

On the Outside
Looking In:
Hope for Separated-Fathers
Who Want To Be Good Fathers

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On the Outside Looking In:
Hope for Separated Fathers
Who Want to be Good Fathers

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my two sons Asiedu and Netfa who I love very much. Because of you I have become a better man.

Being your father has been one of the greatest rewards a man can have. I thank God that He has given you to me. I am very proud of each of you in how you have grown to become young men. I pray that God continues to bless you in everything you do throughout your lives and especially when you too become fathers.

Dad

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Introduction

Men, some of you may be recently divorced or separated from your children's mother and you might be experiencing difficulty or going through any number of things as a man. Others of you might have been separated for a long time.

Many of us did not have good role models in our own fathers. Many of us did. Regardless of your background and regardless of the reasons for being separated from your children – you are still their father – and you have a job to do. I can only hope and pray that the stories and information in *On the Outside Looking In* can help you to step-to-the-plate with your own children. They need you.

One of the solutions to the ills that plague our society starts with strong and Godly fathers. That is why I wrote this book. I want to speak directly to fathers who are separated from their children or are considering separation. It is my hope that more separated-fathers will move to reconcile with their children as a result of reading this book. It is also my hope that, wherever possible, men will reconcile with their children's mother in Godly marriages.

On the Outside Looking In is not a re-write of what others have said. It is an honest gut-felt scripturally-based presentation to men who are open to hear.

The goal of *On the Outside Looking In* is first, to help bring more awareness to the problems of father-absent families; second, to challenge the hearts of separated-fathers to be reconciled (or more involved) with their children; third, to encourage separated-fathers in their quest to be good fathers and men; and fourth, to provide information resources that can assist separated-fathers.

We do not deal in specific with the issues of custody battles as many other authors have approached this topic. However, this book provides some resources in the Appendix that can be helpful to those in need of assistance.

On the Outside Looking In starts with information and conclusions about divorce, single-parent households, births outside of marriage **and** God's challenge to separated-fathers in Chapter One.

In Chapter Two I discuss some of the consequences of father-absence on children. In Chapter three we look at how separated-fathers can begin to reverse the trends and growing problems.

In Chapters Four through Seven are a host of suggestions, solutions, remedies and insights that separated-fathers can use to be the fathers that God intended for them to be.

The Epilogue has a final word to separated (reconciled) fathers and the Appendix lists resources, including publications, websites and organizations that can be helpful to fathers.

I hope that you enjoy *On the Outside Looking In* and will be challenged by it as you read the opinions and stories. Hopefully, the suggestions in this book will go a long way toward helping separated-fathers and their children live more fulfilling loves.

May God truly bless you all!

Akili Kumasi

June 2006

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Chapter One:

Breaking-Up Is Hard To Do

(The Social Phenomenon of the Separated Father)

My Father Was My Hero

I remember one day when I was about five years old. My father took me to the park where he played basketball with his buddies. I played in the children's area on the swings and then moved to the big slide. It was a really B-I-G slide and I was a little scared to climb up that tall ladder. I took the challenge anyway and slowly climbed up step-by-step, all the way to the top - and all the time keeping my eye on my father who was scoring points on the basketball court like Wilt Chamberlin and Michael Jordan combined.

When I reached the top of the slide I carefully began to change positions from the ladder side to the slide side.

That's all I remember of that part of the scene because when I woke up I was in my father's arms as he was running down the street to get me home.

My father was a big man, one of the best athletes around. He was a cop, a policeman. Everybody respected him. The whole neighborhood looked up to him. He was handsome, intelligent, personable, good at everything he did and he had an intelligent and pretty wife.

I imagine that after my fall from the top of the slide, my father checked me, found that I would not wake up. Then he scooped me into his arms and started running home to my mother who was a nurse. He was frightened. I had fallen about 15 to 20 feet from the top of the slide and was unconscious. When I woke up – about half the way home, I was not surprised to be in my father's arms as he completed the five blocks back to our house.

I will always cherish that memory. Because of that day and my memory of the trips to the barbershop where all the men seemed to straighten up when my father walked in, I'll always remember that in childhood, my father was my hero.

A Date With Divorce

That was a crushing day. One that I will never forget and one that I would eventually repeat myself. The pain, despair and helplessness of that moment are etched in my memory to stay. I was seven and my sister was eight.

My mother called us into the living room. She and my father sat far apart. She told my sister and me that we would be moving and that my father would not be moving with us.

My father seemed to say nothing. My hero was silent. I assumed that his inability to move with us had something to do with the fact that he was a police officer and he had important work to do.

We all cried, just as my sons, their mother and I did on that fateful day 33 years later when I had to break the same kind of news to my own sons.

Too many families are stuck in the generational curse of divorce which leaves broken family after broken family.

The term "broken home" is not a misnomer. It is real because the break in the hearts of those affected is real. But, as with any broken-heart, it can be repaired. We can all get over it, heal and move on to have happy and productive lives.

I strongly encourage everyone and anyone who can - if you can avoid divorce or separating children from living with both of their parents - please do anything and everything you can. Most importantly, for those who are not in a relationship and do not have children yet, before

you even get to the question of separation, be careful not to get into any relationship that you are not 1,000 percent sure of. If you are not sure, do not gamble with the lives and generations that follow. It is not worth it.

Separated-Fathers

A separated-father is a father who does not live with his children because of divorce, parental separation or births to un-married parents.

Separated-fathers should not confuse being separated from their children's mother as an excuse for not being a good father. Your separation from their mother should not stop you from your Fatherhood role and responsibility. Let me also tell you quite frankly that whatever you are experiencing in your attempt or desire to be a good father, you are not alone.

A Few Statistics on Separated-Fathers

Herein are a few statistics compiled from the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Center for Health Statistics and other sources (as indicated) on: (i) divorce rates, (ii) single-parent households, and (iii) births to un-wed parents. These statistics can help us gain an understanding of the number and scope of separated-fathers.

Divorce Rates in the United States

The proliferation of divorce in the U.S. is not restricted to any particular segment of our society. All geographical regions, religious, racial, age and gender groups experience high divorce rates.

- the average marriage last only seven years
- nearly half of all new marriages will end in divorce
- two out of three marriages to couples under the age of thirty ends in divorce
- approximately half of all divorces are to couples with children
- one million children each year experience the divorce of their parents.

The table below shows a breakdown by religion:

Religious Groups (in U.S.)	% Who Have Divorced
All	35%
Born Again Christians	35%
Jews ^(a)	NA
Catholics	25%
Protestant	39%
Pentecostal	44%
Presbyterian	28%
Atheist/Agnostics	37%

Source: The Barna Group, 2004.

Divorce does not discriminate as high divorce rates exist among all racial groups:

Racial Groups (in U.S.)	% Who Have Divorced
All	35%
White	34%
African-American	36%
Hispanic	32%
Asian ^(a)	10%
Native American	NA

Source: The Barna Group, 2004, 2001.

Note: (a) U.S. Census Bureau 2003 data.

Other factors contribute to divorce rates which are not readily apparent in the statistics. For example, the number of marriages is decreasing as many couples chose to cohabitate (35% of Americans never marry). Thus, neither marriages or divorces are recorded for those who cohabitate and never marry.

Divorce rates are high in other countries as well:

Country	Divorce Rates as % of All Marriages
United States	49%
England	53%
Germany	41%
France	43%
Japan	33%
Canada	37%
Australia	46%

Source: www.divorcemag.com;
www.divorcereform.org;
 Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Single-Parent Households

Single-parent households in the United States have increased dramatically over the last three decades:

- in 1970 there were 3 million single-mother households, in 2000: 10 million (26 percent of households) and 2 million single-father households
- 23,000,000 (twenty-three million) children live without their fathers [NOTE: To understand the impact of father-absence on children, below are some consequences that are widely reported. The general conclusion is that children in single-parent families face a higher risk of academic, social and psychological problems.]
- one-third of all children live in single-parent households
- in 2000 only 68% of children lived with both father and mother, down from 85% in 1970

The number single-parent households remains a large percentage of the total number of households in the U.S. As the table below shows, the number of single-parent household continues to rise.

Single-Parent Households (Percent of Households with Children)						
	All	White	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Native Americans
1970	11%	9%	32%	NA	NA	NA
1980	20%	15%	46%	21%	NA	NA
1990	25%	19%	55%	30%	NA	NA
2000	30%	22%	62%	33%	18%	43%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
 NA: Not Available

Births to Un-Wed Parents

The number of children born to un-wed mothers is also increasing.

- between 1985 and 2000, un-wed mothers gave birth to 18,594,000 babies
- in 2000, 4,059,000 babies were born in the U. S., 1,347,000 were to un-wed mothers
- in 2000 one out every three births occurred to un-wed mothers

The table below shows of births to “un-wed mothers” (as reported). However, we must remember that **un-wed mother also means un-wed father.**

Year	Total Births United States	Births to Un-Wed Parents	Percent of Total Births
1970	3,731,000	399,000	11%
1980	3,612,000	666,000	18%
1990	4,158,000	1,165,000	28%
2000	4,059,000	1,347,000	33%

Source: National Center for Health Statistics

Here is a breakdown of single-parent households in the year 2000 by racial group:

Year	Total Births United States	Births to Un-Wed Parents	Percent of Total Births
All	4,059,000	1,347,000	33%
White	2,363,000	522,000	22%
African American	604,000	415,000	69%
Hispanic	816,000	348,000	43%
Asian	201,000	30,000	15%
Native American	42,000	24,000	57%

Source: National Center for Health Statistics

All of this indicates that the percentage of families with both a father and mother in the house is declining. Consequently, the number of separated-fathers is increasing!

Reconciling the Hearts of the Fathers to Their Children

The problem of father-absent families did not start in the last few decades. In the King James Version of the Bible there are 42 references to the "fatherless." I believe that God sent a warning and a promise about separated-fathers in the very last verse of the Old Testament:

"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the

hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."
(*Malachi 4:5-6 NASB*)

In this scripture God promises the prophet Elijah, a reference to John the Baptist (Luke 1:17), who would preach in the spirit and power of Elijah and prepare the way for the Messiah.

I believe that God has another message for us in this last verse in the Old Testament as well: The heart of every father needs to be with his children and the heart of every child need to be with his/her father. Is strong Fatherhood part of preparing us for the Lord? I believe so.

Separated-fathers need to become reconciled-fathers.

What is a Reconciled-Father?

We defined a separated-father as a father who is not living with his children. But many separated-fathers are also reconciled-fathers, that is, they are taking responsibility for their children and they have an on-going relationship with them.

A reconciled father is a father who does not live with his children, but **is** nonetheless a good father. This father finds a way to bridge the gap of distance whether it is a few blocks, a few miles, or a few thousand miles.

A reconciled father is an important part of his children's lives. He loves his children - and shows it. Love is an action word. Too many people confuse love with feelings. Love is a decision that brings commitment. Commitment in Fatherhood means involvement.

A reconciled-father has an on-going nurturing relationship with his children.

A reconciled father is a father who is responsible for his children. He supports his children.

A reconciled father leads his children. He teaches them. He disciplines them. He plays with them.

In short, a reconciled father loves his children and takes responsibility for them while he helps prepare them for adulthood.

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Chapter Two:

Like Father ... Like Son – and Daughter Too

(The Impact of Father-Absent Families on Children)

Fathers, do not irritate and provoke your children to anger [do not exasperate them to resentment], but rear them [tenderly] in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4 AMP)

Fathers have a great opportunity to help shape the future through their relationship with their children. Research shows that children are much better off with both natural parents loving and caring for them. But, when fathers do not live up to their specific responsibilities everybody can suffer and the potential negative effect on children can be enormous.

Some of the trauma in separated-families can be eliminated with an extra effort by separated-fathers.

It is my hope that an increased awareness of the potential negative sides of father-absence can move some men to take greater responsibility in their children's lives.

In this chapter I want to present some facts which are generally known by those who research and write about divorce, separated-families and single-mother (or father-absent) households.

Growth and Development - A Word to Separated-Fathers

As you read the information in this chapter about what can happen in father-absent families, each separated-father can do some personal soul-searching. If you are a good father then great. You know the value of being a good father because you see the result in your children. If you are not a good father or you see areas where you can improve then I encourage you to consider how you can be more effective in taking care of your children.

If we do not seriously consider our role as fathers, we can expect many more problems for our children. The Bible teaches us to *Train [Or Start] a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it (Proverbs 22:6 NIV).*

This is our primary responsibility to train our children and get them started in the right direction.

Who Is Responsible for Teaching Your Son to Be a Good Man?

Some adult males do not become good men or good parents because they do not know what it means to be a good man. Perhaps they did not have a good role model in their own father. Too often, this is the case, but it is no excuse.

If you can make a baby then you can learn to take care of a baby. Sometimes we have to seek out our own examples or be our own role model and learn as we go. Your children are better off with you trying-but-not-knowing than they are with you not-trying-at-all.

If you do not know what it means to be a good father then you can learn - but only if you want to. This is the mark of a man. If you do not want to be a good father and you refuse your responsibility then God help you. God help your children also - because until we as fathers take a stand and decide that poor parenting is not for our families anymore, the conditions in our society, and with each of our individual children, and with our families, will continue to deteriorate.

We must teach our sons to be good men and fathers or else they too will become poor fathers and men – and the cycle continues.

Who is Responsible for Raising Your Daughter and Showing Her What a Real Man Is?

Men, you have a responsibility to protect and teach your daughters about life and about men - through example. When girls have poor relationships with their own fathers - what impact does that have on their relationships later in life with their male friends, mates and husbands? Are they confident with men? Do they know what to look for in a man – and what to avoid? Do they choose healthy relationships with psychologically healthy men?

We need to arm ourselves with the latest behavioral and psychological information so that we understand the potential damage that could be done to children through father abandonment. Maybe some separated-fathers who are not taking responsibility for their children will reconsider their chosen path.

When fathers are absent, girls are robbed of the opportunity to learn about men in their own home. Who becomes their male role-model, their teacher - and especially about men, the television or the campus playboy? Consequently, our daughters may never know what a good

man is. When they become mothers, will they lead their own children properly? Does the cycle continue generation after generation?

Facts about Children in Father-Absent Families

Those problems include higher rates of:

- attempted suicides
- runaways
- behavioral problems
- psychological disorders
- acts of rape
- poor grades
- high school dropouts
- drugs abuse
- alcohol abuse
- crime resulting in juvenile jails terms
- adult prison terms
- early sexual activity
- teen pregnancies

Studies have shown that neither the single-mother family nor the single-father family does as well as families with both the father and the mother.

Even though the number of single-father families is growing rapidly, there are five times as many families that are without the father as are without the mother. In 2003 there were 2 million single-father families and 10 million single-mother families.

The issue steadily points to the absent father when examining problems in single-parent families. If more separated-fathers were taking their responsibility with their children then the incidence of many of the problems cited above would decrease by virtue of fathers' intimate involvement with their children.

Please keep in mind that reporting these conclusions is not an assault on single-mothers. This is not a gender issue. Single-mothers have historically done a great job in the face of much adversity and a lack of adequate support. I congratulate and applaud single-mothers who have done the job of both parents while balancing work and family responsibilities.

It is, however, an assault on father-absence, because without separated-fathers there would not be single-mothers - except in the case of death of the father.

Please see the Appendix for a list of government and other publications that report on this topic.

Further Consequences of Father-Absence in the Family

The bottom line is that there are increasing numbers of maladjusted people. Added to the problems listed previously are the following:

- an increased number of babies born to teen mothers
- single-mother (father-absent) families have a higher percentage of households below the poverty level (32% of single-mother households)
- higher levels of child abuse in single-mother (father-absent) families
- children from single-mother (father-absent) families are more prone to depression
- children from single-mother (father-absent) families have poorer relationships with mothers and fathers
- boys in single-mother (father-absent) families have more sleep disturbances (trouble falling asleep, nightmares)
- boys from single-mother (father-absent) families have greater levels of aggression
- children from single-mother (father-absent) families have less of an ability to delay gratification

How Do These Problems This Impact Each New Generation?

I believe the impact to each new generation can be seen on three levels: individual, family and societal. The Bible offers an explanation for each:

First, on the individual level, we opened this chapter with a quote from Ephesians where God gave fathers specific instructions on raising children - and what not to do:

Fathers, do not irritate and provoke your children to anger [do not exasperate them to resentment], but rear them [tenderly] in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4 AMP)

From the two lists of problems and consequences above, it is obvious that the absence of a good father is painful to many individual children - whether they know the reason for it or not, whether they know what they are missing or not.

If we consider the two prior lists we can see that God's words from the scripture above *irritate, provoke, anger, exasperate, and resentment* all of a sudden come to life because that is what happens to some individual children. They experience irritation. They become provoked, angered, exasperated and resentful in their lives.

Since this is not a scientific study – I cannot report with absolute certainty. But nevertheless, I believe that the negative emotions and feelings written about in the scripture above, are inescapably linked to the higher risk for academic, social and psychological problems that have been widely reported by social scientist who write on the impact of divorce and father-absence. (See publications in the Appendix.)

In other words, it is the absent-fathers' fault **and** responsibility to set changes in motion to correct the situation for all concerned. Separated-fathers must be more positively proactive in their children's lives.

Second, on the family level, in Deuteronomy, God warned:

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them [false gods, idols - Author Brackets] for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Deuteronomy 5:8-11 NIV)

God promised that the children will be punished to the third and fourth generation. I believe our families are punished when separated-fathers put themselves above their responsibility for Fatherhood. It certainly is idol-worship when a father puts his freedom from family and fatherly responsibilities above his God-given responsibility to *rear* his children *tenderly*, with *training, discipline, counsel and admonition of the Lord*.

When separated-fathers abdicate their responsibility by being separated from their children then our families are dependent solely on the mother's resources and her ability to provide financially, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually and otherwise.

If you as a father do not take care of your children then you have decided to give them less of an opportunity for success. That is not to say that all children will not or cannot flourish, but if they succeed in life then they do so by overcoming a deficiency in parenting - caused by father-absence.

What can we expect in our families in the future if as noted in chapter one that almost half of all marriages end in divorce? Will those statistics on families get any better with each generation being less prepared for adulthood and parenthood?

Third, on the societal level, the family is the primary unit in society. What can we expect in general if the family remains under attack and loses its leader – the father – in increasing numbers?

The decay in our families evidenced by the increase of separated-fathers has a significant impact on each new generation.

As stated before, the social scientists that write about divorce and father-absence believe that father-absence contributes to an increased risk for academic, social and psychological problems in a large segment of society (1/4 of all children).

God warned us. In Malachi in the last verse of the Old Testament, God promised a consequence for the land. He warned that the *hearts of the fathers* will turn to their children, and the *hearts of the children* to their fathers; or else He would come *and strike the land with a curse (Malachi 4:6)*.

I believe that the curse (or consequence) that God promised has come in the form of an assault on society of increased decadence. By “decadence” I am referring to the deterioration of morals accompanied by a self-indulgent culture. In this instance, the increase in the number separated-fathers is both a cause and a consequence. It is a symptom of a society gone wild.

If each generation continues to embrace an increase in decadence, caused by a lapse in morals, mounting sexual promiscuity, a lessening of respect for authority, limits, laws and responsibility, then the situation can only get worse.

But, when men, particularly fathers, are committed to strong families and strong moral values then this trend could be reversed. But without this commitment - I ask what are we breeding?

Like Father ... Like Son.

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