

Be There!

Recently I was in a meeting with an older minister, and as we were discussing strengths and weaknesses, he asked me an important question: “Who has impacted you more in life, your mother or your father?” The question, though seemingly simple, was actually more complicated. You see, my parents divorced the summer before I entered academy. My mother was an Adventist and my father was not, and that made for a very difficult union. After 18 years, they decided to call it quits. Freshman year of academy is often difficult, but it became very challenging for me as my father, who previously struggled with absenteeism, was now even better at camouflaging himself from the call of fatherhood. He struggled to be there. I’d like to say that the story has changed over the last 20 years, but it hasn’t.

This is where the grim reality strikes to the heart. People, especially men, will often say, “My father wasn’t there for me.” And so, they may point to their mother or another who *was* there and who helped form who they are today. Yet the undeniable truth is there is no replacement for a father. Whether through their presence or through their absence, they form us.

“Who has impacted you more, your mother or your father?” There is no doubt that my father’s absence, his failure to be there has formed me more than any other variable in my life. For some this adversity is crushing, and for a time it was so destructive for me that post-expulsion from academy, I was in a hopeless downward spiral that seemed would only end in complete loss.

The path has been long and arduous and continues to be an upward climb for me with many stories to be shared from along the way, but right here it is important to note the power of absence. You see, you can allow your father’s absence to destroy you or drive you. Some have lost their fathers to death, divorce, or desertion. However, it happened, the reality is the same. You have a Father in heaven who loves you. He claims you as His own and calls you His son. He has always been your Father and He has always been there. My earthly father’s absence, though painful, enabled a greater longing for the presence of my Father in heaven. My earthly father’s silence allowed my heavenly Father’s voice to project louder. The absence of purpose and mission transferred from my earthly father gave place to my Heavenly Father’s calling to His message, His mission, and His purpose. A calling that would lead me to be there for others and call them to sonship with the Father, to join in the message, mission, and purposes of the family of God.

As we navigate the masculine journey, the challenges of manhood will be a constant. Your call as a man is always to point others to their Father in heaven, calling them to embrace their sonship and inheritance granted to them by Christ, for it is through Him that we become sons of God.

Don’t let your life be characterized by absenteeism. Be there. Your presence is essential for your success, the success of the men of faith in your sphere of influence, and the success of the church. That means be there when it matters most. Be there at church on Sabbath morning, especially in Sabbath school. Be there at prayer meeting and the evangelistic efforts of your church. Be there

in the lives of men when they are suffering hurt or loss. Be there when it's hard and uncomfortable. Be there September 7th at Great Lakes Adventist Academy for "Men of Faith." In an age of absence, you are called to presence. So be there whenever and wherever "there" might be.

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