

# Who is Responsible for Our Fatherless Epidemic?



Our society is crippled and diseased after years of absent fathers. The ills of our society have been traced back to this epidemic, which is believed to have started in the industrial revolution when men were taken out of the family by corporate greed. Boys were once raised by a society of men who were comfortable with their existence and their God given roles, and the male children grew to be men by a kind of osmosis.

Then we had two great wars that depleted the population of men and put more responsibility on women. In the Second World War, sixteen million men were taken out of society and more than a million of them failed to return. Those that did make it home were never the same. Alcoholism and depression destroyed so many men's lives and brought down families. The end result that we see now is a group of men who were never validated into real manhood because their own fathers were war veterans. The men came home and the women still had to continue until their husbands were rehabilitated back into society. Can you imagine what it would have been like to be a Rat of Tobruk and then come back to a factory job in Marrickville in Sydney?

So as boys grew into adolescence, the next stage of their journey to manhood was put into a holding pattern and they remained stuck in what is now called perpetual adolescence. We end up with whole bunches of mature looking men who have never quite grown up. So who is to blame for this? Well, blame is a useless exercise at the end of the day because it locks us into the victim mentality and gives control of our lives over to people ill equipped to handle it, and often with our worst interests at heart. But in order to understand behaviours—especially the bad behaviours—we need to revisit the scene of the crime to find the source of the pain.

I believe that all boys are hard wired to be heroes. The definition of hero needs to be carefully examined here before we go any further. We need to acknowledge that in our society a football player who sticks a broken glass into his wife's face is called a hero in the eyes of the media. His crime is immediately forgotten when he scores the winning try in the State of Origin game. Today we must all agree that a hero is a man who is there for his family 24/7; as much as any man seen running from a burning building with a baby under his arm. If we are therefore agreed that this is the inherent design feature that God programmed into baby boys, then what goes wrong?

If the boy is mentored and instructed through his life the way God intended, by a father who was also raised that way, then we don't have a problem. But Satan has other ideas. Men taken out by corporate greed and military foolishness have left a huge void that we all now must pay a price for. Is it a man's fault that this has happened to him? Well in most cases the answer is no. So it is vital in the debate about fatherlessness that we don't point the finger at all men.

There are a great many fathers out there who are living into their God-given destiny and the world is better for them. But for every man who is not fulfilling his responsibility, there is also a vindictive and angry woman who uses a pathetic legal system to support her in crushing him further. The pendulum seems to have swung too far the other way. The women's liberation movement made some fundamental mistakes in their approach. It seemed that they were giving voice to a lot of angry women who had an axe to grind. My own personal belief is that if men had not dropped the ball there would never have been a need for a women's movement and conversely, there would be no need for a men's movement today.

Now it is clear to a society hungry for answers that we need fathers more than ever. As the song says, "You don't know what you got till it's gone".

One of the great conversations around fatherlessness today is from men who try to remain active and useful fathers with their children in spite of a broken marriage. Men whose efforts to support their children through a tough situation are thwarted by an angry woman with a good lawyer, working in a system that favours her no matter what the circumstance. Men who are not permitted to see their kids because of a string of costly restraining orders. In the USA, of the 50% of divorced men, more than 44% will never have regular contact with their children. This means that more than 10% of children in the USA will have no contact with their fathers.

The family law courts have become insensitive sporting arenas for arrogant and overpaid lawyers to have sport with each other at the expense of families and society at large. Acts of parliament enacting laws that are unworkable in keeping families together. Laws that prevent parents from disciplining their children. Teachers and law enforcement agencies that are hamstrung by inane rules set in place by bleeding heart civil libertarians. Government agencies that pay huge sums of money to support children who left good homes in the first place and a society that has become bloated on entitlement. Baby bonuses used by some single mothers to have more fatherless children so they can afford to have a new TV or the tattoo they've always wanted. All of this has contributed to the breakdown I doubt we will ever repair.

In our ministry, we have seen the best and the worst of both men and women. Parents going through divorce need to put their children ahead of themselves in the seeking of outcomes. Sadly, both men and women use their children as weapons against one another in these situations. Women who behave like this are the first to lament the poor

behaviour of their own children. The truth is that selfishness and a lack of forgiveness is at the heart of the fatherlessness that is being suffered by our society today.

I am often accused by some men as having a bias against men. When I say, before the world can change, first men must change, I am making a call to all men out there to see what is happening and stand up. This is going down on our watch and we can't let this continue. Are men to blame for the absence of fathers? Yes, but no more so than women, government and society as a whole. We are all either a part of the solution or we are a part of the problem. It is said that, 'hell hath no fury than a woman scorned'. As much as there are men who behave badly there are also women who behave badly. Women and men need to meet each other's emotional needs and stem the rate of family break up.

To be Christ-like is to love beyond self and this is becoming a rare event, even within churches. So who is to blame for fatherlessness? Who cares? All I know is that men need to stand up and they need to do it now. If you are a man and you are offended that I make this call to men, then this message may not be for you. But I refuse to water the message down because you are likely offended. If I am not describing you then get out of the pews and join with me, and the thousands of other men who want to be held accountable and reclaim the lost ground. It's time to get busy living or get bust dying. Our kids need us more than ever and good men must be allowed to be good fathers. It's time to get out of the blame game and get the wound healed.

God bless.

*Graham Hood.*