³

Research Applications

The research should continue to be investigated to help African American men understand the challenges that can occur to dissuade them from prayer. They must explore their past to understand some of the difficulties that can stand in the way of becoming a “Kingdom man.” The enemy of their souls places all sorts of obstacles to keep the men from recognizing their true potential. When African American men understand their spiritual lineage and place history’s effects on their culture within the proper context, they will be able to rise to every challenge as they pass down the Word of God to their children.

The study of the trauma of slavery on Black men must continue to be studied. The information helped unlock the men’s thought process and gave them the insight needed to understand how the trauma, passed on from previous generations, has affected them. African American men can now see how their beliefs have been twisted to believe they cannot be the “Kingdom man” God ordained them to become.

³²³ Bengtson, et al., *Families and Faith*, 12.

The study also uncovered the negative stigmas around mental health that persist in the black community and among African American men especially. The researcher purports that African American men must humble themselves and stop believing the lies that Black people do not need to seek psychiatric help or seek therapy. These are lies, and it is imperative for men to understand that God cares for their mental and spiritual health. African American men need to see that sometimes they need help from outside sources or licensed professionals. Just as they would seek a medical doctor for their physical health, there are times when the same might be necessary for their mental health.

Many Black men cannot hear God's calling due to lies from the past and the lack of a clear signal from God; which is because life has created “static” on the vessels of their hearts. Yet, He is calling. God is calling for an intimate, abiding, and obedient relationship with Him.³²⁴ The research must continue to engage African American Christian men to sound the alarm. They have been bamboozled, hoodwinked, deceived, and cheated out of their inheritance. Evans said, “we are either delaying or denying His supernatural presence in our situation by failing to make contact through prayers prayed in faith, fervency, and trust from a kingdom perspective.”³²⁵

Referring to Paul’s letter to Timothy, the Apostle encouraged Timothy to “train yourself in godliness” (1 Tim 4:7). Timothy was to persist in Christian discipline that would lead to God’s highest purpose. He was to concentrate his energy on vigorous training for true godliness. Likewise, African American men need to respond to Paul’s command to walk in true Christianity by teaching their children and grandchildren to submit to the control of the Holy Spirit and

³²⁴ Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 116.

³²⁵ Evans, *Kingdom Prayer*, 116.

practice the virtues of the fruit of the Spirit.³²⁶ The change can be done by creating a foundation in moral and ethical principles.

African American men have more religious influence than they think. They are needed to fill the spiritual voids in their homes by taking their God-given, Scripture-prescribed roles as spiritual leaders. Black men must learn God's role and place for them and begin to live it out, allowing their claims and practices to match the belief that influences their behavior. The Black man's religiosity is typically the strongest predictor of a high-quality relationship with his family. However, they must remember that fervent faith cannot compensate for a distant relationship within the family structure. Those who live with the men can gauge if there has been a spiritual transformation.

Research Limitations

The researcher thought she might encounter the challenge of being female and attempting to teach classes to African American men concerning an intimate subject matter like prayer. However, she learned the men were not concerned with whether a woman or a man taught the class. Instead, the men were ready to hear from the researcher, as well as hear from the church's pastor. What mattered was the information they received and the existence of a body of Christ's believers to hold them accountable. The time has come for African American men to move beyond discussion to obedience.

One of the observations the researcher noted was some of the new men that joined the class attempted to draw the class away from the subject. They talked about the negatives of the

³²⁶ Thomas D. Lea & Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *The New American Commentary: An exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture 1, 2 Timothy, Titus* Vol. 34 (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1992), 135.

church or just religion in general. These were Christian men, but for several reasons, they did not attend church or have a church home. To that end, the researcher had to take control of the conversation and keep the subject of developing a prayer life first as the foremost topic of discussion.

The men selected one of them to continue the discussion of prayer and Bible study and hold each participant accountable. The man they chose would have to be someone who continued to read and study the Bible, and his prayer life had increased throughout the eight-week course. Terrell suggested they change up each week; therefore, each person must be responsible for reading the Bible and praying. New Life Gospel Center pastor agreed to attend the discussion but allowed the men to lead the conversation and prayer.

Terrell, who stated he goes to church but is not sure if he is a Christian, was the person who suggested the agenda of how to keep the classes going. The researcher spoke to Terrell after the class and questioned him about his Christianity. She asked him if he believed Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He died for his sin, and He rose from the grave? He replied affirmatively, which led the researcher to suggest his problem was not with Christianity but with Christians who did not behave as the Bible instructs. He responded positively by saying: “Yes, you are right; that is why I questioned Christianity.”

The research must continue because it gives hope to African American Christian men as they grow spiritually, becoming as the tree Psalms 1:3 describes, rooted and grounded in the Word of God. The outcome of the study shows it helps Black men truly find their spiritual place in the home as they begin to take their instructions from the Bible. African American men can be the authority figure in their homes and pass on a healthy spiritual legacy.

Further Research

The information in the thesis was gleaned from the analyzed work in the literature review. Unfortunately, there were no results to compare the research to, so the researcher had to pull from African American Christian men in the church. There is a particular need for further studies concerning Black Christian men and prayer. Therefore, it is essential to empower men and help them to see the image of a resurrected Jesus Christ. African American men should “talk about Jesus who was man enough to cry, tough enough to die, and strong enough to be resurrected.”³²⁷

During the implementation of the project, the researcher learned that confidence in prayer is a slow process, and the men at New Life Gospel Center are more comfortable walking it out at home than in a corporate setting. African American men continued to join the classes each week; however, the researcher found that many of the older men, aged sixty and older, missed classes, while the younger men connected to the Zoom classes wherever they were located. In addition, the researcher noticed the older men were challenged in connecting to Zoom. If their wives did not connect for them, they were generally missing from the class.

The researcher learned African American men want to be vulnerable in a safe environment. None of the men who attended the classes were in leadership roles in the church except one, who was new in his role. As the classes proceeded, the men asked questions and commented on different aspects of the subjects discussed. There would be times the classes would go over the agreed-upon one hour, but the discussions would continue. The researcher would tell the men to sign off if they needed to leave. However, they were always graceful and allowed the discussion to end and the completion of the closing prayer before anyone signed off.

³²⁷ Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministry*, 23.

Providing the Zoom classes created a favorable setting because everyone could be comfortable in their own environment. In addition, it allowed more men to join because the participants were not limited by geographical location.

The two concepts the researcher wishes she had more time to discuss were *Post Trauma Slave Syndrome* and *Care for Mental Health*. During those classes, it seemed like the weight of the world lifted off the men's shoulders. They learned what was passed down to them and what they needed to do to keep from passing down the same trauma that affected their lives to their children.

The researcher believes both of those subject matters would merit additional research. Yet, it must all point to the Kingdom of God within each man. The Bible is God's revelation, so men need to rely on it and align with it as they study, practice, and allow the Holy Spirit to transform their hearts. There is no road map; it only takes submission to God. The kingdom of God exists in those who have made God their King. Therefore, pride and ego must be set aside, for they are some of the worst spiritual deceptions.

The men were encouraged to see themselves as God sees them, and to remember that they are created in the image of God. The men created a safe space for themselves that they wanted to continue even after the classes concluded. The researcher found it easy to discern the trauma of hopelessness and fear that some African American men suffer; however, these men have learned how important it is to function as men of prayer in their households. In prayer, they will embrace a level of communion with God that will ultimately affect their families and leave a legacy.³²⁸ These African American men committed to becoming doers of the Word.

³²⁸ Bailey, *The Spiritual Life of A Leader*, 21.

The men realize it is essential to continue to nurture their spirituality. The Millennials encouraged the other men to continue enhancing their mental and spiritual well-being, so they can continue in life's journey toward greater freedom as they flourish. Dewayne stated that he was encouraged by Malik's courage to go to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). During the last class, Dewayne revealed he, too, has a problem with alcohol and asked the group to pray for him. He said he started attending AA meetings and looks forward to gaining his sponsor.

These men are learning to understand the power of prayer, faith, and the knowledge of the Word of God. African American Christian men are finding value in who they are in Christ, much more than what they were led to believe (Gen 1:27). Man is the only creature created in the image of God. "God and mankind share a likeness (the Hebrew terms for image and likeness are essentially synonymous terms)."³²⁹ They must remember that this likeness undoubtedly involves the personality, aesthetic appreciation, authority, moral, and spiritual qualities that God and humanity share.³³⁰

The researcher read a quote noted above by Allen, "...man is the master of thought, the molder of character, and the maker and shaper of conditions, environment, and destiny."³³¹ African American Christian men should continue studying a Kingdom man's life. Evans stated, "if you are a messed-up man, you are going to contribute to a messed-up family."³³² Black men become better by aligning themselves under the all-embracing rule of God in every area of their lives. A kingdom man has a kingdom impact on his family.³³³

³²⁹ Kenneth O. Gangel & Stephen J. Bramer, *Holman Old Testament Commentary: Genesis* edited by Max Anders (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2002), 14.

³³⁰ Gangel & Bramer, *Holman Old Testament Commentary*, 14.

³³¹ James Allen, *As A Man Thinketh: As a Man Thinketh in his Heart, so is He* (New York, 2021), 11.

³³² Gangel & Bramer *Holman Old Testament Commentary*, 145.

Recommendations

The results created awareness and identified how African American men recognize, comprehend, and represent their faith and prayer life. The men are spiritually becoming what they want their children and grandchildren to model: men of prayer, or *Kingdom Men*. The desire to grow spiritually has always been there; it just needed to be stirred like fresh wood in a fire. The Apostle Peter wrote to encourage believers to stir them up and awaken them to a proper mindset (2 Pet 3:1). The men were challenged to develop a disciplined prayer life. Through prayer and Bible study, they have learned that praying with their children is a large part of mentoring.

The researcher suggested some Bible board games could help the men engage with their families in time spent learning the Word of God and having fun. When the answers are given, they can take the time to look each one up to verify the correct answer. The more they play, the better they become at some of the different biblical stories in the Word of God. The entire family can enjoy it, and they can invite some of the other men and their families to join the games.

As the studies took place and the men began to grasp the hindrances placed on their lives through slavery and passed down generationally, they understood the only way to face the problem effectively is through a direct line of prayer to God. African American Christian men are learning that remaining in community is beneficial for their spiritual transformation. Despite their belief in the importance of making prayer a central part of their lives, many of the interviewed men found it challenging to engage in intentional time before the Lord with their families.

³³³ Gangel & Bramer, *Holman Old Testament Commentary* 145.

These men have created a safe space for themselves; therefore, if they want to thrive in their households as spiritual leaders, they need to discipline themselves to be the men of God He created them to be by fulfilling their purpose. African American Christian men must assert their spiritual authority and become their children's role models and their wives' heroes. Being someone you have not seen can be challenging. Can you be a praying Black man if you have not seen one? The researcher affirmed the answer is "yes."

Conclusion

The expectations of African American men and prayer were not completely met. Few men came out to corporate prayer, or any prayers held at the church. The men's attendance did not increase during the prayer conference calls on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 6:00 a.m. However, the most significant results of prayer occurred in the home. The intervention plan yielded results that far exceeded the researcher's expectations of individual and family prayer.

From week four through the end of the classes, the researcher sent encouraging words to the men through emails and text messages. As a result, every male who participated in the interviews and attended the classes increased in prayer over the course of the eight weeks (see Figure 4.5). Thirteen of the fourteen men interviewed at the beginning of the project continued the eight-week class and invited other men to join. By the end of class eight, there were nineteen men in attendance.

The fathers provided an atmosphere to pray with their sons and sons-in-law as each man was able to be vulnerable and talk about his feelings. The men have committed to praying together once a week. It was essential for the men to understand they had been tricked by Satan and told they were not important in the spiritual realm. John (22) stated, "this class has helped

me understand my value in God.” Each person admits they will need to continue to hold each other accountable.

The researcher received a call from William. He stated he, Dewayne, Maurice, and their wives were talking about the classes. The women said they had seen a significant change in the men and wanted to have their own class. Lily contacted the researcher and asked if the researcher would be willing to do a class with the women. The researcher received this question as good news, and an indication of an enduring expression of prayer and spirituality being carried throughout the family. This eagerness for another class indicates that the influence of African American men and their roles as leaders in their homes is essential. They need to continue to focus on the family as a unit through the bonds of prayer and Bible study, strengthening connections across generational lines.

African American men must stop making excuses and remember God is their source. They must have faith and call on Him; believing in God involves spiritual discernment. The natural man cannot discern the spirit. The natural man needs to see, taste, smell, touch, and hear, but faith does not use or require the five senses.³³⁴ Faith believes in God no matter what is seen. There must be faith to pray with the conviction of the soul. Prayer is work. Prayer is something that time must be devoted to, something that is done even if you are not good at it. Prayer is the work of the soul that cries out to Christ.³³⁵

The terrifying fact is African American men can either grace their children with the treasures of heaven by teaching them to become dependent on Christ or damn them with unrequited wounds that never seem to heal. Every man that calls himself a Christian must

³³⁴ Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministry*, 49.

³³⁵ Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, 108.

understand that prayer and worship is the ultimate priority of their lives. When the focus is on God, His presence abides. Focus on Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, who became the founder and perfecter of humanity's faith by the way He lived.

Each Christian is given the role of priest (1 Pet 2:9), serving under Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, and their job is praying for others and showing others what true worship resembles. When the men of God unite with Christ as members of His body, they can join in His priestly work of reconciling God and man, beginning with their families.

The men in the research project exhibited a strong desire to serve the Lord. They were able to understand the strand culture can have on them. African American men must rid themselves of unconscious and conscious practices that do not line up with Scripture. They must remain committed to seeking God's face through prayer and the study of the Bible.

As the scripture, James 2:26 says: "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." When life drags them down and struggles become unbearable, Black men must remember their ability to rise above it all. Faith centers on an intimate relationship with Christ. Through the study, they learned that effective kingdom prayer depends entirely on their abiding relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Lord said, "For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, do not fear; I will help you" (Isa 41:13). Know this Kingdom Man, you are not alone, God is with you, and He will help you every step of the way. African American children must see more than just the leaders in the church leading prayer. They should see you, *Kingdom Man*.

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APPENDIX A

MEN'S PRAYER CLASS COURSE CURRICULUM

The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men

The appendix comprises the teaching notes, presentation slides, and student notes for the eight classes to be taught in eight consecutive sessions on prayer. The eight classes comprise:

1. Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome Part 1(1 Session)
2. Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome Part 2 (1Session)
3. Care for Mental and Spiritual Health (1 Session)
4. Identity Restored Part 1 (1 Session)
5. Identity Restored Part 2: Kingdom Man (1 Sessions)
6. The Purpose of Prayer Part 1: The Foundation (1 Session)
7. The Purpose of Prayer Part 2: Hurdles (1Session)
8. The Purpose of Prayer Part 3: Hindrances (1 Session)

APPENDIX B

**Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome
Week 1 Lesson #1 – Part 1**
Teaching Notes
1A. Introduction – Open in Prayer

I would like to welcome you to this class on prayer. The class will take some unique twist and turns to arrive at our final destination, prayer.

I read a book by Tessa Afshar called *Harvest of Gold*. In the book she talks about Gideon hiding in the winepress. I would like to examine the story of Gideon. In the book of Judges, the Midianites, would invade the land of the Israelites and steal their crops. The Midianites had intimidated Gideon and his people to the place where they had to hide their crops.

In Judges 6³³⁶, Gideon is found by an angel of the Lord threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. He is in the winepress because experience had taught him to be timid and afraid. But God came to him at the height of his weakness, indignity, and insecurity and called him a “*mighty warrior*” (Judg 6:1-16). Most modern people would say Gideon’s circumstances caused him to behave like a coward. But God did not see a coward, He saw the real man not the person the circumstances produced. God knew the man He created. When African American men can look pass the circumstances that surround them, they will see the man God created.

³³⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages reference are in the New International Version (NIV) Life Application Study Bible (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. & Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991).

These classes are to help you realize that you too are “*mighty warriors*.” “As a man thinketh in his heart so is he,” this embraces the whole of a man’s being. A man is literally what he thinks, his character being the complete sum of all his thoughts.³³⁷ You may not see yourself that way now, but God knows who He created you to be. I am hopeful that as you follow the history of African Americans from slavery to now your eyes will be opened to who you are, “*Kingdom Men*.”

1B. Impact of Slavery

I want to talk to you about how the impact of generations of slavery and oppression can affect a people. The emotional trauma of slavery has affected countless African American families, whether victims, perpetrators, or both. Like the Israelites during the times of Judges, slavery yielded stressors that were both disturbing and traumatic, exacting a wound upon the African American psyche that continues to fester. We will examine a term call “Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome.”

POST TRAUMATIC SLAVE SYNDROME

Who can imagine what could be the feelings of a father and mother, when looking upon their infant child whipped and tortured with impunity and placed in a situation where they could afford it no protection. But we were all claimed and held as property; the father and the mother were slaves! ... I was compelled to stand and see my wife shamefully scourged and abused by her master: and the manner in which this was done, was so violently and inhumanely committed upon the person of a female, that I despair in finding decent language to describe the bloody act of cruelty. My happiness or pleasure was then all blasted; for it was sometimes a pleasure to be with my family even in slavery. I loved them as my wife and child. Little Francis was a pretty child; she was quiet, playful, bright, and interesting. But I could never look upon the dear child without being filled with sorrow and fearful

³³⁷ James Allen, *As A Man Thinketh* (2021), 9.

apprehensions of being separated by slave holders, because she was a slave regarded as property. And unfortunately for me, I am the father of a slave...It calls fresh to my mind the separation of husband and wife; of stripping, typing up and floggings; of tearing children from their parents, and selling them on the auction block. It calls to mind female viture, virtue trampled under foot... But oh! When I remember that my daughter, my only child, is still there, destined to share the fate of all these calamities, it is too much to bear...If ever there was any one act of my life while a slave, that I have to lament over, it is that of being a father and a husband of slaves!

---Henry Bibb, 1849 (ex-slave)³³⁸

What is the effect our history has had on our culture, on our soul?

Joy DeGruy's studied trauma passed down from slavery. She provides an example of a slave mother who attempts to protect her daughter from the slave master. She says to her master, "Naw, sir, she ain't worth nothin.' She can't work. She stupid. She shiftless."³³⁹ The mother's denigrating statements about her daughter were spoken to dissuade the slave master from molesting or selling her daughter. For hundreds of years, this belittling of the slave children was to protect them. Yet what initially began as an appropriate adaptation to an oppressive and danger-filled environment has been transmitted down through the generations. History's role in producing these negative perceptions, images, and behaviors is often not addressed³⁴⁰

Another example, have any of you ever heard the saying, "black people are like crabs in a barrel, as soon as one reaches the top another one reaches up and pulls him back to the bottom."

³³⁸ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 95.

³³⁹ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 9.

³⁴⁰ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 8.

If you can imagine through the lens of slavery, you will be able to see why African Americans may feel threatened by the accomplishments of peers. On the plantations the enslaved were divided in different categories; these that were worked in the fields, versus those that worked in the house. Those that were black, versus those that were black and white. Often those differences designation meant access to or denial of privileges. It was common practice for slave owner to set one class or slave against another. Slave owners perpetuated feelings of separateness and distrust by sometimes ordering black overseers to beat or punish their friends, peers, and relatives. When a slave was promoted, that individual often joined the master in the rank of oppressor.³⁴¹

I am sure we all can identify with these examples. The behavior has been carried down from generation to generation. I can remember my own relatives saying my two sisters had *good hair* while my younger sister and I had *nappy hair*. The skin tone of a person was always an issue. “He is so fine, he light skinned!” “No, I don’t like him, he too black!” The stereotyping began during slavery, but it was transmitted down through the generations by our own people.

Again, I ask the question: What effect has our history had on our culture and our soul?

What are the impacts of generations of slavery and oppression on a people? It’s call PTSD

³⁴¹ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 10.

2 A. Diagnostic Criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Criterion A: Stressor

The person was exposed to death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence, as follows: (1 required)

- Direct exposure.
- Witnessing, in person.
- Indirectly, by learning that a close relative or close friend was exposed to trauma. If the event involved actually or threatened death, it must have been violent or accidental.
- Repeated or extreme indirect exposure to aversive details of the events(s), usually in the course of professional duties (e.g., first responders, collecting body parts; professionals repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse).

Any one of the above stressors is enough to cause PTSD. Many of the Slaves experience not just one, but all the above stressors.

2B. Passing Down the Effects of Trauma

What is trauma? According to the American Psychological Association trauma is defined as an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While

these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives. Psychologists can help these individuals find constructive ways of managing their emotions.³⁴²

When you hear the term Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, some might think, “How could African Americans today possibly be affected by events that occurred so long ago?”³⁴³

Epigenetics Research – has revealed that the environment can influence our genes and, more specifically, that trauma can be transmitted over generations. The following excerpts describe how the body can store memories of past events:

Behavior can be affected by events in previous generations which have been passed on through a form of genetic memory. A body of research shows that your DNA may contain a biological memory of the stress your grandparents endured. Can trauma, stress, and even nightmares be passed down from generation to generation? Scientists say yes.³⁴⁴

Scientists say even nightmares can be passed down from generation to generation.³⁴⁵ Significant life-threatening experiences alter genetic coding, and this is inherited in subsequent generations. The legacy of trauma is reflected in many behaviors and beliefs. These behaviors and beliefs may have been necessary for survival.³⁴⁶

Chris Mason an associate professor at Weill Cornell Medicine was interviewed by Katrina Margit Erdelyi, of Psycom. Mason stated there is some strong evidence that parental

³⁴² American Psychological Association, 1, accessed 12/4/2021 www.apa.org-topic-trauma.

³⁴³ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* 101.

³⁴⁴ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* 101.

³⁴⁵ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 14.

³⁴⁶ DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 102.

trauma can alter how genes are passed down.³⁴⁷ Trauma can leave a chemical mark on a person's genes, which can then be passed down to future generations. The mark does not cause a genetic mutation, but it does alter the mechanism by which the gene is expressed. The alteration is not genetic, but epigenetic.³⁴⁸

Question: What is an event in your past that you often think about?

Our past is made up of good, bad, and ugly. Many of our experiences have been positive but may have been bad or painful. Painful past come in all shapes, sizes, and degrees of intensity. Like it or not, our past often influences our present.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ Karina Margit Erdelyi, "Can Trauma Be Passed Down From One Generation to The Next?" *Psycho*, 1, 2021. www.psychom.net/epigenetics-trauma

³⁴⁸ Erdelyi, "Can Trauma Be Passed Down From One Generation to The Next?" 1.

³⁴⁹ Tony Evans, *No More Excuses: Be The Man God Made You To Be* (Nashville: Lifeway Press, 2021).



AFRICAN AMERICANS IN CANADA FORMER SLAVES (FUGITIVES

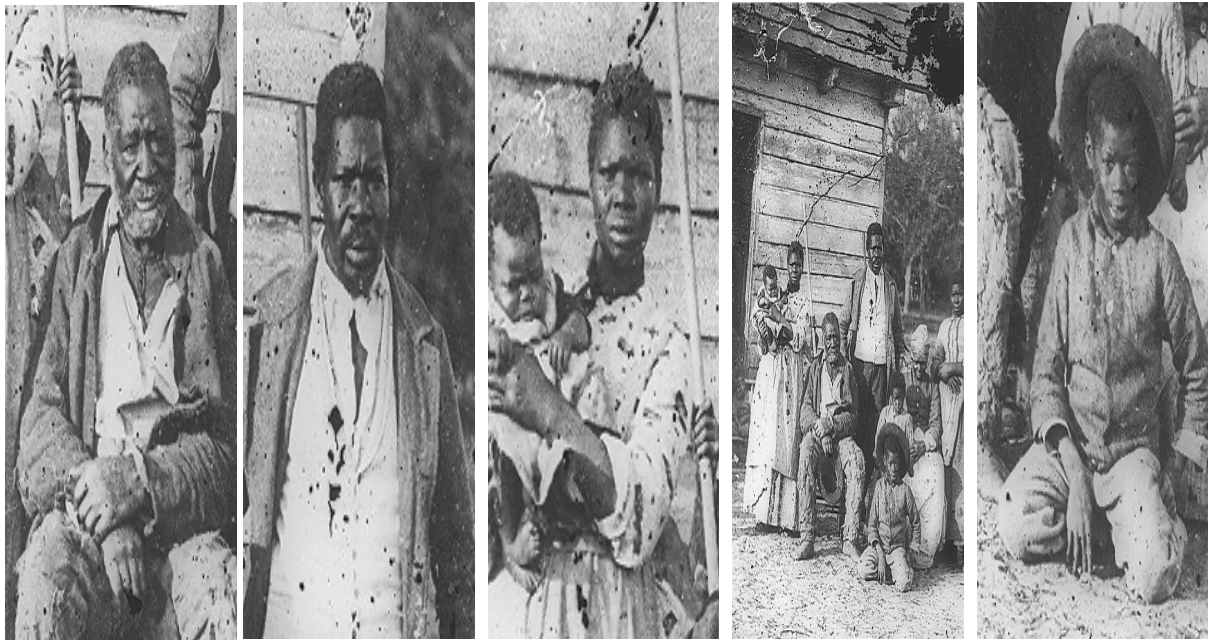
Windsor, Ontario, Canada, ca. 1892

Photograph. Ohio Historical Society, Wilbert H. Siebert Collection. Reproduced by permission.

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome
Lesson #1 – Part 2

Teaching Notes





FIVE GENERATIONS OF AN ENSLAVED

AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY

plantation of James Joyner Smith Beaufort, South Carolina, 1862

Photograph by Timothy H. O'Sullivan. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Civil War Photograph Collection.

1A. Introduction

Definition – *Human flourishing* “is a state of being in the world that is more than mere existence, but rather experiencing a quality of life that results from a ‘pattern of strivings over a period of time’”³⁵⁰

STORY- Tyler Perry is a perfect example of an African American man flourishing. He came from a mother who loved him and gave him her faith, a father he feared, a child who was sexually molested, a homeless person sleeping in his car, to a man who loves God and credits Him for who he is today. He was told by Hollywood, *no, no, and no*, again. He had white executives tell him what the African American community wanted and needed. He had to resist categorical racism and White racial ideology. Perry overcame it all to credit God first for making him a Black man, who is now empowered to help other Black men. Perry had a hope to keep going as He listened to the voice of God direct his path. Perry is no more special to God than you. The difference is, he heard God’s voice and let nothing stop him from moving forward into his future. He learned to flourish despite his circumstances.

Scripture Jer 1:5, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

You are not a mistake! No matter what the circumstances of your birth were. God said He knew you before you were conceived.

³⁵⁰ Grier, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health of Black Men*, 7.

God knew you, as He knew Jeremiah. He thought about you and planned for you. He created you to have the parents you have, to be a Black male. Nothing took Him by surprise. When you feel discouraged or inadequate remember that God has always thought of you as valuable and that He has a purpose in mind for you.

It is never too late, as long as you have breath in your body. God is speaking to each one of you. We go back to the definition of *Human flourishing*. It is “a state of being in the world that is more than mere existence, but rather experiencing a quality of life that results from a ‘pattern of strivings over a period of time’”³⁵¹ It is a process that is nurtured over time, given the optimum condition.

We need to have hope that we can make it to a better future in spite of the past or any present situation. African American men deserve to live without an existence tied solely to suffering and resistance.³⁵² Every human being has a right to flourish. Human flourishing ‘occurs when the covenantal relationships or promises between God, other people, and ourselves are functioning appropriately... faithfulness to the covenantal relationship obligates us to act in ways that institute and maintain human flourishing for all people, especially for the poor, weak, and vulnerable.’³⁵³

1B. Impact of Racism

One of the things that can hinder African American men from flourishing is the negative cultural images of Black men in the media and society. These images can function as barriers

³⁵¹ Grier, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health of Black Men*, 7.

³⁵² Grier, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health of Black Men*, 5.

³⁵³ Grier, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health of Black Men*, 8.

that can frequently impact their thoughts and how other people view Black men. In Grier's study the men surveyed stated that society believes Black men are:

- Not educated
- Dumb
- Criminals
- Violent
- A threat
- Savages

They believed the expectation society has of Black men is that they can only attain professional success as an entertainer, athlete, and any other life options are not available to them.

Discussion Question: What do you do when you feel devalued?

2A. Mental Health

To care adequately for the mental health of African American males there needs to be an awareness of the ways that history and social context impact their lives.

Negative Impacts:

- Cultural images and expectations of men in the media and society
- Cultural environments matter and have tremendous impact on their lives

Example - told by Nicholas Grier

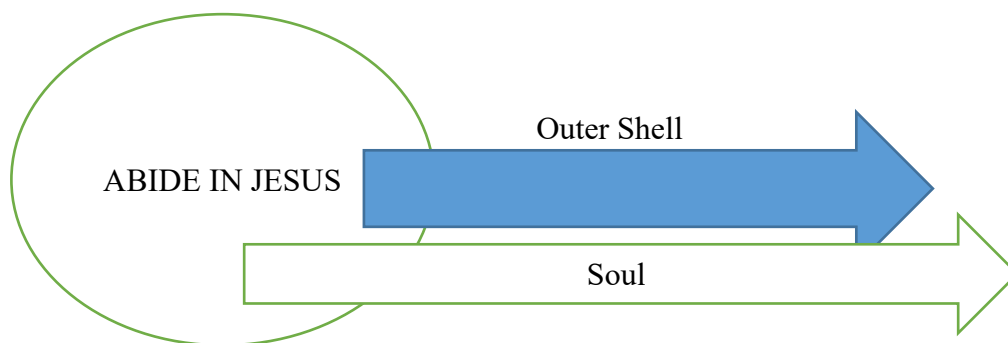
If you have ever worn contact lenses, you know that sometimes they can cause eye discomfort. However, when properly cleaned they can rest in your eyes quite comfortable. If you pour out the old solution and place the lens in clean solution before putting them on the lens will feel comfortable. If the contact lens is causing discomfort, is the problem the lens or the solution they are placed in? The dirty solution (its environment) was the problem. The old dirty solution

was polluted and needed to be replaced with new clean solution in order for the contact lenses to function properly.³⁵⁴

It is the social contexts surrounding Black men in the United States that often prevent African American men from surviving and flourishing as their best selves due to the cultural workings of racism and sexism. Therefore, it is important to examine the psychohistory (a combination of psychology, history, and associated social sciences and the humanities). Psychohistory discusses the ‘why’ of history, particularly the difference between stated intention and actual behavior, and the approach to fostering psychological liberation and healing in the lives of African American men.³⁵⁵

African Americans have survived and live a meaningful existence; however, it is time to move pass surviving and just coping with the things of the pass. It is time to live a life committed to God raising warriors for His kingdom.

Real change does not come from the outside. The experience of true transformation is a renovation of the soul. When you are connected to Christ all things are possible.



Prayer: Ask each person to pray.

³⁵⁴ Grier, *Care for The Mental and Spiritual Health*,40.

³⁵⁵ Grier, *Care for The Mental and Spiritual Health*,40.

1A. Identity Restored Part 1

“A man is *what* he thinks, his character being the complete sum of all his thoughts”³⁵⁶
 (Prov 23:7). "Human beings, made in God's own image, have distorted the image of God by creating their own."³⁵⁷ It is imperative for you to change your thinking and remember you are *first* made in the image of God. Your thoughts must align with who God said you are. You are longer enslaved in your physical body however, the real question is, what about your mind?



It is time to recognize who you are in Christ and that is done through the hope that the gospel provides each man. Relationship with God is central to what it means to be an image bearer. When you walk as a kingdom man you are now carrying the image of Christ everywhere you go. Where are you on the flow chart above?

³⁵⁶ Allen, *As A Man Thinketh*, 10.

³⁵⁷ Alexander Jun, Tabatha L. Jones Jolivet, Allison N. Ask, Christopher S. Collins, *White Jesus* (New York: Peter Lang, 2018), 115.

Discussion Question: What do you think about yourself?

Not what others think about you, but what do you think about yourself? How would you describe you to God? Take some time and write it out. You don't have to share it if you don't want; however, I would like to discuss some of your answers if you feel comfortable sharing.

Identity has become an artistic creation of man's choosing. In this line of thinking, who you are is based on personal wish and desire as opposed to being rooted in the image of God.³⁵⁸

Example: When I was about to retire from the police department, I began to wrestle with who I was outside of being a detective in the police department. I would always receive raised eyebrows when people asked me what I did for a living. Your identity is not in what you do but who you are. I wrestled with the idea of not being a police officer about a year before I retired. I had to ask myself, who am I without that title?

Each person must know who they are in God. It is the Lord who give us our significance. The devil has poured out lies on top of lies to disempower African American men.

Who decided:

Manhood was dependent on ego	What mandates that a real men disrespects women?	Why is turning the other cheek considered being soft?
What lair stated that being a man is synonymous with being "hard"?	Who said that a man can't be decent and still be considered a man?	Who said that real men don't cry? ³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ Mason, *Manhood Restored*, 21.

³⁵⁹ Brown, *From Prayers to Players*, 38.

These lies were nurtured in men as boys and teenagers; when such lies are ingrained in the mental realm and are allowed to fester from that point on the lies are acted on and accepted as the norm.³⁶⁰

African American males must learn to see themselves through the eyes of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is only through the power of Jesus will the Black man rise to take his rightful place as the head and priest in the family and leader in the community. They must see themselves as unapologetically Christian first and then as an African American centered man.³⁶¹

In doing so, there are several principles they must endeavor to pass down:

- The greatest legacy a father can ever give to his children is faith
- When you save a man, you save a family.
- Men are changed by what they experience, not what they are told
- You cannot rely solely on the sermon to take you through the week
- Men are responsible. They work before they play.
- The family cannot survive with Jezebel in charge and Ahab allowing it³⁶²

Each man must understand that God has a specific plan for his life. One way to discover that specific plan is to examine your:



³⁶⁰ Brown, *From Prayers to Players*, 38.

³⁶¹ Jawanza Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries* (Chicago: African American Images, 2006), vi.

³⁶² Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 4-7.

Now uncover where those four come together. This will help to reveal the plan God has destined for you.³⁶³ God has given each person the authority to perform that plan well. However, the real question to ponder is “have you lost the leverage of that authority somewhere along the way through poor decisions or neglect?”

The African American male must remember he is an *image-bearer*, and he gets to make decisions, for *good* or for *bad*. God has given you a domain in which you are to rule. You are responsible not only to defend it but also to expand it. Your home and your family are your realm, and it is time that the world and all of hell hear your roar.³⁶⁴

1B. Male Trends

According to Dr. Kunjufu, contrary to what we are exposed to in the media who talk about the large numbers of African American males within the penal system, he offers positive statistics. There are 609,000 + African American males attending college, and each year that number increases. 400,000 + African American males are single parents. The media enjoys depicting Black men as irresponsible, deadbeat fathers.³⁶⁵ Statista Research stated, “In 2020, there are about 1.23 million Black families with a single father living in the United States. There is an increase from 1990, when there were 472,000 Black families with a single father in the U.S.”³⁶⁶

Contrary to frequent claims, there are more Black men in college than in prison. The U.S. Census Bureau reports there were 841,000 Black male inmates held in custody in state or federal

³⁶³ Evans, *Kingdom Man*, 91.

³⁶⁴ Evans, *Kingdom Man*, 92.

³⁶⁵ Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 37.

³⁶⁶ *Number of Black families with a single father in the U.S. from 1990 to 2020* (Statista Research Department, Oct. 5, 2021), accessed 1/4/2021. www.statista.com.

prisons or local jails in 2009, but 1,037,000 Black men were enrolled in college in fall 2009.³⁶⁷

Kunjufu believes there are more than three million males who call Jesus Christ Lord and Savior.

³⁶⁷ *Advancing Success for Black Men in College – ETS org* (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013), accessed 1/4/2022. www.ets.org.

2A. Kingdom Man

“Jesus speaks of a treasure. And He calls it the kingdom of God” (Matt 13:44).³⁶⁸

Definition: “The Formation of a Kingdom Man is a man who visibly demonstrates the comprehensive rule of God underneath the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of his life.”³⁶⁹

The cry for a kingdom man to rule is heard from every corner of the world.

It is everywhere. It is loud. It is in the heartbeat of every child born or raised without a father, every woman’s dream drowned by an irresponsible or neglectful man, every hope snuffed out by confusing circumstances, every lonely soul of a single woman searching for someone worthy to marry, and every sanctuary and community devoid of significant male contributions. It is a cry for a kingdom man.³⁷⁰

The Greek word for *kingdom* in the New Testament is *basileia*, and it means authority and rule.³⁷¹ A kingdom includes three fundament components:

- A ruler (You)
- A realm of subject who fall under his rule (Family)
- The rules of governances (The Word of God)

God has given the guidelines for the operation of all three, and negligence to adhere to these guidelines results in disorder and loss. All three work under the authority of God. In the garden Satan’s first act was to subtly and deceitfully dethrone the ruler and bypass Adam to get to Eve.

³⁶⁸ Evans, *Kingdom Man*, Introduction.

³⁶⁹ Evans, *Kingdom Man*, Introduction.

³⁷⁰ Evans, *Kingdom Man*, 10.

³⁷¹ Evans, *Kingdom Man*, 11.

A great deal depends on whether you are a kingdom man who responsibly rules with consistency and wisdom to the guidelines and governances in God's Word. Or if you are a man of this world, leaving those under your influence vulnerable to what life brings their way and vulnerable to themselves as a result of the chaos that you have either made or allowed.³⁷² As a man, you are ultimately responsible for those within your domain because Adam was created before Eve.

2B. The Cry for a Kingdom Man

If you listen closely, you can hear the cry for African American men to rule. You can hear it in the chaos of the culture triggering a cry to rise up from the homes, schools, neighborhoods, communities, states, and from every shattered soul affected by the absence of kingdom men.³⁷³

Listen (Pause for about 30 seconds).

Repeat this quote - "It is everywhere. It is loud. It is the heartbeat of every child born or raised without a father, every woman's dream drowned by an irresponsible or neglectful man, every hope snuffed out by confusing circumstances, every lonely soul of a single woman searching for someone worthy to marry, and every sanctuary and community devoid of significant male contributions."³⁷⁴

It is time to model for your family the value of making God and His Word the central focus in all that you do. It is time to exhibit the courage to be dedicated to God and your family even when you face harsh opposition. Your impact on your family, your marriage, and your

³⁷² Evans, *Kingdom Man*, 18.

³⁷³ Evans, *Kingdom Man*, 10.

³⁷⁴ Evans, *Kingdom Man*, 10.

church cannot be emphasized enough. It will alter the trajectory of your life and impact more people than you will ever know.

Discussion Question

How much time have you spent daily in prayer and in the scriptures this week?

Scripture

1 Chron 4:9-10, “Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, ‘I gave birth to him in pain. Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, ‘Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.’ And God granted his request.”

1A. What is Prayer?

- Prayer is humankind giving God the legal right and permission to interfere in earth's affairs.
- Prayer is humankind giving heaven earthly license to influence earth.
- Prayer is a terrestrial license for celestial interference.
- Prayer is humankind exercising their legal authority on earth to invoke heaven's influence on the planet.³⁷⁵

Scripture “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matt 16:19-20). “I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with the” (Matt 18:18-20).

1B. Spiritual Discipline

There must come a time when each man must learn to order his private world through prayer. They must get into the habit of referring the minor actions of their lives to God. Let inward prayer be their last act before they fall asleep and the first act when they awake in the

³⁷⁵ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 15.

morning.³⁷⁶ Prayer is not an option, but a necessity. “If we don’t pray, heaven cannot interfere in earth’s affairs.”³⁷⁷

Developing a good, daily, disciplined prayer is one of the most challenging exercises Christ-followers undertake. Worship and intercession rank at the top of any list of spiritual struggles. This is a major reason the inner gardens of so many private worlds are in a state of disorder. There are three possible reasons why African American men may struggle to pray:

- First, worship and intercession can seem to be unnatural acts. In his sinless nature, man probably had a great desire for communion with the Creator; however, sin turned a natural activity into an unnatural function. Thus, worship and intercession have become difficult challenges.³⁷⁸
- The second reason African American men can find it difficult to enter worship and intercession is that these acts are by nature admissions of personal weakness. To enter the act of prayer, they must acknowledge that they are completely dependent on God. The sin that lies deep within strongly denies dependence.³⁷⁹
- A third reason prayer comes hard to African American men is the fact that it seems frequently unrelated to actual results. What is meant by this statement is God does answer prayer; however, most of us have had enough experience to realize that His answers do not always come in forms or on schedules that we would have designed.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶ Gordon MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2017), 151.

³⁷⁷ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 16.

³⁷⁸ MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World*, 152.

³⁷⁹ MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World*, 152.

³⁸⁰ MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World*, 154.

Discussion Question: Is there a reluctance for men to pray with their wives?

Do you think the answer may lie in the fact that men have been taught in our culture never to reveal weakness or engage in any activity that may show weakness? Prayer in its most authentic form acknowledges that we are weak and dependent on our God. Something in the male knows this and unconsciously fights having to identify with the fact of dependence.³⁸¹ Most women have never had to struggle to face their own weaknesses; this is why they feel more at ease in prayer than men. African American men will show significant spiritual growth when they admit that they need a relationship with God in order to be the human beings they were created to be.

Scripture “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chron 7:14).

Gordon MacDonald quoted E. Stanley Jones who wrote:

I know that there are certain mental and emotional and moral and spiritual attitudes that are anti-health; anger, resentments, fear, worry, desire to dominate, self-preoccupation, guilts, sexual impurity, jealousy, a lack of creative activity, inferiorities, a lack of love. These are the twelve apostles of ill health. *So in prayer I've learned to surrender these things to Jesus Christ as they appear.* I once asked Dr. Kagawa: ‘What is prayer?’ And he answered: ‘Prayer is self-surrender.’ I agree. It is primarily self-surrender, blanket surrender, day by day. It is all we know and all we don't know. ‘All we don't know’ covers the unfolding future and involves problems as they arise. So in prayer if any of these twelve things arise, and they do rise, for no one is free from the suggestions of anyone of them, I've learned how to deal with them: not to fight them, but to surrender them to Jesus Christ, and say, ‘Now, Lord, you have this.’³⁸²

³⁸¹ Gordon MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2017), 153.

³⁸² MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World*, 161.

1C. Unanswered Prayer

There is frustration and confusion over unanswered prayer. Christians expect things to work if God said they are supposed to work. So, what effect does unanswered prayer have on you? The truth is, there can be spiritual and emotional pain that can cause deep and devastating results. It can lead to sorrow, despair, bitterness, and rebellion. Unanswered prayer can undermine the foundation of faith and lead to these results:

- Feeling abandoned and isolated from God, imagining that God doesn't care about your problems.
- Questioning God's character and integrity. Does God promise to answer prayers? Can we rely on Him to fulfill His Word?
- Feeling as if your life is very unsettled and unstable. You may ask, 'Can I truly depend on God, or is prayer a hit-or-miss? Because of this, men began to rely on themselves, other people, groups, instead of appropriating the power and promises of God to meet our needs.³⁸³
- Coming to premature conclusions about yourself and your prayers by trying to make sense of why your prayers aren't working. Doubting your faith level, and not understanding the various principles and truths concerning prayer.

Question: What parts of prayer are confusing or unclear to you?

³⁸³ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 21.

2A. Learning About Prayer, But Not Practicing It.

Satan recognizes the power of true prayer to bring the kingdom of God on earth. He makes it his business to cause the prayer of individuals and churches to be ineffective. He uses:

- Misconceptions of prayer to hinder our prayer potential ³⁸⁴
- He gives a false sense of satisfaction when we learn about something but fail to do it.

What we learn must move from theory to practice. Satan loves when we read about what to do, but never do it. You must make a commitment to *pray*. A major cause of unanswered prayer is becoming an expert in the knowledge of prayer but not masters in the practice of praying.

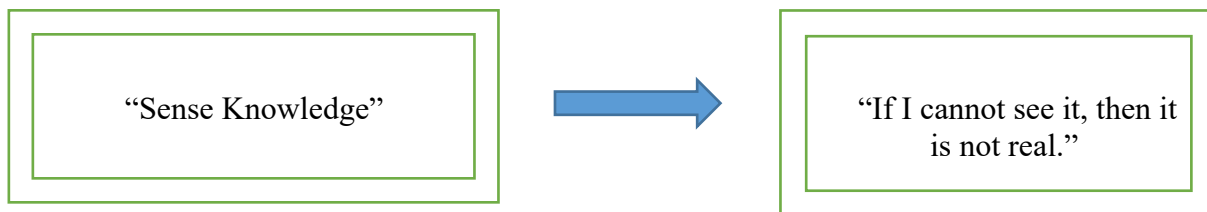
Scripture

James 1:22, “Do not merely listen to the word, and deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

2B. Mental Assent Rather Than Action

Mental assent (agreement) means intellectually accepting the Word as true – admiring it and agreeing with it—but not allowing it to have an impact on you, so that it doesn’t do you any good. In essence, mental assent *agrees* with God but does not *believe* God.³⁸⁵ A true believer is a doer of the word.

A variation of mental assent is



³⁸⁴ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 151

³⁸⁵ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 152.

The notion of, I will believe it when I see it is not faith. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1 KJV). If you have been mentally assenting to the truth, you have been living below the level God called you to operate in for far too long.

2C. Hearing the Word, but not Absorbing It

Another chief hurdle to answered prayer is hearing the Word but not absorbing it into one’s life. The Word must be internalized if it is going to make an impact on our lives. The enemy is concerned about the source of our spiritual life – the Word. Jesus Christ said the enemy comes *immediately* to steal the Word of God.³⁸⁶ It is important to allow the Word of God to:

- Sink in – Meditation is an important and valued spiritual exercise. Biblical meditation focuses solely on God’s Word.

Scripture

“Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all” (1 Tim 4:15, NKJV).

The Greek word for *meditation* in this verse is *meletao*, which means to ‘revolve in the mind.’³⁸⁷ It means turning something over and over in your mind in order to understand all its truths and implications – and then embracing those truths by applying them to your entire life.³⁸⁸

2D. Having Faith

Another hurdle that blocks prayer is hoping rather than faith. Wishful thinking is a destructive element in prayer. When you say things like “I hope it happens,” You have just

³⁸⁶ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 156.

³⁸⁷ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 157.

³⁸⁸ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 157.

nullified your prayer.³⁸⁹ Many people mistake hope for faith. The Greek word for *faith* is *pistis*, meaning *belief* or *confidence*. It can also mean ‘conviction’ or ‘assurance.’ The word for *hope* is *elpis*, meaning ‘expectation’ or ‘confidence.’ Biblical hope is based on faith because it is the confident anticipation of the ultimate fulfillment of that faith.

When you pray for a blessing, hope doesn’t play a part, except in your confident expectation that what you asked for is on its way. Daniel continued to pray, even though he did not receive an answer for three weeks. He hoped for an answer and believed that God will do what He said He would do. Faith grows as the Word of God is taken into our lives and acted upon.

³⁸⁹ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 159.

3A. Hindrances to Answered Prayer

“Clearing out hindrances in our lives will enable us to live in harmony with God and others and to have confidence in prayer.”³⁹⁰ In addition to the hurdles portrayed in the last lesson, there are spiritual and emotional hindrances to prayer that need to be addressed to have true fellowship with God and receive answers to our prayers.³⁹¹

- Sin – The impact of sin must be acknowledged – especially willful sin.

Isaiah 59:2 tell us, “Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear, and Psalm 66:18 says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (KJV).

- Fear – Is a significant hindrance to overcome because it can keep us from believing we can approach God in prayer. Fear immobilizes you and causes you to believe God has something against you. It is faith in what could go wrong. It is believing what the devil said about you and what others are telling you instead of believing what God is saying. “For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim 1:7 NKJV).
- Guilt – is related to the fear of not being forgiven. You condemn yourselves and allow others to condemn you because you believe you deserve it. Hebrews 8:12 say, “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

³⁹⁰ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 165.

³⁹¹ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 165.

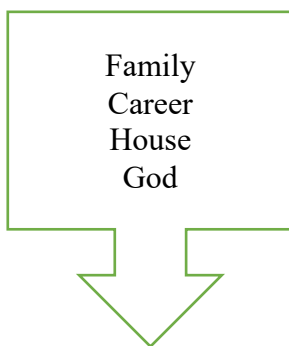
- Feelings of Inferiority – Your prayers are hindered because you don't believe you are worthy to receive an answer. This is a crucial hurdle to overcome so that it will not sabotage your prayer life. You cannot pray effectively if you are ashamed of yourself and do not consider yourself worthy to receive what you are asking God for.³⁹²
- Doubt – Is asking God for something in prayer and showing that you really didn't expect to get what you prayed for. You make no arrangements to receive the answer. James tells us we must believe. "Let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting" (Jas 1:5-6).
- Wrong Motives – "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (Jas 4:3). What are the motives of your heart? Are you asking God so you can fulfill His Word so that His kingdom can come? Or do your prayers promote your ego or some other selfish purpose?
- Bitterness – Holding something against someone and not releasing that person through forgiveness. Bitterness is iniquity. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps 66:18 KJV). The Greek word for *iniquity* in this verse is *anomia*, which means lawlessness or an offense against the law.³⁹³ Iniquity is a secret sin – in the sense that you can't see it. It is important to remember, you must forgive others even as Christ has forgiven you.
- Unforgiveness – Mark 11:25 says, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against any, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

³⁹² Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 170.

³⁹³ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 176.

Unforgiveness does not reflect the character of Christ, and it demonstrates ingratitude for the vast forgiveness God has extended to you.³⁹⁴

- Broken Family Relationships – As believers, the Spirit of God dwells within us. Therefore, we are demonstrating the nature of God to one another. “The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever, he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities” (Ps 103:8-10).
- Idols – Idols of the heart. It is important not to set up idols in your lives, however subtle they may be.



Anything you may give a higher priority than God.

The displacement of God from His rightful position in your life can be gradual.³⁹⁵

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

As Your Word says, we are burdened by things that hinder us spiritually and emotionally, and we too easily become entangled with sin. These encumbrances keep us from having a joyful, unbroken relationship with You and with our families, friends, coworkers, and others. We ask

³⁹⁴ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 178.

³⁹⁵ Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 179.

You to enable us to have a true understanding of who we are in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to clear away each of the hindrances in our lives so we can live freely as Your children and so we can pray in harmony with Your will and purposes for the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who is our Burden-Bearer- who has carried our sins and sorrows, who has healed us by His own wounds, and whose suffering on our behalf has brought us peace with You (Isa 53:4-5).

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APPENDIX C**Men's Prayer Class
The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men****OUTLINE FOR STUDENT NOTES**

- I. Notes Connected with the Class
- II. Definitions
- III. Scripture References
- IV. Questions for Reflections
- V. Applying God's Principals
- VI. Prayer

APPENDIX D

Men's Prayer Class

The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men

Student Notes: Lesson 1 & 2 - Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome

Lesson #1 – Part 1 & 2

1 A. Diagnostic Criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Criterion A: Stressor

The person was exposed to: death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence, as follows: (1 required)

- Direct exposure.
- Witnessing, in person.
- Indirectly, by learning that a close relative or close friend was exposed to trauma. If the event involved actually or threatened death, it must have been violent or accidental.
- Repeated or extreme indirect exposure to aversive details of the events(s), usually in the course of professional duties (e.g., first responders, collecting body parts; professionals repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse).

Any one of the above stressors is enough to cause PTSD. Many of the Slaves experience not one, but all the above stressors.

Epigenetics Research – has revealed that the environment can influence our genes and, more specifically, that trauma can be transmitted over generations. The following excerpts describe how the body can store memories of past events:

Behavior can be affected by events in previous generations which have been passed on through a form of genetic memory animal studies suggest. A body of research shows that your

DNA may contain a biological memory of the stress your grandparents endured. Can trauma, stress, and even nightmares be passed down from generation to generation? Scientists say yes.³⁹⁶

Definitions

Trauma – The American Psychological Association defines trauma as an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives. Psychologists can help these individuals find constructive ways of managing their emotions.³⁹⁷

Scriptures – Judg 6:1-16

Questions for Reflection: 1. What behavior has affected your life? Good or Bad

2. Do you believe you have passed that behavior down?

Applying God’s Principles: Old things have passed away, behold all things are new in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:17). “Meditate on your role as ‘priest’ before God on behalf of your family. Then, let that perspective guide your daily prayers.”³⁹⁸

Prayer- Write a letter to God, and be specific, concerning the person you want to be in Him.

Questions for reflection and prayer due next Sunday.

³⁹⁶ DeGruy, 101.

³⁹⁷ American Psychological Association, accessed 12/4/2021 www.apa.org-topic-trauma

³⁹⁸ Myles Monroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer: Study Guide* (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 2003), 47.

Men's Prayer Class

The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men

Student Notes: Lesson 3 – Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health of Men

Definition – *Human flourishing* “is a state of being in the world that is more than mere existence, but rather experiencing a quality of life that results from a ‘pattern of strivings over a period of time’”³⁹⁹

Scriptures – Jeremiah 1:5, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

Questions for Reflection: Do you feel abandoned and isolated from God?

Applying God's Principle: “For me it is absolutely essential that my prayers be guided by, saturated by, and sustained and controlled by the word of God.” John Piper⁴⁰⁰

Prayer: Father, we come asking You to allow Your expression of greatness to shine through us. Give us a glimpse of Your plan for our future and inspire us to continue on the path of spiritual development. We ask You to reduce any distractions that keep us from fully pursuing You. We thank You for the work You have already begun in our lives, and we ask You to increase our faith, as Your work is brought to completion.

Questions for reflection and prayer due next Sunday.

³⁹⁹ Grier, *Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health of Black Men*, 7.

⁴⁰⁰ Donald S. Whitney, *Praying The Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 55.

Student Notes

Men's Prayer Class

The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men

Lesson 4 - Identity Restored Part 1

Lesson 4

Definition: “The Formation of a Kingdom Man is a man who visibly demonstrates the comprehensive rule of God underneath the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of his life.”⁴⁰¹

Scriptures

1 Chron 4:9-10, “Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, ‘I gave birth to him in pain. Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, ‘Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.’ And God granted his request.”

Questions for Reflection- How much time have you spent daily in prayer and in the scriptures this week?

Applying God's Principles: This week you will lead in prayer over the meals in your home. Try to get everyone in the house to seat and eat together.

Prayer: Father, You have asked us to rise above excuses and live with personal responsibility. Help us to identify past hurts and experiences we need to let go of, forgive, and see ourselves in the light of Your power and purpose. Help us live as men without excuses as we trust in Your ability to transform our lives. In Jesus Christ name we pray, amen.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰¹ Evans, *Kingdom Man*, Introduction.

⁴⁰² Evans, *No More Excuses: Be The Man God Made You To Be* (Nashville: Lifeway Press, 2021), 15.

Student Notes

Men's Prayer Class The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men

Lesson 5 – Identity Restored – Kingdom Man

Lesson 5 – Part 2

Definitions - The Formation of a Kingdom Man is a man who visibly demonstrates the comprehensive rule of God underneath the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of his life."⁴⁰³

- The Greek word for *kingdom* in the New Testament is *basileia*, and it means authority and rule.⁴⁰⁴

Scriptures – Matt 13:44

Questions for Reflection: How much time have you spent daily in prayer and in the scriptures this week?

Applying God's Principles: God created Adam before Eve because he was to be responsible to rule and lead. As a man you are ultimately responsible for those within your domain. A kingdom man on earth must properly align himself under Jesus Christ. This determines how well you lived in light of advancing God's cause.⁴⁰⁵

Prayer: Father,

Thank you for never giving up on us but for redeeming us for Yourself and Your Purpose through Jesus Christ, the Second Adam. Paul said in 2 Thess 1:11, 'That our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of

⁴⁰³ Evans, *Kingdom Man*, Introduction.

⁴⁰⁴ Evans, *Kingdom Man*, 11.

⁴⁰⁵ Evans, *Kingdom Man*, 69.

yours and every act prompted by your faith.' We ask You to count us worthy of our calling and to enable us to fulfill Your purposes, through the grace, faith, and authority we have in Christ.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and King. Amen.

Student Notes

Men's Prayer Class

The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men

Lesson 6- Foundation of Prayer Part 1

Lesson 6 – Part 1

Definitions – “Prayer is a result of God’s established authority structure between heaven and earth, as well as a product of His faithfulness to His Word. Prayer is as simple as respecting God’s authority.”⁴⁰⁶

Scriptures – Matt 16:19-20 & 2 Chron 7:14

Questions for Reflection –

- Do you feel reluctant to prayer with your wife or other family members?
- What parts of prayer are confusing or unclear to you?

Applying God’s Principles: Jesus said that we should always pray and not give up (Luke 18:1)

Prayer – Father, you have said, call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know (Jer 33:3). On the basis of this promise, we call to You and ask You to show us great and unsearchable truths about prayer that You have set forth in Your Word. We ask You to forgive us for leaning on our own understanding when it comes to prayer. Heal us from the spiritual and emotional effects that unanswered prayer has worked in us. Give us open minds and hearts to hear Your Word and to allow the holy Spirit to teach us Your purpose and truth. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Wisdom and our strength. Amen⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ Myles Monroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 11.

Student Notes

Men's Prayer Class

The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men

Lesson 7- The Hurdles of Prayer

Lesson 7 – Part 2

Definitions - Meditate in Greek meletao – “means revolve in the mind”

Scriptures: 1 Pet 5:8-9

Questions for Reflection:

- Which of these hurdles best describes my practice of prayer and reading the Word?
- What attitude do I need to repent from in order to rise above this hurdle through God's grace?

Applying God's Principles:

1. Learning about Prayer but Not Practicing
2. Mental Assent rather than action
3. Hearing the Word but Not Absorbing It
4. Hoping rather than Having Faith
5. Praying for Faith
6. Laziness/Cares of the World

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

⁴⁰⁷ Myles Monroe, *Understanding The Purpose and Power of Prayer*, 26.

Your Word says, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith” (1 Pet 5:8-9). We ask You to help us remain alert to the hurdles in our lives that the enemy wants to use to destroy our prayer potential. Help us to resist him as we stand firm in our faith. Let Your Holy Spirit show us where we are being deceived in our attitudes toward prayer and the Word so we can understand and practice true and effective prayer. We ask these things in the name of Jesus, who resisted the enemy through the power of Your Word. Amen.

Student Notes

Men's Prayer Class

The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men

Lesson 8- The Hinderances of Prayer

Lesson 8 – Part 3

Scriptures: Hebrews 12:1 "...Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

Questions for Reflection: Is there anything in your life that is keeping you from a clear conscience and unbroken fellowship with God? If so, what is it?

Applying God's Principles: Confess your sins to God and ask for His forgiveness. Accept His Forgiveness and be released from the past of sin and guilt.

Prayer – Heavenly Father,

As Your Word says, we are burdened by things that hinder us spiritually and emotionally, and we too easily become entangled with sin. These encumbrances keep us from having a joyful, unbroken relationship with You and with our families, friends, coworkers, and others. We ask You to enable us to have a true understanding of who we are in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to clear away each of the hindrances in our lives so we can live freely as Your children and so we can pray in harmony with Your will and purposes for the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who is our Burden-Bearer- who has carried our sins and sorrows, who has healed us by His own wounds, and whose suffering on our behalf has brought us peace with You (Isa 53:4-5).

APPENDIX E
MALE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The first six questions will be asked of every participant.

1. How would you define a Christian?
2. What is your practice of prayer? (Ex: how often do you pray? Do you pray at certain times of the day?)
3. What are the major obstacles that stand in your way of a life of prayer?
4. Who is the primary person in your home that prays? Why?
5. Is there a need for less or more prayer in your life? Explain
6. When you were growing up as a child, who in your household was the person who prayed the most?
7. How would you describe prayer?
8. Are there aspects of prayer that are confusing or unclear to you?
9. In what ways, if any, has prayer changed your life?
10. How often do you pray with your family?
11. If you have children, do you teach them to pray?

APPENDIX F**FEMALE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What is your relationship to the participant?
2. Have you noticed a transformation in your husband/son's spiritual habits? If so, please describe.
3. How often did your husband/son pray in your home before the class?
4. How often does your husband/son pray since attending the classes?
5. Have you notice a difference in your husband/son's prayer life? If so, how?
6. How often do you and your spouse/son pray together?

APPENDIX G**FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

1. What, if anything, did you learn in this class you did not know before?
2. Has your belief changed concerning prayer? Explain
3. Has this class helped you change your prayer life? If so, how?
4. Has this class helped you to understand who you are in God? If so, how? If no, why not?
5. Has this class helped you to feel more confident in prayer? If so, how? If no, why not?

APPENDIX H

SURVEY

INSTRUCTIONS: These questions consider your prayer growth aspects of a Prayer. The questions stem from what a person believes about himself and what God believes. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest and 1 the lowest how would you rate the spiritual formation in your life through this study.

1. Do you believe you are responsible for your family's spiritual growth?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. How comfortable are you with sharing the information you have learned with others?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Would you recommend this class to others?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. How much more do you pray now, as compared to the beginning of the class?

Not much A little more than before A regular routine A lifestyle change

5. How confident are you in praying in corporate prayer?

Not much A little more than before A regular routine A lifestyle change

6. Has your desire for prayer increased?

Not much A little more than before A regular routine A lifestyle change

7. How has your prayer life made a difference in your marriage?

None Somewhat Significant

8. How much has the change in your prayer made in your life?

None Somewhat Significant

APPENDIX I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Title of the Project: The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men

Principal Investigator: Sherilyn Howard, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a project study. To participate, you must be African American 18 – 80 years of age. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore the prayer life of the African American male. To encourage, educate, and train African American males to pray in private and public.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. First, you will be asked to provide your name, phone number and email address.
2. Second, you will be asked to complete a 1-hour one-on-one interview through Zoom or in person. All interviews will be tape recorded and may be used in a public forum.
3. When all the one-on-one interviews are completed, each participant will be asked to do a one-hour focus group at New Life Gospel Center. The selection process will be divided by ages as follows: 18-30; 31-45; 46-60; 61-80. The focus group will take place one week prior to the first class.
4. Participate in an eight-week fifty-five-minute men's prayer class at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings beginning the 1st Sunday in June 2022.
5. Finally, you will be asked to complete a post-course survey at the conclusion of the last class.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study is learning to analyze and address any issues that may interfere with your prayer life. This study will increase the potential for creating a teaching atmosphere that will enhance African American males' prayer lives.

The benefits to society will first come through the benefits the family will receive, as young Black males learn to pray for themselves, their families, and the community.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

The project records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Project records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Anonymous data collected from you may be shared for use in future project studies or with other projects.

Project records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future project studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not be able to 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.
- All tape recordings of interviews and focus groups 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.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside the group.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with New Life Gospel Center. If you decide not to participate, he/she is free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue participation, and you should not submit the study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Sherilyn Howard. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Jacob Dunlow, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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 me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

WOMENS CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men

Principal Investigator: Sherilyn Howard, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a project study. To participate, you must live in the home with an African American male 18-75 years of age, who is taking part in this project study. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore the prayer life of the African American male. To encourage, educate, and train African American males to pray in private and public.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

- First, you will be asked to provide your relationship to the male participating in this research project.
- Second, you will be asked to complete a post-course survey at the conclusion of the male's last class.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study is learning to analyze and address any issues that may interfere with the prayer life of your spouse or sons. This study will increase the potential for creating a teaching atmosphere that will enhance African American males' prayer lives.

The benefits to society will first come through the benefits the family will receive, as Black men learn to pray for themselves, their families, and then society.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

The project records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Project records will be stored

securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Anonymous data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers.

Project records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be anonymous and kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not be able to 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.
- All tape recordings of interviews and focus groups 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.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside the group.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with New Life Gospel Center. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation, and do not submit your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study. Data collected from you, apart from the focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Sherilyn Howard. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Jacob Dunlow, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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 me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & D

APPENDIX J

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT CHURCH

Included in this appendix are the researcher's letter requesting permission to conduct the action research thesis intervention at New Life Gospel Center. Also included is the formal, written permission for New Life Gospel Center permitting the researcher to conduct the proposed action research thesis intervention within the church facilities and seek volunteer participants from its members and attendees.

March 23, 2022

Otmous Howard
Senior Pastor
New Life Gospel Center
2856 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44104

Dear Pastor Howard

I am a graduate student in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University. I am conducting a project as part of the requirement for a Doctor of Ministry degree in Spiritual Formation. The title of my research project is “The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men.” The purpose of this DMIN action project is to encourage, educate, and train African American men at New Life Gospel Center to lead prayer for their families.

I am requesting your permission to conduct my project at the church utilizing one of the classrooms and through Zoom meetings. I would like to recruit the Black men at New Life Gospel Center to participate in my project study by placing an announcement in the church bulletin for three consecutive Sundays.

Participants will be asked to sign up for focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and complete a survey at the end of an eight-week Prayer class. Prior to this study participants will also be asked to complete an informed consent document giving their permission to take part in this study. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are free to discontinue their participation at any time. Each participant will be notified that all interviews and focus groups will be recorded and may later be used in a public forum.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. An example permission letter is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Sherilyn A. Howard, M.DIV.
Doctoral Candidate
John W. Rawlings School of Divinity
Liberty University



New Life Gospel Center


March 23, 2022

Mrs. Sherilyn Howard
Graduate Student
John W. Rawlings School of Divinity
Liberty University
1971 University Boulevard
Lynchburg, VA., 24515

Dear Mrs. Howard

After careful review of your research proposal entitled "The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men," we have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at New Life Gospel Center. We request a copy of the results be provided to the Board of Elders upon the completion of the study and/or publication.

Sincerely,


Apostle Otmous Howard
Senior Pastor
New Life Gospel Center

2856 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44104
(216) 791-6800
Apostle Otmous Howard

APPENDIX K

CHURCH BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENT

The following announcement will be prepared for the bulletin as part of the regular worship service announcements starting three weeks before the Prayer class begins. The attached promotional flyer will be handed out by the usher to the men when they enter the sanctuary. The flyer will be placed on the church website, Facebook page, and the table in the foyer. It will also be distributed as an email to various past and present members and attendees through the church's weekly newsletter transmitted via the internet.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men

Prayer is the foundation of this church, and there is a new prayer class for men only called "The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men." The class will begin the 1st Sunday in June 2022 and run consecutively for eight-weeks. The class is open to all male members from the age of 18-80 years-of-age. The classes are part of a research project conducted by Elder Sherilyn Howard, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University.

This prayer class will examine African American men coming together in prayer across multi-generational groups standing in faith praying for their families, city, and themselves. They are not a religious group but average guys, and their only motive is to unite and connect to the Lord. Through this study men will realize there is strength and power in he who walks with God.

This class will be different from any other prayer class you have taken. It will begin with some generational obstacles leading back to slavery that may have caused hinderance in your prayer life. If you would like to volunteer, please fill out the sign-up sheet in your bulletin, and give it to one of the ushers.

APPENDIX L

RECRUITMENT VERBAL SCRIPT – IN PERSON

Hello New Life Gospel Center,

As a student in the School of John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a project as part of the requirements for a DMIN. The purpose of my project is to inspire, instruct, and help develop a lifestyle change directing African American males on a journey into becoming an inspiration in prayer in their homes. If you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join the study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, African American, and male. If willing, participants will be asked to participate in a one-hour, one-on-one interview through Zoom. Second, attend a one-hour eight-week 9 am class on prayer on Sunday mornings here at the church. Third, attend a focus group divided into four groups according to age at the mid-way point of the classes. The focus group sessions will be one hour. Third, complete a survey at the end of the final class that will take 10 minutes to complete. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

Would you like to participate? Great, could you fill out the sign-up sheet with your name, phone number, and email address? This information is needed so I can contact you to set up an appointment for the Zoom interview. If not, I understand, and I thank you for your time.

If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me before the one-on-one interview can be scheduled. Doing so will indicate you that have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

APPENDIX M
SIGN-UP SHEET

The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men
Sign-up Sheet
African American Men & Prayer

Name _____

Age (Please Circle)

18-30

31-45

46-60

61- 80

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

APPENDIX N
PROMOTIONAL FLIER

Research Participants Needed

The Prayer Life of The African American Christian Men

- Are you an African American Male 18-80 years-of-age?
- Are you interested in developing an effective prayer life?

If you answered **yes** to either of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in a prayer research study.

This study will examine the prayer life of African American men across multi-generational groups. It will reflect on the history of slavery on Black men, their spiritual health, and implement a plan to pass on the legacy of prayer to the next generation.

Participation in this study will require a one-on-one interview conducted on Zoom, and one group participation divided into age groups to allow each person to help develop and understand what prayer looks like to them. It will also require attending eight 1-hour prayer class conducted in classroom #1 at 9:00 am on consecutive Sundays beginning the 1st Sunday in June. At the end of 8-week classes each participant will be given a survey to fill out.

The study is being conducted at
New Life Gospel Center
2856 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Cleveland, Ohio 44104

Sherilyn Howard, a doctoral candidate in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study. Please contact Sherilyn Howard at

██████████ or ██████████

[New Life Gospel Center – 2856 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44104,](#)

APPENDIX O

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 15, 2022

Sherilyn Howard
Jacob Dunlow

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY21-22-733 African American Men and Prayer

Dear Sherilyn Howard and Jacob Dunlow,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office