

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

INCREASING THE INVOLVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN AT CONTENDING  
FOR THE FAITH CHURCH IN WILSON, NORTH CAROLINA

Submitted to Dr. Michael Whittington  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Completion of the Doctor of Ministry

by  
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Thesis Project Approval Sheet

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **INCREASING THE INVOLVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN AT CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH CHURCH IN WILSON, NORTH CAROLINA**

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Contending for the Faith Church Ministries was founded in 2004. It is a predominantly African American congregation located in the eastern North Carolina city of Wilson. Since the church's founding, the gender gap in involvement has been obvious. It is quite clear that men's involvement is significantly lower than the than that of women within this congregation. This project will suggest a model to increase involvement of African American men at Contending for the Faith Church. Taking into consideration the challenges faced by African American men in America as well as specifically in the community surrounding the church, this study will assist Contending for the Faith Church in its goal to get African American men more involved and to effectively address these challenges. This project will be constructed in the form of a case study involving select members of Contending for the Faith Church. It will use questionnaires and interviews to establish the problem, discuss related issues, and reach positive solutions.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

African American (AA)

Contending for the Faith (CFTF)

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## CHAPTER ONE:

### INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, African American (AA) churches have been viewed as the centers of their communities, and the presence of strong men within these institutions has only added to this assertion. However, in recent years, the influence of many AA churches has waned, and the presence of AA men attending them has been on the decline. Though AA women are still very committed to attending AA churches, in many cases there seems to exist a lack of connection between the black church and AA men.<sup>1</sup> Although the leadership within the church is predominately male, research suggests that 75% of parishioners are black women.<sup>2</sup>

It has been suggested that when you save a man, you save a family. This holds true in the case of the AA man.<sup>3</sup> Historically, black churches have been instrumental in positively affecting the lives of AA men, and those who consistently attend church usually gain great benefit. In many cases, church involvement has assisted black men to lead better lives that are free from the negativity that too often surrounds them. Strong AA men offer stability to their families and help greatly to reduce the burden often left for black women to bear alone.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, when healthy AA men are present in the home, they offer powerful role models to their wives and children. However, when positive AA men are not present, it can leave black women with a sense of insecurity and hosts of black children unguarded from a world of negativity.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jawanza Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You? Why Most Black Men Don't Go to Church*, (Chicago: African American Images, 1994), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam Where Are You?*, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Jawanza Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries* (Chicago: African American Images, 2006), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 41.

<sup>5</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 42

The Contending for the Faith (CFTF) Church, located in Wilson, North Carolina, is in a predominately black community. For the most part, the church is surrounded by a low-income area that has a sizeable number of individuals who rent low-budget housing. It is not uncommon to travel around the immediate area of the church and notice AA men of all ages walking and gathering at different homes throughout the community. However, many of these men are not involved in the church. Even among men who are members of CFTF Church, it is obvious that they are not nearly as involved as their female counterparts. This reveals a possible growing lack of interest among AA males concerning church involvement. This lack of interest contributes to issues such as broken AA homes and communities. Further, low church involvement can be linked to high dropout rates among AA children, high rates of single-parent AA homes, and high rates of participation in crime within the AA community. Clearly, the author realizes that CFTF Church has been quite deficient in effectively addressing these issues surrounding the lack of AA male church involvement, and it is his desire to explore and research this matter.

Getting AA men involved at CFTF Church can assist in improving the plight of these men and their communities. AA men who are involved in church are more likely to live productive lives. Further, getting AA men involved at CFTF Church will increase their family involvement and ultimately improve the overall condition of the church's immediate and local community.

Since CFTF was founded, there has been a noticeable difference in the church involvement among AA males and that of AA female parishioners. Yearly, CFTF has seen an increasing number of black women join the local church and commit to active involvement in it. Though AA males who do join the church and dedicate themselves to involvement are highly appreciated, AA male involvement at CFTF could be much better. For this reason, this project

will examine the issue of increasing AA male involvement at CFTF. Particularly, this study will explore the experiences of AA men at CFTF Church and examine how these experiences impact their church involvement. The information gathered from this project will be used suggest recommendations and a model through which the involvement of AA male can be increased at CFTF.

### **The Statement of the Problem**

AA men have faced many challenges in the United States. These issues continue to plague many AA men and often leave them feeling marginalized in their own country. Often, AA men find themselves in many unfortunate and distressing situations. Significant numbers of them fight to even have decent food, clothing, or shelter. In his book *Man Alive* Patrick Morley asserts that in the face of life challenges, some men anesthetize their pain, give up, drop out, and drift away.<sup>6</sup> This is often the case with the AA male and his church involvement.

For some AA men, history has made them feel that they have no part in the so called “American Dream.” In many cases throughout the United States, AA men have felt devalued and poorly appreciated. Historically, they have aided in building significant parts of this country, but they have also met fierce resistance when they have attempted to get ahead. Some AA males feel that they have no real voice or respect in American culture, and this has thwarted their confidence.

America has had a dark past in terms of racial discrimination. AA men have endured much abuse at the hands of those who have not always seen them as deserving of basic human

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<sup>6</sup> Patrick Morley. *Transforming Your Seven Primal Needs into a Powerful Spiritual Life* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2012), 7.

rights. From the courts to the educational system, AA men have seen their share of mistreatment and bold disregard. In many cases, they have been served one injustice after another, and many of them feel that very little has been done to rectify their mishandling. Such challenges cause some AA males to be a defiant force within American culture. Moreover, it leads some AA men to believe that America does not care about them or their challenges. Unfortunately, many of these men have turned their anger towards God and the church.<sup>7</sup>

CFTF Church is the local assembly in Eastern North Carolina. Since its inception in 2004, the church has witnessed a significant growth in membership and increased levels of involvement among those who have joined the fellowship. However, it is evident that most of those individuals who are involved at CFTF Church are women. This work will research this issue and properly address it.

### **Clarification of Terms**

The term *involvement* for the purposes of this study includes church service attendance and church activity participation. The specific areas of participation that will be examined during this study include Sunday morning worship services, Sunday school, Bible study, and men's fellowship. In this study, the term *evangelism* will refer to church outreach that creates opportunities to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and recruit others into the local church. The term *discipleship* will refer to the commitment that mature believers in Jesus Christ make to teach, train, and model Christian living to new Christians and believers needing assistance. The terms *African American* (abbreviated AA) and *black* will be used interchangeably throughout this

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<sup>7</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where are You?*, xi.

research project. The term *brotherhood* used in this research will refer to the fellowship of men already presently involved at CFTF Church.

### **Statement of the Scope and Limitations**

This study seeks to use the data gathered to make recommendations about how the involvement of AA males can be increased at CFTF Church, in Wilson, North Carolina. The author realizes that this study is about a predominately AA church, and therefore it aims to reach an audience of AA men in a rural area of eastern North Carolina. Consequently, this research may not be of great benefit to churches that are not of a similar nature.

Further, it is noted that the AA men who participated in this study are parishioners from the CFTF church. These men are a part of an independent Christian church and not a major denominational setting. Thus, the thoughts of these men may not reflect those of men who attend other churches.

In addition, the participants in this study are all AA males who attend a black church setting. The responses and experiences of these men may not reflect those of men from other backgrounds. Furthermore, the information gathered from these participants may not relate to churches with other racial and cultural makeups.

Also, the interviewees in this study all have some level of faith in Jesus Christ. There were no interviews conducted with AA males who do profess faith in Jesus Christ or who do not attend CFTF. Thus, the views of these study participants may not fully reflect those of all AA men within the immediate church community, especially those who do not subscribe to the Christian faith.

Though this research may not be fully relevant to other local churches other than CFTF, elements of it could possibly suggest insights for local churches facing similar issues and offer a fresh perspective on the subject matter. This research could possibly present information which a wide range of local Christian churches could use to gain a better understanding of the broader problem of male involvement within Christian churches in America.

### **Theoretical Basis**

This project is grounded in the belief that AA men have a profound impact on the state of the AA family and community. When AA men engage in negative behavior, it leads to women without male support, children without fathers, communities that are violent and drug infested, and a penal system with increasing numbers of AA prisoners.<sup>8</sup> Conversely, when AA men dedicate themselves to church involvement, their lives are more likely to lead to more positive results.

Furthermore, the church is an institution that seeks to teach attendees how to live lives that are both Christ-like and productive. This message can be highly beneficial to the lives of AA males, and the results of the message can have far-reaching effects. Thus, AA men who make church involvement a priority are usually good citizens who are gainfully employed, support their wives and children, and remain free from the penal system.<sup>9</sup> Such men are positive role models within the AA community and join in the work of helping the overall state of black lives in America.

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<sup>8</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 41-45.

<sup>9</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 41-45.

## Theological Basis

This project also grounds itself in a strong biblical basis. In Matthew 28:18–20, Jesus tells His disciples, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”<sup>10</sup> These words have traditionally been referred to as the Great Commission, and they lay the framework for what the church should be doing as a collective body. Jesus’s intent is that church evangelize outside of its’ own walls with the objective of leading all men to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Upon leading men to Jesus Christ, this passage calls upon the church to make disciples through training and teaching men concerning the ways of the Lord.

As one considers Matthew 28: 18–20, it must be acknowledged the heart of God in reaching lost and wayward populations. Among the many groups who need the gospel of Jesus Christ are AA males. CFTF Church must recognize the seriousness of this issue and be intentional about evangelizing AA males. Furthermore, it must create a welcoming atmosphere for AA men where they can be trained into mature disciples of Jesus Christ. This can serve to create a positive cycle in which these men will become passionate about evangelizing and making disciples of other men and male children.

A further theological basis for this project can be viewed through God’s constant use of men throughout the Bible. In the creation account, God creates man on the sixth day. Genesis 1:26 states, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all

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<sup>10</sup> All quotations are from the *Authorized King James Bible* unless otherwise stated.

the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” This passage demonstrates the importance of man in God’s design. In the passage, God grants man the authority to be stewards of the earth. This speaks volumes of God’s love and concern for man.

Throughout the Old Testament, as He uses men to do His bidding and accomplish His purposes in the earth. God uses men like Noah to be preachers of righteousness in the face of a wicked generation (2 Peter 2:5). He uses men like Abraham to exemplify His command to become examples of great faith. God uses Jacob to bring forth 12 sons who would eventually be the patriarchs of the nation through which He would demonstrate His glory. Further, the Scripture reveals that God uses a man named Joseph and sent him to Egypt so that he would be able to help his family in a time of famine (Genesis 45:1–28). Also, God uses Moses to lead the people out of Egypt and through the Red Sea (Exodus 14:1–28). God uses a man named Joshua to lead the people over the river Jordan and into the Promised Land. These men demonstrate the importance of man in the God’s plan. God uses these men to lead His people, prophesy to nations, lead military victories, and so much more.

Additionally, the New Testament does not demonstrate any reduction in the constancy of God’s love or use for man. In fact, at the opening of the New Testament, the announcement is made concerning a man named John the Baptist who would come into the world to announce and prepare the way for the ministry of Jesus Christ (John 1:19–29). As Jesus’s ministry is launched, He expresses the importance of men in His ministry. Jesus chooses 12 men who would become His disciples (Matthew 10:1–6). Moreover, Jesus dwells with these men and teaches them. He performs miracles in their midst, and after His resurrection he charges them with evangelizing the world (Acts 1:8). Furthermore, Jesus makes a post-resurrection appearance to a man named Saul and eventually uses this former persecutor of the church to write epistles that help to



establish many of the foundational doctrines of the church (Acts 9:1–16). Unquestionably, God loves and desires to use men. He equally loves and desires to use AA men. CFTF Church must embrace this truth and create an atmosphere for this to happen.

### **Statement of Methodology**

This research project will consist of five chapters. These chapters will provide an overview of the researcher's process in determining how to increase AA male involvement at CFTF Church. This project will present several recommendations based on the data collected from study participants and other pertinent research that can be implemented at CFTF and other churches.

#### **Chapter One**

Chapter One of this project will introduce the topic and discuss the purpose of the research. This chapter will also give a brief presentation of the ministry contexts in which this research will be applicable. It will further establish a theoretical basis of this research while presenting a summary of the literature and its contribution to the project at hand. Chapter One will also offer a list of Scriptures that are related to this study.

#### **Chapter Two**

Chapter Two will examine the challenging plight of the AA male. It will discuss the predominate issues which plague AA men in society. Also, this chapter will explore barriers that often keep AA men from church involvement. Further, this chapter will examine what men need from church, how the church benefits from the presence of men, and the biblical concerns of men.

#### **Chapter Three**

Chapter Three will discuss the research study portion of the project. It will give the reader a brief analysis of the project's ministry context, the church's history, and other related issues. It will also highlight methods used by the researcher to obtain study participants and conduct interviews. This chapter will also discuss the methods in which data was collected and it will share and interpret the results from the data.

#### **Chapter Four**

Chapter Four will offer a summary of the information presented in Chapters One through Three. In this chapter, recommendations will be suggested as to how the research problem can be adequately addressed. This chapter will provide details of each recommendation determined by the researcher. Chapter Four will provide a summary of the work done throughout the project. It will also give concluding thoughts concerning the research project. This chapter will focus on the project as it relates to its intended ministry context.

#### **Chapter Five**

Chapter Five will suggest a model recommended by the author concerning how CFTF can increase the participation of AA men from its immediate community. This model could also assist other churches in successfully engaging the process of increasing the presence of AA males within their congregations. It will provide considerations for those who desire to effectively engage this process and offer ideas that may attract AA men.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Books**

In the book, *44 Ways to Increase Church Attendance*, author Lyles Schaller discusses several ways churches can increase their attendance. The book has seven chapters that seek to

assist the reader in the type of thinking that helps draw parishioners to a church. The issue of male church attendance is not extensively addressed in this book, but the author does include a small section about making space for men. Nevertheless, it does not seem to be Schaller's goal to place great emphasis on reaching a male population.

In *Prayer for Black Men: Coffee with God*, Ramon and Janie McGee recognize several challenges that black men often face. The authors offer a list of prayers that the reader can use to assist them in asking God's help to overcome personal concerns. The authors view prayer as a powerful force that is essential for black men to lead victorious and emotionally healthy lives. The book does not speak directly to concerns with church attendance, but it does seek to encourage AA males to pursue an increasingly deeper relationship with God.

*No Man Left Behind*, authored by Patrick Morley, David Belk, and Brett Clemmer, is built on the belief that men are a very important part of society, and they possess the power to impact the world greatly. The goal of this text is to encourage local Christian churches to make the necessary adjustments to properly establish and strengthen their men's ministries. Suggestions are given concerning teaching and training men while making their growth in Jesus Christ a chief priority. These authors believe that the presence of a strong male ministry will greatly help transform men for Jesus and use them to change the world for the better. Though this book offers great details about getting men involved, it is not directed at the plight of the AA male. Nevertheless, many discussions in this book address issues that affect male church involvement in a general sense. There is also much information that will assist in enriching the lives of men.

*Why Men Hate Going to Church* by David Murrow addresses concerns about why men do not crowd the church pews on Sunday mornings. The author views men as one of the world's

largest unreached groups and he seeks to address this issue. He highlights several groups leaving the church that need attention. His suggestion is to create what he believes is a balanced approach in which men and women can be heard and thrive. This book addresses several problems associated with why men dislike going to church, and it offers suggestions to change this trend. Again, this text does not delve into the many issues that plague AA men and their church attendance exclusively. However, this book does offer relevant information concerning men and the church in a general sense.

In *Adam! Where Are You? Why Most Black Men Don't Go to Church*, author Jawanza Kunjufu offers some insight concerning the problems causing black men not to attend church more frequently. He highlights that there is a greater percentage of AA men in Islam than in Christianity. The author holds that in order for black churches to grow, develop, and thrive, they must begin to gain black male adult and youth members. He informs the reader that many black men struggle with several issues including but not limited to hypocrisy, emotionalism, tithing, and ego issues within the church. Further, he believes that church often presents to men a passive and unappealing Jesus. Such matters serve as hindrances, and the author suggests a model in which AA men can frequently gather in Bible studies, men's weeks, and retreats. This book is highly relevant to the present study and speaks to many of the issues plaguing AA men and what the church might do to get him involved.

In *Where Are All the Brothers?*, Eric C. Redmond turns his attention to men who protest church attendance. The author addresses several concerns that he believes are held by many men who tend not to attend church. He establishes a list of readings divided into nine different sections. Each of these sections deals with a different question related to why some men who do not attend church, and it seeks to bring resolution to these concerns from a biblical standpoint.

Redmond seems to be particularly concerned with getting AA men back into the church, and he ends his discussion by offering insights on how men might go about finding church that is a good fit for them. This text is useful to the present study in that it offers possible answers to questions AA men have concerning the church.

In *The Samson Syndrome*, Mark Atteberry uses the life of the biblical figure Samson to address issues that frequently challenge men. He warns against the many hidden vices and traps that men encounter, and he suggests several ways to avoid them. From lust to struggles with intimacy, the author encourages the reader to adopt skills for making better choices. Though nothing in this book is specifically related to the discussion of the low rate of church attendance for AA men, this text speaks to some underlying issues that could possibly aid men from all ethnicities to make better choices.

Another book worth mentioning is *Stout Advice* by Logan Stout. In this book, Stout seeks to inform the readers of personal enrichment, character building, and organizing strong teams. He discusses the importance of staying focused on goals and believing in one's ability to achieve them. Stout also talks about the importance of connecting with people and seeking to build strong and productive relationships. This text does not in any way focus on the issues surrounding black men and their church involvement, but it does speak to building strong teams to reach such men.

Similarly, in *Bondage Breaker*, Neil T. Anderson aims to assist his readers to lead victorious lives. He highlights the many challenges that come along with living in our world, and he discusses Satan's schemes that seek to keep people bound. The author suggests everyone who has come to salvation in Jesus Christ can live a life of freedom. Anderson suggests that the believer has the authority to overcome the attacks of Satan and he offers several tools to do so.

This text does not speak to the challenges of the AA male or his lack of church involvement, but it does speak to the spiritual dimensions essential to the development of these men.

In *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys, Volume II*, Jawanza Kunjufu offers thoughts to assist the success of AA boys in education. This book tackles the issue of how to properly educate AA boys. It explains the importance of understanding the specific needs of these children, and it presents advice to assist parents and teachers who are involved with their development. While confronting the many issues that these children face, the authors express their belief that black boys can best learn and thrive when there is a concerted cooperative effort between parents and educators. This book does directly address the plight of black males or their involvement in the church. However, it does offer some sound insights on how AA men can contribute to the family as fathers.

*Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters: 10 Secrets Every Father Should Know* by Meg Meeker highlights the importance of fathers in the lives of their daughters. Meeker believes fathers who handle their daughters with love, patience, and a listening ear can be very impactful. The text suggests that the positive influence of fathers in the lives of their daughters can have far-reaching effects that leads to the development of strong and independent women. This book does not address the needs of black males specifically nor does it offer any insight into their involvement in the local church. However, this work provides a general sense how the presence of positive men can benefit girls' development.

*High Impact African-American Churches* by George Barna and Harry Jackson gives great insights about AA church traditions, and it discusses many interesting facts concerning AAs and their spirituality. It further highlights various AA churches which have had positive impacts on their surroundings and discusses the many practices that make these churches successful. This

text offers helpful insights about practices other AA churches might adopt to have more success in reaching their communities and AA men.

In *Developing Strong Black Men's Ministries*, Jawanza Kunjufu describes problems that often plague AA men in society, and it suggests ways in which AA churches can minister to these issues. It also presents various ideas for spiritually strengthening AA men, increasing their church involvement, and developing ministries for men's overall maturity. This book speaks directly to the subject matter of the present research, and it offers many helpful suggestions to increase AA male involvement within the church.

In *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander discusses race relations in the United States and highlights the many ways minorities continue to be targeted by racism. She discusses avenues in which racial exclusion and discrimination are alive and well in America. Alexander further discusses how new tactics of racial discrimination have emerged as times have changed. She examines ways in which she believes the outcomes of these new forms of racial discrimination remain the same. In particular, Alexander is concerned about how she believes that America uses its justice system to label people of color criminals. She asserts that once the criminal justice system has labeled these individuals, they are set upon a course of hardship and failure. Alexander believes that time spent in the criminal justice system often dooms black offenders throughout their lives. This text does not specifically speak to AA male church involvement. Nevertheless, it offers sound insights concerning challenges faced by AA men and contributing factors.

## **Journal Articles**

Paul Lowe is the author of a sermon article submitted to *The African American Pulpit*. In his article, entitled: “The Mission of the Church,” he uses a biblical reference from Matthew 28:16–20. He argues that the church is an organism and it lively and vibrantly impacts its surroundings. He further suggests that the church is about the business of making disciples though sound teachings. This article does not directly address the concerns of the AA male or his lack of church involvement. However, it speaks to the how the church can possibly assist the entire population through evangelistic efforts.

Another article published in *The African American Pulpit* was written by Jacqueline Thompson. In this article entitled, “I Am My Brother’s Keeper,” Thompson uses the biblical text in Genesis 4:9 to encourage the reader to consider his obligation to his brother. Using the parable of the Good Samaritan, she highlights that Jesus encourages followers to consider their brothers with compassion and concern. The author contends that many AA men are often robbed by racism, violence, unemployment, homicide, and many other such enemies. She calls upon AA men to consider their brothers as they consider themselves. Further, AA men are called upon to offer a helping hand to others who may be struggling. The author believes that a commitment to this practice will be very constructive in the AA community. This article speaks to the many challenges confronted by AA men and it provides insights concerning how such information can be helpful in building unity among men as the church seeks to increase their involvement.

“Men Helping Men Experience the Delivering Power of God,” a sermon article that was published in *The African American Pulpit*, author James Perkins uses the passage recorded in Mark 2:4–12 to discuss the importance of men helping other men come to Jesus. He speaks of how the four men in passage brought a crippled friend to Jesus and helped him to be healed of the things that troubled his life. Perkins argues that men in the church should be making an



organized, concerted effort to bring other men to Jesus. The author writes in the context of a predominately AA church, and he concerns himself with the issues that often challenge AA men. This article's ideas could be useful to encourage stronger AA men to evangelize and disciple others who need it most.

## **Dissertations**

In his dissertation entitled *Role Model Development in Young African American Males: Towards A Conceptual Model*, Christian Gale argues that adult AA male role models can be highly beneficial in breaking the cycle of crime and incarceration among young AA males. He highlights that much of the crime being committed by today's AA males stem from the fact they have not had good role models. This work points to positive AA men as an irreplaceable resource in the lives of younger AA males. Gale's work supports the parts of the present study that suggest the importance of healthy AA males in the lives of their sons and communities.

The research in *The Absent Black Fathers' Effect on Black Males' Development*, written by Booker Edwards, centers around absent black fathers and the effects it has on their sons. Edwards explores how important the role modeling by black fathers is to the proper development of their sons. He concludes that black fathers are an irreplaceable resource in the lives of their sons, and the lack of this example often leads young men down destructive paths. This research does not directly address the issue of AA male church involvement; nevertheless, it can be used to highlight how positive AA role models contribute to the success of their sons.

## **Summary of Scripture**

**Matthew 28:18–20** <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. <sup>19</sup>Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: <sup>20</sup>Teaching them to

observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Sometimes, the words of Jesus to evangelize the world and make disciples are not made a priority within local churches. This text serves as a reminder to CFTF Church that Jesus has Himself established a model to spread the Gospel to the world. This offers a direct command to CFTF Church to recover those who are lost. The above passage offers the church a biblical basis for reaching out to AA males with the gospel of Jesus. It further encourages CFTF Church to develop strong teams of men who can evangelize and disciple others.

**Luke 10:1–2** <sup>1</sup>After these things the LORD appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. <sup>2</sup>Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the LORD of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

The text reveals Jesus' concern for the lost. Those who are without Jesus Christ are portrayed in this passage as grain ready to be harvested. This text reveals the heart of God towards those AA males who remain distant from the church. Importantly, this passage is useful to the objective of this research because it helps remind parishioners at CFTF Church and other churches of the importance of their mission to evangelize the world and gather wayward souls. This includes the souls of straying AA males.

**Acts 2:42–47** <sup>42</sup>And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Often churches forget about the practices of early Christians. This passage reveals the dedication of these saints to those things that encouraged strong faith and community. This text is important to this study in that it reminds CFTF Church and all other local churches of the

importance or prayer and fellowship among believers. These practices can go a long way to help to increase church involvement of AA men and assist in their growth.

**Hebrews 10:25** <sup>25</sup>Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Sometimes parishioners are guilty of reducing the importance of church attendance by practicing it casually. If CFTF Church is to be successful in getting AA males involved, it must place a high priority on experiencing fellowship with like-minded believers. This text also encourages the creation of opportunities for fellowship so that saints can aid in strengthening each other.

**Acts 1:13–15** <sup>13</sup>And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. <sup>14</sup>These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

In modern times, many local churches do not have a large male presence in worship. However, this passage highlights the early disciples of Jesus as men of worship. This text is relevant to this study because it names and celebrates men who joined with women in prayer to seek God's help. CFTF Church can use such a passage to encourage AA men to be more patient about prayer and not leave this work solely to the women.

**Ephesians 4:11–16** <sup>11</sup>And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; <sup>12</sup>For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: <sup>13</sup>Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: <sup>14</sup>That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; <sup>15</sup>But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: <sup>16</sup>From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth,

according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

The above passage is pertinent to this study because it offers a reminder to the leadership of CFTF Church to dedicate themselves to the development of Christ-like believers. The text reveals God's purpose in placing leaders within the church, and this purpose should be kept constantly in mind. In seeking to increase the involvement of AA males, this passage reminds CFTF Church to work toward the end of making mature disciples among AA men.

**Matthew 22:37–40** <sup>37</sup>Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. <sup>38</sup>This is the first and great commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

If the church is to reach out, it must do so from a heart of love. In this passage, the words of Jesus remind believers of His expectation to be people of love. In many ways, this passage connects loving God and loving others in an inseparable way. If CFTF Church is to be successful in its endeavor of increasing the involvement of AA males in a meaningful way, it must approach men with a heart of love and concern.

**Philippians 2:1-8** <sup>1</sup>If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, <sup>2</sup>Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. <sup>3</sup>Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. <sup>4</sup>Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. <sup>5</sup>Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: <sup>7</sup>But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: <sup>8</sup>And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Many endeavors fail because they are done for prideful reasons. This passage from Philippians reminds believers of the importance of walking in the Christian virtues of love, humility, and unity. It highlights the principle of being a servant, and it encourages all followers of Jesus to do the same. This passage truly pertains to this study because there is no way that men will be reached in any impactful way if they are not approached by believers who possess the heart of a servant. The model of Jesus presented in this passage can serve as the example that CFTF Church will need to practice while reaching out to increase the involvement of AA males within their local assembly.

**Proverbs 3:5** <sup>5</sup>Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

This passage from Proverbs 3:5 fits every occasion for believers in Jesus Christ. Men and churches alike have a tendency to do things without seeking God's wisdom. The text reveals the importance humbling one's self before God and seeking His guidance. As CFTF Church seeks to increase the involvement of AA men within its local congregation, it will require divine help. This text teaches that prayer and humility must be held above any human strategy.

**2 Chronicles 7:14** <sup>14</sup>If my people, which are called by my name, shall 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.

This passage offers a great prescription for any population on the decline. It speaks to God's expectation from those who would experience His recovery and restoration. The text calls upon those transgressing to turn to God in repentance and humility, and it gives them cause to look to the Lord with expectation. God promises that those who approach him in this manner can look to him to heal their land. This is most appropriate for the AA male who, in his own way, must return to God in humility. With the many earthly solutions that can be offered to assist AA

in returning to the church, this passage offers the primary help needed for the AA male. CFTF Church can become intentional about training men how to display the humility required in the passage, and it can commit itself to becoming a place where men can experience God's healing.

**2 Corinthians 5:17** <sup>17</sup>Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

The promise of this passage is the ability of God to make all things new for those who come to Jesus in faith. It reminds men and women everywhere that Jesus brings new life to those who come after Him. All men would do well to receive this new life, and the AA male is no exception. Jesus can give him new life and offer him a new outlook despite the plaguing issues he may face. CFTF Church can commit itself to diligently sharing this truth with AA men.

**Romans 8:1** <sup>1</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

There are host of people who are bound by the guilt and condemnation of their past. This passage offers men hope and liberty through Jesus Christ. It reminds men that Jesus liberates from the bondage of condemnation. Irrespective of the mistakes of the past, Jesus presents men with a fresh opportunity to live victoriously in Him. Indeed, AA men need this message. It can be a powerful and liberating truth for the scores of AA men who have made mistakes and see no hope beyond them. The CFTF Church can share the love of Jesus by sharing this truth with those men.

**Galatians 5:1** <sup>1</sup>Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

This passage is a reminder to the church to hold steadfastly to the freedom they have gained in Jesus Christ. It warns the believer of the possibility of letting that liberty slip away. In the general sense, this text encourages those who have made great strides in Jesus Christ to

firmly hold to them. Though many challenges and opposing forces are destined to arise, God helps His people through prayer and spiritual diligence. He enables saints to continually advance without having to be bound again by old patterns. This is a challenge for every believer in Jesus, and it will be a challenge for AA males. Although men may seek to please God, many challenges may remain before them. The CFTF Church can use this text to encourage men and remind them to continue advancing in the teachings of Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER TWO: CHALLENGES OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE

### Problems Plaguing the African American Male

The black church has in many ways been lifted as a symbol of hope and solace within the AA community. Its teachings and activism for the poor and least of these have earned it a reputation of being an institution of help and transformation.<sup>11</sup> However, despite its many past instances of activism and assistance, the black church is witnessing the dwindling of AA males in its pews. In his discussion of gender disparity within the black church, Kunjufu states that there is a 77:29 ratio of female to male youth who are in attendance each week.<sup>12</sup> This, he believes, reveals that problems with AA male attendance will continue to get worse. While acknowledging this reality, it is wise for the black church to take a fresh look at issues that plague black men in America and throughout their communities. A renewed understanding of such matters can help reveal some insights on how to properly assist the effort to reclaim this endangered population.

### Educational Disparities

One area of concern is the state of AA males within the educational system. Kunjufu raises concerns about the difficulties black males often face upon entering the school system. He highlights that most teachers have not attempted to make the necessary changes in their teaching methods to effectively assist AA male students.<sup>13</sup> He further suggests that if a child fails a grade

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<sup>11</sup> Brega, Angela and Lerita M. Coleman, "Effects of Religiosity and Racial Socialization on Subjective Stigmatization in African-American Adolescents," *Journal of Adolescence* 22 (1999): 223–42. 10.1006/jado.1999.0213.

<sup>12</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 39.



in his early school years, there is a 70% chance that same child will not graduate from high school. This issue is significant among AA males. Black males are 8.5% of the population of public school children. However, Kunjufu highlights that 41% of children in special education classes are AA, and 85% of these students are AA males.<sup>14</sup> Thus, these male students are often subjected to several years of diluted curriculum. This means that frequently AA males graduate from high school and enter the world totally unprepared to succeed, having a diploma based upon special education standards.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, black demographics shown in the 2013 US Census Bureau data show that 48% of black males over the age of 25 have attended college, but half of them have not completed their education. This report adds that only 17% of AA males have earned a bachelor's degree.<sup>16</sup> Statistics like these suggest that many AA males lack the education to be employed in certain high-level careers that require a college degree.

### **Employment Concerns**

As one might imagine, the lack of education among AA men ushers in a host of other troubling issues. One such issue is the lack of decent jobs. AAs have the lowest household income of any ethnic group in the United States and the highest rate of poverty for unemployed individuals.<sup>17</sup> The US 2013 Census report, shows that AA males ages 16 to 64 have a significantly lower participation rate in the work force. The percentages concerning participation rates refer to the percent of men who were either employed or searching for employment. In 2013, AA men had a 67% participation rate in the work force compared to an 80% participation

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<sup>14</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 39.

<sup>16</sup> "Black Male Statistics," Black Demographics, <http://blackdemographics.com/population/black-male-statistics/>, accessed January 6, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> George Barna and Harry Jackson, *High Impact African American Churches* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2004), 35.

rate by all men. Of AA men ages 16 to 64, 40% reported no earnings at all. Further, reports show that 36% of AA men were working blue collar jobs in 2013.<sup>18</sup> Such disparities in employment opportunity often leads to significant numbers of black men earning low wages and suffering from other related problems.

## **Drug Offenses**

When one considers the troubling educational and employment situations many AA males face, it is not difficult to see how scores of them feel hopeless and deserted. Consequently, some AA find themselves challenged with great personal and economic pressures and sometimes find themselves in situations involving murder, suicide, violent behaviors, and drug abuse.<sup>19</sup> Kunjufu asserts that drugs are the new form of slavery among AA men.<sup>20</sup> In *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander asserts that the Fourth Amendment, which grants protection against unreasonable searches and seizures, has been nearly destroyed by the so called War on Drugs. She adds that this declaration has led to the roundup of many Americans who have nonviolent drug offenses.<sup>21</sup> Many AA men find themselves incarcerated due to such drug charges. Kunjufu states that 60% of all AA males who are incarcerated are there for crack cocaine violations.<sup>22</sup> The United States Department of Justice statistics give a report on drug offenders in the federal system. It states that in 2012, 99.5% of drug offenders in federal prison were sentenced for drug trafficking.<sup>23</sup> Further, it highlights that 54% of the drug type for which offenders were arrested

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<sup>18</sup> “Black Male Statistics.”

<sup>19</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 42-45.

<sup>20</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 42.

<sup>21</sup> Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New York Press, 2012), 6–7.

<sup>22</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 41

<sup>23</sup> “Drug Offenders in Federal Prisons,” United States Department of Justice, [https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/dofp12\\_sum.pdf](https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/dofp12_sum.pdf), accessed February 9, 2017.

was cocaine (powder or crack). However, AAs represented 88% of those who committed a crime that related to cocaine. Such offenses carried on average an 11-year sentence.<sup>24</sup> Kunjufu credits drugs sales or addictions with greatly damaging the black family and often leaving children without fathers and women with the responsibility of raising them on their own.<sup>25</sup>

### **AIDS/HIV Epidemic**

Another problem plaguing the AA male is that of AIDS. In fact, AIDS has been called one of the greatest threats known to the AA community. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that AAs are the ethnic group most affected by AIDS in the United States. It also states that AAs account for the highest proportions of new HIV diagnoses.<sup>26</sup> Though AAs are only 12% of the total population, they account for 45% of the new AIDS diagnoses. Between 2005 and 2014 the diagnoses among AA gay and bisexual men increased 87%. These are alarming numbers among AA males.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Prison System**

Involvement with the penal system is another problem often faced by AA males. Due to several factors, high numbers of AA men end up committing crimes that cause them to end up in prison. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that approximately 6% of working age AA males (ages 18 through 64) are currently in a state or federal prison or in a municipal jail. More alarming is that approximately 34% of all working age black men who are not incarcerated have

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<sup>24</sup> “Drug Offenders in Federal Prisons.”

<sup>25</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are you?*, 42.

<sup>26</sup> “HIV among African Americans,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last updated February 9, 2017,

<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/raciaethnic/africanamericans/index.html>.

<sup>27</sup> “HIV among African Americans.”

at one time in their lives been convicted of a felony.<sup>28</sup> It is highly possible that these numbers are reflected in the high numbers of black males who are absent from the work force.<sup>29</sup> Felonies on their records commonly cause African men to be disqualified from securing well-paying jobs and often cause employers to discriminate against them during the hiring process.<sup>30</sup>

### **Fatherlessness Issues**

The above stated problems often lead to harsh realities within the AA family. It is not uncommon to see the absence from the AA man from his family. In the book *Fatherless in America, Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem*, David Blakenhorn comments on fatherhood: “Over the last past two hundred years, fathers have gradually moved from the center to the periphery of the family. As the social role of fathers has diminished, so our cultural story of fatherhood has by now almost completely cease to portray fathers as essential guarantors of child and societal well-being.”<sup>31</sup> The times have changed concerning how fatherhood is viewed among many families. Blakenhorn comments that colonial America at one time viewed fathers as primary caregivers who bore the responsibility for their children. He adds that over the last 200 years four roles have been lost as part of fatherhood: irreplaceable caregiver, moral educator, head of the family, and family bread winner.<sup>32</sup> Though Blakenhorn speaks of the nation in general, these losses are highly damaging phenomena within the AA family. Kunjufu also

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<sup>28</sup> “Black Male Statistics.”

<sup>29</sup> “Black Male Statistics.”

<sup>30</sup> “Black Male Statistics.”

<sup>31</sup> David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (Broadway: Harper Collins Publishers), 16.

<sup>32</sup> Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America*, 16.

highlights the decline of the AA male as a father in the home. He states that in 1920, 90% of AA homes had fathers. However, by 2006, only 32% of AA homes had fathers living in them.<sup>33</sup>

The issue of having a father in the home is very important to the health of the whole family. However, the presence of a father in the home greatly impacts AA boys who will one day grow into men. In his dissertation entitled “Role Model Development in Young African American Males: Towards A Conceptual Model,” Christian Gale argues that adult AA male role models can be highly beneficial in breaking the cycle of crime and incarceration among young AA males.<sup>34</sup> Meg Meeker discusses this issue in her book *Boys Should be Boys: 7 Secrets to Raising Healthy Sons*. Meeker argues that if a boy is to grow up into a healthy young man, he needs a father who will be a role model for him.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, 80% of AA children can expect to spend a significant amount of their childhood without their fathers compared to 35% of Hispanic children and 28% of white children. An astounding 63% of AA children do not have their biological father in the home.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, a boy living in a single parent home is more likely to suffer physical, educational, and emotional neglect.<sup>37</sup> Children growing up with a single parent (usually mothers) are more likely to suffer from a wide range of trouble like violence, drugs, suicide and crime. Blankenhorn asserts that sons view their fathers as examples who know and set the rules.<sup>38</sup> He further upholds that fathers help instill confidence in their sons and help them view the world in a brighter and more positive way.<sup>39</sup> When fathers are present and model

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<sup>33</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Men's Ministries*, 42.

<sup>34</sup> Gale, “Role Model Development in Young African American Males: Toward a Conceptual Model, (PhD diss., 2007).

<sup>35</sup> Meg Meek, M.D, *Boys Should Be Boys: 7 Secrets to Raising Healthy Sons* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008), 6–7.

<sup>36</sup> Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America*, 146.

<sup>37</sup> Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America*, 146.

<sup>38</sup> Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America*, 146.

<sup>39</sup> Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America*, 146.

honorable character qualities, sons subconsciously adopt these characteristics in their own lives. In agreement, Kunjufu states that children are highly sensitive to messages released by people around them. AA males need their fathers to be present and to demonstrate strong character around them. Absent fathers cannot accomplish this goal, and this is too often what happens in AA families.<sup>40</sup> Kunjufu asserts that improvements must be made to help AA boys grow into positive and productive young men.<sup>41</sup>

### **Problems with Homicide/Suicide**

Another issue plaguing AA men is that of homicide/suicide. Kunjufu states that homicide is only second to AIDS in killing AA males.<sup>42</sup> He further highlights that AA men are more likely to commit suicide than AA women. Homicide and suicide both often claim the lives of AA males when they are in their prime and their future is ahead of them.<sup>43</sup> These are troubling issues that need serious and immediate attention.

### **Overemphasis on Sports**

Kunjufu also suggests that an overemphasis on sport is a problem that haunts many AA males. Often AA males are encouraged to place their hopes on gaining a career in sports. James Cone and Joseph White describe the problem of an overemphasis on sports. They highlight that of the 200 players who are usually drafted into professional basketball, only approximately 50 will go on to make the team.<sup>44</sup> Kunjufu views this overemphasis on sports as highly destructive

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<sup>40</sup> Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America*, 146

<sup>41</sup> Jawanza Kunjufu, *Developing Positive Self-Images and Discipline and Images in Black Children* (Chicago: African American Images, 1986), 1.

<sup>42</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 43.

<sup>43</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You* 45

<sup>44</sup> Joseph White and James Cone. *The Black Man Emerging: Facing Past and Seizing the Future in America* (New York: WH Freeman Press, 1999), 20.

because AA males are not usually encouraged this way in academic matters.<sup>45</sup> He challenges the notion that AA male athletes should shy away from achievement tests, and he questions what will happen to those individuals who expect to become professional athletes but do not. This questioning suggests that if the professional athlete options fail, it will often lead to great hardship for those who place their emphasis on success in sports.<sup>46</sup> Kunjufu further suggests that failed athletes who do not strengthen themselves in academics are often lost in this highly technological society.<sup>47</sup> This is a damaging reality for many AA males.

### **Barriers to African American Male Church Involvement**

If the AA church is to properly address the issues that often plague AA males, it must seek to examine the barriers that keep large numbers of these men absent from the church.<sup>48</sup> Kunjufu seeks to address this issue and provides several reasons his research found about why some AA males have no dealings with the church. In a survey that included over 75 AA males Kunjufu received several responses which warrant the attention of the AA church.

#### **The Barrier of Hypocrisy**

When seeking an answer to why AA males are absent from church, Kunjufu found that significant numbers of these men view church as a place often laden with hypocrisy.<sup>49</sup> In their book *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity And Why It Really Matters* David Kinnaman and David Lyons state that a hypocrite is anyone who says one thing

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<sup>45</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 41.

<sup>46</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 41.

<sup>47</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 42.

<sup>48</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 42.

<sup>49</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 56.

and does the opposite.<sup>50</sup> Kunjufu's survey found that some AA males believe that there is a disconnect between what is said in church and what is practiced in the outside community. Several participants in Kunjufu's survey had memories of ministers and other church leaders who led lives outside the church that did not reflect what was considered to be Christian behavior.<sup>51</sup> The bold disregard for living Christian principles by those who teach them is disheartening to some AA males and often serves as one more reason to keep away from the church.<sup>52</sup>

### **Dislike for An Egotistical/Dictatorial Leadership Style**

Kunjufu also reports that some AA men do not attend church because they find it has an egotistical/dictatorial style of leadership. His research revealed that many men harbor negative feelings from childhood experiences in which the pastor was given preferential treatment while visiting their homes.<sup>53</sup> As adults, several of these men recalled attending churches in which they felt that they had no voice. In Kunjufu's research, these men expressed the frustration of having their voices and ideas rejected. Further, they were deeply displeased with church experiences in which all decisions seemed to fall into the hands of the pastor.<sup>54</sup> In *High Impact African American Churches*, Barna and Jackson comment on the differences between AA and white pastors.<sup>55</sup> He suggests that in white churches the pastor is listened to and appreciated, but he is clearly viewed as a hired hand responsible for providing vision to the congregants who then

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<sup>50</sup> David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity and Why It Really Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 40.

<sup>51</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 56.

<sup>52</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 56.

<sup>53</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 56–57.

<sup>54</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 56.

<sup>55</sup> Barna and Jackson, *High Impact African American Churches*, 46.



make the final decision on what to do. In contrast, Barna and Jackson assert that in the typical AA church, the pastor is clearly in charge and often left with the task on making the final decisions.<sup>56</sup> Having pastors who hold this level of authority presents a challenge to some AA men and discourages their church involvement.

### **The Problem of Passivity**

Kunjufu further explains that some AA men view the church as being too passive.<sup>57</sup> Such men do not like to hear teachings that encourage parishioner to turn the other cheek. Most AA men were brought up in a culture where they were encouraged to fight back, and they were strongly taught against anything that promoted persistent forgiveness.<sup>58</sup> In Kunjufu's survey, he found that 90% of the men had weapons in their homes. He suggests that a church that encourages passivity faces a very difficult barrier to high AA male participation; some men may not want to involve themselves with such a church.<sup>59</sup>

### **The Dislike of Tithing**

Another barrier that is often mentioned as to why AA males do not attend church is tithing. Many men do not agree with giving 10% of their income to the church, and most of these men strongly object to their significant other doing so as well.<sup>60</sup> Kunjufu states that when this issue was discussed among the men he surveyed, a great deal of time was spent on it. Several AA males being surveyed recalled experiences of the church collecting money from people and

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<sup>56</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 46.

<sup>57</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 58.

<sup>58</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 59.

<sup>59</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 59.

<sup>60</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 59.

inappropriately distributing it.<sup>61</sup> Such experiences as this only inflame the grievances that many AA men have with giving money to the church. Because some men view the church as a place of great financial impropriety, they simply choose to stay away.<sup>62</sup>

### **Church Is Viewed as Irrelevant**

A further reason why some AA men do involve themselves with church is that they believe that it is not relevant to their lives. Significant numbers of AA men are in some way connected to a community that suffers from many challenges.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, some AA males do not feel that the church adequately addresses issues that plague their lives and communities.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, Kunjufu states that the AA men he surveyed believe that the King James Bible falls short in addressing issues like crime, drugs, teen pregnancy and unemployment.<sup>65</sup> Many AA men feel that the church lacks the message and the programs to effect any real change in their lives and communities. As a result, some of these men have chosen to simply absent themselves.<sup>66</sup> In his book *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, David Murrow further suggests that some men view church as being out of date, and this causes them not to choose to be involved with the church. He comments that most of these men see the church as a place frozen in time. Many men would like to see the church journey beyond their childhood experiences and function more effectively in their present lives. When this fails to happen, men are not attracted to the church<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 59.

<sup>62</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 59.

<sup>63</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 60.

<sup>64</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 60.

<sup>65</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 60.

<sup>66</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 60.

<sup>67</sup> David Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going To Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 126.

## **Church Services Viewed Too Lengthy**

Other AA men have highlighted the length of services within the AA church as a barrier to their church involvement. Many AA churches have services that last approximately three hours. When examining the content of these services, some AA men view it as a waste of valuable time.<sup>68</sup> In fact, when the services held at most AA churches are compared in terms of length to those of Catholics and other groups, AA church service are found to be significantly longer.<sup>69</sup> Some AA men simply do not see the value in such lengthy services. In fact, Murrow argues that many men are quickly irritated when services last too long and do not start on time.<sup>70</sup> Consequently, these men don't feel encouraged to involve themselves with the church.

## **Church Viewed as a Place for Women**

Furthermore, some AA men absent themselves from church because they view it as a place for designed for women. Particularly, the AA church has been known to be very emotional and expressive in its form of worship. The common displays of clapping, shouting, and swaying seem to some men to fit stereotypes of how women behave,<sup>71</sup> and such emotionalism is not viewed as a masculine attribute among AA men.<sup>72</sup>

During his survey of why AA men do not attend church, Kunjufu found that several men complained about church distractions. Some men even felt that it was hard to hear the message being delivered by the pastor due to so much hollering and dancing. One man recalled being hit

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<sup>68</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 61.

<sup>69</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 61.

<sup>70</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going To Church*, 130.

<sup>71</sup> Eric Redmond. *Where Are All The Brothers?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 33.

<sup>72</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 62.

in the mouth by a woman sitting beside him who was overcome with emotion.<sup>73</sup> Men tend to express their emotions more subtly than women, and a church in which attendees are often overcome with expressive worship can be far less attractive to them.<sup>74</sup> In his sermon in *The African American Pulpit Journal* entitled “Men Helping Men Experience the Delivering Power of God.” James Perkins states that people are socialized to think that church is not for men, but he insists that many people have missed the beauty of the gospel for men.<sup>75</sup> This is case with scores of AA men.

### **Dislike of Church Dress Codes**

Another concern that often keeps AA males away from church is the expected dress code. In many AA churches, there is an emphasis on men wearing suits or sports jackets.<sup>76</sup> Kunjufu suggests that some men are really bothered by the idea of having to wear a suit to church. He adds that there are men who feel that the church should not discriminate against them because of their attire. In addition, some AA men who do not have suits may feel uncomfortable and out of place due to the looks they receive from those who feel that they are not properly dressed.<sup>77</sup> This turns some AA men away from the church and may keep them discouraged from attending any worship services.<sup>78</sup>

### **Issues with Homosexual Males**

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<sup>73</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 62.

<sup>74</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 62.

<sup>75</sup> James Perkins, “Men Helping Men Experience the Delivering Power of God,” *The African American Pulpit* (Summer, 2002): 64.

<sup>76</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 64.

<sup>77</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 64.

<sup>78</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 64.

Some AA men absent themselves from the church because of the presence of homosexual males in attendance.<sup>79</sup> While questioning AA males about their lack of church attendance, Kunjufu found that there were some men in the group who spoke concerning the feminine-acting males who often attend AA churches.<sup>80</sup> Some of these men stated that they would only be comfortable with sending their girls to church because they did not want their boys exposed to weak men. Some AA males view the church as a place full of homosexual men, and because of this, they want no part of it.<sup>81</sup>

### **The Lack of Evangelism**

Kunjufu also highlights a lack of evangelism as another reason why AA males may not attend church. When asking the males that he surveyed about whether they had been witnessed to by anyone, only one man in the group said he had.<sup>82</sup> The one AA male who was witnessed to had been engaged by a Jehovah's Witness.<sup>83</sup> None of the men that he surveyed had encountered any real worthwhile witnessing experience. Kunjufu points out that it seems Muslims are the only ones effectively reaching many of low-income AA males.<sup>84</sup> The AA church too often fails at this task and its numbers suffer accordingly.

### **Church Is Viewed as Too Eurocentric**

Further, Kunjufu explains that his study revealed that some AA males do not involve themselves with church because they view it as too Eurocentric. Several of these men had a

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<sup>79</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 67.

<sup>80</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 67.

<sup>81</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 67.

<sup>82</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 68.

<sup>83</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 69.

<sup>84</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 69.

problem with a white, blonde, blue-eyed image of Jesus often displayed in AA churches.<sup>85</sup> Booker W. Edwards, in his dissertation “Absent Black Father's Effect on the Black Males' Development,” suggests the importance of constructing a theology that speaks to the culture and experiences of black people.<sup>86</sup> One of the men who participated in Kunjufu’s study made it clear that he preferred the mosque over the church because the mosque did not have these types of Eurocentric images.<sup>87</sup> Kunjufu contends that if the AA church seeks to worship in spirit and in truth, then such images need to be removed from their walls.<sup>88</sup> For many AA males, these images suggest that Christianity is not a religion for them. As a result, some AA men distance themselves from the church altogether.<sup>89</sup>

### **The Rise of Islam**

The rise of Islam is another barrier to AA male church involvement. Kunjufu highlights that there are approximately 40 million people of African descent in America, and only 16 million of these individuals attend church. In the face of these numbers, Islam continues to grow among AA males. Kunjufu estimates that 45% of all Muslims in America are of African descent.<sup>90</sup> Kunjufu asserts that the Nation of Islam effectively attracts AA males because of the concern they show in helping them.<sup>91</sup> He further adds that the Nation of Islam does not assume that a man is able to dedicate himself to the principles of Islam just because he attends a mosque. Considering this, every male who attends the mosque and expresses interest in following the

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<sup>85</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 69.

<sup>86</sup> Booker T. Edwards, “Absent Black Father's Effect on the Black Males' Development” (PhD diss., 1996).

<sup>87</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 60.

<sup>88</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 61.

<sup>89</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 61.

<sup>90</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 29.

<sup>91</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 29.

tenets of Islam is given a “big brother” who checks on him daily.<sup>92</sup> The man is then invited to worship services and educational classes where men and women are separated because Muslims believe that men lack the discipline to learn well in the presence of women. Men are trained in the principles of Islam and taught how to apply them in their daily living. They learn to be good fathers and husbands and how to respect their bodies.<sup>93</sup> Often the AA church falls short in offering support to AA males, and many of these men are left to grasp the principles of Jesus Christ without much concern. The care that Muslims put into assisting the AA men who come to the mosque is remarkable, and it may account for why they have a male presence far greater than that in Christian churches.<sup>94</sup>

### **The Lack of Presenting a Masculine Jesus**

Another major issue that Kunjufu lifts as a barrier keeping AA men from the black church is the failure to present a masculine Jesus. In his estimation, sometimes the church is guilty of presenting to parishioners a weak and defeated Jesus.<sup>95</sup> Kunjufu comments that “[i]n order for the church to become more attractive to men, we need to talk about a Jesus who was man enough to cry, tough enough to die, and strong enough to be resurrected. We need to make Jesus real. That’s what men need.”<sup>96</sup> Kunjufu asserts that the presentation of a weak, meek, and mild Jesus is not empowering to men. He says that men should be able to pray and worship as well as do push-ups and sit-ups.<sup>97</sup> Murrow also comments on this subject. He highlights what he calls a “feminine spirit” and a “masculine spirit.” He says that the so-called masculine spirit

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<sup>92</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 30.

<sup>93</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 30-31.

<sup>94</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 31.

<sup>95</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 23.

<sup>96</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 24-25.

<sup>97</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 25.

encompasses the core value of sports, achievement, competition, and victory.<sup>98</sup> He further explains that the feminine spirit expresses core values that include cooperation, nurture, and harmony.<sup>99</sup> Murrow asserts that a healthy church should possess a measure of the feminine spirit. However, he upholds that most churches are out of balance and overflowing with the feminine spirit while having a shortage of the masculine spirit. Often the masculine expression is frowned upon in the church and cast away as being too strong.<sup>100</sup> Murrow also explains that “When the masculine spirit shows up in church, Christians and non-Christians roundly condemn it. People who speak the truth too boldly are stifled because they might hurt someone’s feelings. Leaders who make bold moves are accused of being power hungry. Efforts to make church more efficient or effective are tabled in the name of harmony.<sup>101</sup> The lack of masculinity could be a sure way of keeping significant numbers of men from all races away from churches of all races. There is no exception as it concerns the AA male and the black church.

### **Exploring What Men Need**

As the church seeks to accommodate men and get them involved, it must also consider the men’s needs. In *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, Kunjufu upholds that man’s greatest need is spiritual in nature. He states that most AA men see their greatest need as financial. However, Kunjufu believes that men who are more mature in the Bible will understand that man’s primary need is spiritual.<sup>102</sup> To support this assertion, Kunjufu references Joshua 1:5, which states, “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with

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<sup>98</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going To Church*, 25.

<sup>99</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going To Church*, 25.

<sup>100</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going To Church*, 26.

<sup>101</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going To Church*, 26.

<sup>102</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Men’s Ministries*, 70.



Moses, I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.” He also gives reference to Joshua 1:8, which reads, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate therein it day and night, that thou mayest observe to according to all that is written therein: for then thou shall make your way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” Kunjufu points out that many AA males have come to believe that it is the white man holding them back. However, He points back to the Joshua 1:5 and asserts that according to it, nothing can hold a man back if he meditates on God’s Word.<sup>103</sup>

### **The Need for A Relationship with Jesus Christ**

Kunjufu expands his assertion that man’s most important need is spiritual in nature. He recalls Matthew 6:33, which reads, “But seek ye first that Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.” Kunjufu suggests that if AA males hold firm to these teachings and line their confessions up with them, they can make it through the toughest seasons.<sup>104</sup> He states that a man could lose his job, but his personal relationship with Jesus and knowing that God is the source of his power can give him the strength he needs to create another job. Kunjufu believes that good things will happen for the man led by God’s spirit.<sup>105</sup> This includes the AA male.

### **The Need for Close Male Friends**

In discussing male needs, Kunjufu also points out that men have needs that are much different than those women have. He argues that men need close male friends with whom they can share their feelings and deepest concerns. He further states that many occurrences of suicide

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<sup>103</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Men’s Ministries*, 71.

<sup>104</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Men’s Ministries*, 71.

<sup>105</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 71.

among men are because they tend to hold things inside.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, David Murrow suggests that every man needs a band of brothers.<sup>107</sup> Murrow comments, “though he may not realize it, every man longs to be part of a circle of one. It is the model Jesus left us. If the church was offering this kind of fellowship-united in purpose, mutually supportive, and accomplishing great things-you would not be able to blast men out of the church.”<sup>108</sup>

Murrow, referencing a Gallup poll, states that 51% of women have a best friend in their church as opposed to 35% of men. Kunjufu suggests that men need forums in which they can argue, debate, and challenge each other.<sup>109</sup> He upholds that even men have testimonies to share and things to say if the setting is created for them to do so. However, Kunjufu believes there very little opportunity is given to do this in church. When men are given opportunities to share with other men, it helps them and strengthens the faith of those who hear it.<sup>110</sup> Murrow argues that no matter how many suggestions a church implements, it will continue to lose men if they do not have a “company of brothers” to run with.<sup>111</sup>

### **The Need to Be Great**

Kunjufu also suggests that men need to be great. Kunjufu believes that men will not deeply invest themselves in any endeavor that denies them the possibility of being great.<sup>112</sup> He comments, “[t]he world offers men the possibility of greatness. The world cheers for men. Too

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<sup>106</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Men’s Ministries*, 64.

<sup>107</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going To Church*, 222.

<sup>108</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going To Church*, 222.

<sup>109</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going To Church*, 222.

<sup>110</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Men’s Ministries*, 64.

<sup>111</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 222.

<sup>112</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Men’s Ministries*, 67.

often a local church does not. What a tragedy. It's no sin to recognize men for the good they do. It's not about exalting individuals; it's about celebrating what God is doing in people's lives."<sup>113</sup>

Kunjufu upholds that for AA men to feel they are great, they do not want to constantly hear about negative things about them. Instead, he asserts, men want to hear about the men who are doing positive things within the community.<sup>114</sup> He suggests that AA men particularly want to hear about the men who are in college, the numbers of men who support their families, the numbers of men who continue to serve the Lord, and the numbers of men who have started successful businesses.<sup>115</sup> In his book *44 Ways to Increase Church Attendance*, Lyle Schaller explains that churches who offer hope and good news tend to attract the most people.<sup>116</sup> Kunjufu states that position, territory, and power are important to men, and he suggests that these are key factors in becoming great.<sup>117</sup> Institutions that want to effectively reach men must provide opportunities for men concerning all these factors.

### **The Need to Hear Positive Messages**

Akin to the need to be great, Kunjufu suggests that men will be drawn to churches that send them positive messages. He warns women that it is counterproductive for them to bring their men recordings of their pastor badgering men.<sup>118</sup> Kunjufu states that too few church leaders praise men for their accomplishments, and he believes that a wise pastor knows that stroking the

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<sup>113</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Men's Ministries*, 67.

<sup>114</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 66.

<sup>115</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 66.

<sup>116</sup> Lyle E. Schaller, *44 Ways to Increase Church Attendance* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 25.

<sup>117</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Men's Ministries*, 68.

<sup>118</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 66.

male ego can go a long way in terms of getting more male involvement.<sup>119</sup> Kunjufu also highlights that the greatness of the AA male is often hindered by negative feelings he senses from so-called prosperity churches in which the pastor is sometimes the only male spoken of in a positive light. He admonishes AA churches to remove this negative image by providing opportunities for all men to share in greatness.<sup>120</sup> If churches continue to send negative messages to men, Kunjufu is convinced that men will stay away from church, and those in attendance will continue leaving in droves.<sup>121</sup>

### **The Need to Be Empowered**

Furthermore, Kunjufu suggests that men need to be empowered. Focusing on the black church, Kunjufu suggests that some churches boast of more than 100 ministries. He highlights a problem within many black churches in which the pastor attempts to head all 100 ministries.<sup>122</sup> Kunjufu asserts that this makes no sense, and he calls upon pastors and churches to change it. In his estimation, a pastor must help empower men by following the biblical model of passing the baton. In his assessment of this matter, Kunjufu recalls that Moses passed the baton to Joshua, and Elijah passed it to Elisha.<sup>123</sup> He strongly asserts that men need to be empowered, and he warns that any pastor whose ego doesn't allow him to empower other men will see the growth and effectiveness of the ministry severely limited.<sup>124</sup>

### **The Need for Vision**

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<sup>119</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 66.

<sup>120</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 66.

<sup>121</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 66.

<sup>122</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 69.

<sup>123</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 69.

<sup>124</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 70.

When discussing the needs of men, David Murrow also suggests that men need vision. He upholds that vision comes from God and it represents that call of God for each church and believer to accomplish something great. In his book *Stout Advice: The Secret to Building Yourself, People, and Teams*, Logan Stout states that vision helps to keep people locked into the big picture.<sup>125</sup> Murrow says that men need to have clear and strong vision presented to them, and if they do not, they will not invest themselves. He states that when a vision is present, even menial tasks carry great significance.<sup>126</sup> In Murrow's estimation, men who do not have vision set before them will see what they are doing as a club and not as a cause.<sup>127</sup> Murrow states:

Here's the problem: We put men to work in the church duplicating tapes, and they think they are duplicating tapes. They are not! They are creating lifeboats that can rescue drowning souls. They are forging swords that can pierce the darkness that binds the captives. Every usher and parking lot attendant, every teacher and team leader must see himself as a link in a chain going back to Christ Himself, a foot soldier in the army of a transforming world. That's the power of vision, and without it men perish!<sup>128</sup>

In addition, Murrow points out that Jesus had a vision which defined the focus of His life on earth. He further states that men are spiritually perishing daily, and they need significance that can only be found in a vision authored by God. This he believes, will fulfill man's desire to be a part of something that is greater than himself.<sup>129</sup>

### **The Need to Be Challenged**

While Murrow highlights man's need for vision, he also states that men need challenges. He explains that there are some men who will not follow a church leader unless they are given

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<sup>125</sup> Logan Stout, *Stout Advice: The Secrets to Building Yourself, People, and Teams* (Bloomington: Author House, 2013), 18.

<sup>126</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 159.

<sup>127</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 159.

<sup>128</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 159.

<sup>129</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 158.

what appears to be obstacles ahead.<sup>130</sup> Murrow highlights that Jesus understood this truth well and used it to motivate the men who followed Him. He goes on to say that Jesus did not promise his disciples a road of ease. In fact, Murrow highlights that Jesus promised that there would be trials ahead and He informed them that they would go out as “sheep among wolves.”<sup>131</sup> Murrow asserts that if the church wants to have bold, aggressive, and greatness-seeking men, it must do as Jesus did and present the promise of pain and suffering along the way.<sup>132</sup> In Murrow’s view, modern Christianity is often marketed as an antidote for pain, suffering and trial. This, he believes, is different from the model that Jesus used.<sup>133</sup>

### **The Need for High-Standards**

Closely related to man’s need for challenge is his need for high standards. Murrow states that some people have a misconception that churches ask too much of parishioners. He disagrees and believes that the quite opposite is true. Citing a study done with 2,000 churches by Thomas Rainer, Murrow states that without exception the unchurched greatly responded to high-expectation churches. Murrow agrees with Rainer that people have no desire to be a part of anything that expects little.<sup>134</sup> He also asserts that Rick Warren built Saddleback Church on this very philosophy. Mimicking the words of Warren, Murrow writes that people do not resent being asked for great commitment when it is associated with great purpose.<sup>135</sup> He adds that often men are brought into a church and plugged into the ministry machine, but they are not shown how

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<sup>130</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 162.

<sup>131</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 162.

<sup>132</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 161.

<sup>133</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 161.

<sup>134</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 161.

<sup>135</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 161.

their contribution is making an eternal difference. Murrow upholds that men need these high standards and will be more than likely drawn to a church that has them.<sup>136</sup>

### **The Need to Defend Against Satanic Attacks**

In addition to other needs, Kunjufu states that men also have a need to defend themselves against Satan's attack. He highlights that men are highly visual individuals, and he asserts that Satan uses this information to his advantage. He states that one of the greatest tools that Satan has designed to harm men is that of pornography. Kunjufu believes that this multi-billion-dollar industry has been the cause of the destruction of many families.<sup>137</sup> He asserts that the men who are given to pornography often make it their god and mistress.<sup>138</sup> In the book *Act Like Men: 40 Days to Biblical Manhood* James MacDonald upholds that internet porn is devouring the lives of men like a form of deadly cancer. Kunjufu recalls an incident in which he tried to witness to a hotel worker. He remembers that the worker quickly told him that he did not want to hear about Kunjufu's God. The worker told Kunjufu that the hotel had over one thousand rooms that all had been rented out to ministers during a conference. He further stated that his manager noted a record-breaking rental of pornographic movies by these church leaders.<sup>139</sup> Kunjufu says that men must remain aware of lust, adultery, pornography, and fornication. These things have been known to take down many strong men, and they stand ready to claim others.

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<sup>136</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 161.

<sup>137</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Men's Ministries*, 72.

<sup>138</sup> James MacDonald, *Act Like Men: 40 Days to Biblical Manhood* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 11.

<sup>139</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 72.

Kunjufu believes that men need to be prepared to respond appropriately to these satanic attacks.<sup>140</sup>

### **The Need for Good Pastoral Leadership**

It has also been suggested that men need strong pastors. If a church plans to effectively provide for men's needs, it will require strong pastoral leadership. This is true in every community, especially so in the black church. According to personality tests, men who are in ordained ministry exhibit more feminine personality traits than men in general. Studies show that pastors tend to have lower testosterone levels than other men. This does not suggest that most pastors are effeminate, but it does suggest that they may be more verbal and expressive.<sup>141</sup> Often men who bear such characteristic are not appreciated by other men, and pastors who bear such qualities must be judicious in the ways they behave. Pastors who desire to get men involved in church activities need to intentionally adopt the qualities of an effective leader.<sup>142</sup>

Murrow suggests that a good pastoral leader who will greatly affect men understands the importance of training them and giving them responsibility. Moreover, he states that men want to be a part of a movement where they can contribute. He suggests that churches in which the pastor makes all decisions cause men's interest to wither.<sup>143</sup> Murrow quotes John Eldredge, who says that a church must create a team and not a one-man-show. He challenges pastors to heed this advice and give men the opportunity to apply what they have learned.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Men's Ministries*, 74.

<sup>141</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 170.

<sup>142</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 170.

<sup>143</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 170

<sup>144</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 170.



Furthermore, Murrow suggests that men appreciate pastors who possess firm convictions. He quotes an unchurched man who was highly disappointed by the churches he visited and the lack of conviction they displayed. The man found, to his surprise, that many of these churches had no more conviction than he did. Murrow asserts that men are drawn to a pastor who proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ in a manner that is bold and unashamed. This, however, is not to be confused with being harsh and condemning. Men strongly dislike pastors who badger them and others; they are more likely to follow a leader who believes what he is saying while being gentle in spirit.<sup>145</sup> This is a preference for men in general, including AA men.<sup>146</sup>

David Murrow also adds that men appreciate a pastor who is a regular guy. Murrow quotes Lee Strobel, who asserts that men who do not attend church prefer a down-to-earth leader who does not insist on a title of high importance.<sup>147</sup> Unchurched men do not like to see anything that suggests arrogance or elitism as it concerns a pastor. Men have a greater appreciation for a pastor they view to be authentic. Murrow quotes an individual who comments about his pastor's authenticity, who said that he highly appreciated the fact that his pastor speaks openly of his struggles, failures, and shortcomings. He added that he appreciated having a leader who did not pretend trying to be something he was not.<sup>148</sup>

### **Men and Their Value to the Church**

When considering that so many men do not attend church, one might wonder what value they bring to church. Murrow asserts that many men have gotten the message that the church

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<sup>145</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 171.

<sup>146</sup> Kunjufu, *Developing Strong Black Male Ministries*, 66.

<sup>147</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 171.

<sup>148</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 171.

does not need them.<sup>149</sup> He states that this happens because most positions in the church require verbal and relational skills that men may not always have. He highlights that the low priority often given to the church's ministry to men helps to send a message to men that they are not important. However, Murrow argues that not only do men need the church, the church needs men.<sup>150</sup>

### **Men Help the Church to Take Risks**

In his discussion concerning how men benefit the church, Murrow states that men's orientation toward to risk taking promotes the church's health. He highlights that men are by nature wired to take risks. Murrow argues that in the biblical parable of the servants with talents, Jesus teaches that taking risks pleases God. He further states that the servant in the parable who does not take risks is referred by Jesus as a wicked servant. Though many women love safety, the church needs men to lead it outside of its comfort zone into place of adventure and the possibility of greater accomplishments.<sup>151</sup>

### **Men Bring Strength**

Murrow also asserts that men bring strength to the church. He adds that although women offer great gifts to the church, one thing men bring is strength. Murrow quotes Gordon Dalby, who reflects on the awesome and unique power displayed when men unite. Dalby says that this power comes from God and is given collectively to men to get His work done. When spiritually-alive men are present, they bring great strength to the church.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 171.

<sup>150</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 36.

<sup>151</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 45.

<sup>152</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 46.

## **Men Bring Finances**

Furthermore, Murrow explains that men bring finances to a church. He states that when a wife comes to church the tithe is greatly lessened. However, if a man attends church with his wife, they usually tithe from their household income.<sup>153</sup> Murrow states that a Gallup study found that people who are engaged in their churches give three times as much as those who are not.<sup>154</sup> Thus, when men are involved with the church there is great financial benefit for churches.

## **Men Bring Their Families**

In addition to the other benefits that men bring to a church, Murrow adds that men bring their families to church. Research shows that when a mother comes to faith, 17% of her family commonly follows. However, when a father comes to faith in Christ, 93% of the time his whole family follows him.<sup>155</sup> In his discussion, Murrow mentions the jailer in the Acts 16 text of the Bible. He highlights how the jailer comes to faith in Jesus Christ and his whole family follows him. This serves as an example how men can powerfully impact a church.<sup>156</sup> As they bring their wives and children, the church grows and gains more individuals to become effective witnesses for Jesus Christ.

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<sup>153</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 46.

<sup>154</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 46.

<sup>155</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 47.

<sup>156</sup> Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 47.

## **CHAPTER THREE: GATHERING AND ASSESSING RESEARCH**

As previously stated, the purpose of the present study is to explore how to increase the involvement of AA males at CFTF Church Ministries in Wilson, North Carolina. This research will to consider how the experiences of men at CFTF Church impact their church involvement. Upon examining the findings from this study, implementable recommendations will be made for CFTF Church and other local churches that may face similar circumstances.

### **The Demographics of Wilson County**

According to the United States Census Bureau's 2016 report, Wilson County, North Carolina has a population of approximately 81,661. Within the Wilson city limits the population is 49,620. When examined by race 56% of residents are white and 40.6% are black. No numbers were issued concerning the number of AA males in the area. The median household income for residents in the area is \$38,497.00. The report estimates that 25.9% of people in the city live in poverty. Also, it is estimated that 79.8% of individuals living in the area have high school diplomas or higher.<sup>157</sup>

### **History of Contending for the Faith Church**

CFTF Church Ministries is located in Wilson, North Carolina. The church was started in January 2004, and it originally held services at a middle school in the area. The first meeting on the church was on a Friday night with approximately 200 people in attendance. During the first year, the church added about 80 people to its membership. This growth allowed the church to

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<sup>157</sup>“Wilson County Quick Facts”  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/wilsoncountynorthcarolina/PST045216>, accessed April 7, 2017.

further establish itself financially. Within six months, the church raised enough funds to purchase land in the heart of one of Wilson's predominately AA Communities.

After a year, the church secured a loan from a local bank. Church leaders led the congregants in a ground-breaking ceremony and announced the plans for the new edifice. The construction effort took approximately 10 months, and soon after, in October 2006, the congregation moved to its present location. The church has continued to witness steady growth since its inception. Church records reveal that there are approximately 1,000 people on the membership role and there is an average Sunday attendance of 400 to 500 people.

### **Ministry Context**

CFTF Church is not a very culturally diverse ministry. It would be characterized as a predominately AA church with less than 1% of the congregation representing other ethnicities. As far a gender is concerned, the church is made up of approximately 75% female members. This gender difference is reflected in many services held at the church. Of the 400 to 500 who frequently attend Sunday morning worship services, usually fewer than 70 are men.

CFTF has a weekly Sunday school class that convenes every Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m. During this time, attendees learn and discuss the Bible from a lesson that is prepared by an appointed teacher. Following Sunday school, the congregation is led into a Praise and Worship service for approximately 30 minutes. During this time people are invited to stand and participate or they may remain seated if they desire. After the Praise and Worship, the Sunday morning worship service begins with a selected minister calling the service to order with a Scripture reading and prayer. The service also includes a sermon from the pastor and always ends with an invitation for those in attendance to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and savior.

There are also several auxiliary ministries at the church. These auxiliaries include a Women's Fellowship, Men's Fellowship, Choir Ministry, Praise and Worship Ministry, Dance Ministry, Young Men's Ministry, and Young Ladies Ministry, Youth Ministry, Married Couple's Ministry, Single's Ministry, and Senior's Ministry. These auxiliaries minister to different segments of the congregation and those who desire can join them. Each of these groups usually meets on an evening throughout the week or on Saturdays. They are chaired usually by a leader and an advisory team who work together to plan events for their respective ministries.

The church also has its own governmental structure, and it does not belong to any major denominational body or hierarchy. However, CFTF is an autonomous body that has voluntarily joined itself to a fellowship of other independent Christian churches and pastors. CFTF has a senior pastor who is primarily responsible for maintaining the general congregation's teaching ministry. The pastor teaches Bible studies and he presides over the weekly Sunday morning worship service. Assisting the pastor is a ministerial staff comprised of 30 ministers. These leaders assist the pastor with teaching responsibilities when needed and they help to oversee many of the church's auxiliaries. There are also deacons who assist the pastor with visiting the sick, taking care the needs of the parishioners, and helping to maintain church order. The female counterparts of the deacons are usually referred to as "Mothers." These women are responsible for helping with the needs of women within the congregation.

The ministry teams at CFTF Church have a strong focus and are very effective in many regards. However, there is room for improvement as it concerns CFTF's ministry to men. Due to many different circumstances, several events that had served to unite men have ceased. The church had, in the past, organized several annual events in which men could participate and work together. Particularly, there was Men's Day week in which various events were planned around

the men. This event would end with Sunday morning worship in which the men were responsible for the order of the service. Also, the church had in the past done men's retreats in which the men would travel out of town together for a few days of teaching and fellowship. There was always a great response to these events and their planning. However, these things have not taken place in the last few years.

### **Community Profile**

CFTF Church rests in the eastern part of Wilson in the heart of predominately AA community. This community is also the home to a significant Hispanic population. The community in which the church resides has an elementary school, which is presently one the lowest performing elementary school in the county. Significant numbers of these children are being raised in single parent homes in which fathers are not present. Many of the people who live in this community have very low incomes, and sometimes meeting basic needs maybe a struggle for these families. The community is plagued by drug-related crime, substance abuse, alcoholism, gang activity, theft, and other crimes. Significant numbers of men in this community are unemployed and often entangled with one of more of the issues listed above.

### **Participant Profile**

Thirty individuals participated in this study. Each of these men were AAs who reside in and around Wilson, North Carolina. These males reflected three different age groups: Group A represented men between the ages of 18 and 34, Group B represented men between the ages of 35 and 50, and Group C represented men between the ages 51 and 65. Each group reflected men from different generations. The questionnaire revealed that 23 of these men are married and 7 are single. Each participant has been a member at CFTF Church for at least one year.

**Table 1.** Number and Age of Participants

	<b>Group A</b>	<b>Group B</b>	<b>Group C</b>
Number of participants	10	10	10
Age range (years)	1–34	35–50	51–65

### **Research Procedure**

Each participant received a formal letter (see Appendix A) asking them to participate in a study being conducted within the local congregation. The letter explained their commitment, which was minimal, to the study. They were asked to keep all information confidential. The addresses of all potential participants were obtained from the official membership list of CFTF Church.

Recruitment was done by US mail. Each potential participant received the explanatory letter and a return letter with their name and a place for them to accept or reject participation in the study. The return letter was sent via the US mail and a stamped envelope was included in the original packet to help with confidentiality. Seeking to protect the identity of each potential participant and to minimize the risk around their involvement in this study, participants were asked to keep their involvement completely confidential.

Church records were examined to create a list of all the AA males who were adult members of the congregation. From this list, men between the ages of 18 and 65 who could potentially participate were chosen. A maximum 30 participants were sought for this study. Thirty-four individuals promptly responded and agreed to participate in this study. The maximum number of participants were chosen from this group respondents.



## **Research Acknowledgements**

The researcher serves as the pastor for the participants in the study, and while there is no financial or supervisory authority over the participants, there is an element of spiritual leading present in these relationships. These relationships are acknowledged, but no conflict is anticipated since there is no grading or professional authority over any of the participants.

## **Research Protocol**

Data was collected through interviews during which participants were asked to respond to a questionnaire prepared by the author. Each participant was fully informed that their involvement required them to be interviewed on their experiences and that this data would be used to construct a dissertation as a part of the researcher's doctoral requirements. No participant's data was to be released for any reason. All data would remain in the secure care of the researcher and several measures were taken to ensure confidentiality. For instance, the initial contact was done using the US mail so there would be no identifying documents to disclose the nature of the correspondence except to the respondent. Interviews would be held at a time and space where no one else would be present or know the nature of the visit, other than the interviewee. Each member was also asked to maintain total confidentiality of the study throughout so as not to compromise the integrity of the research.

## **Research Findings and Interpretation of Results**

Question 4 was in the background section of the questionnaire. This question asked participants who raised them. The aim of this question was to examine how many participants were reared without a father in the home. When considering this question, 15 men (50%) grew up without a father in the home. These men were mostly reared by a mother or grandmother.

Question 6 inquired about the education level of the study participants. It appears that 29 of the surveyed participants completed their high school diploma. Only 1 participant revealed that he had dropped out of high school. Further, this survey revealed that out of all 30 participants only 2 had some college experience but none had graduated. Thus, 96% of all participants in this study had received at least a high school diploma. Acknowledging that 50% of these men were reared without fathers in the home, this study reveals that there is no significant difference in educational accomplishments among the participants who were reared with fathers in the home and those who were not. However, the 1 participant who dropped out of school had no father in the home and believes that having one might have helped him to finish.

Question 8 asked if participants had ever been arrested. In Group A, 4 out of 10 of the participants said that they had been arrested. From Group B, 5, out of 10 participants said they had been arrested. In Group C, 3 out of 10 participants had been arrested. Of the total of 12 participants who had been arrested, 8 of them were reared without a father in the home. Thus, 66.6% of surveyed participants who had been arrested were without fathers. Those participants who had been arrested with fathers in the home represented 33.4%. The results of this survey show that the arrest rate among those without fathers in the home is greater than the rate for with fathers present. Thus, participants in this study seem to confirm other research that suggests that men without fathers in the home are more likely to be arrested.

**Table 2.** Participants Arrested with or without Fathers

<b>Participants Arrested with Fathers</b>	<b>Participants Arrested without Fathers</b>
33.4%	66.6 %

Another section of the survey asked the participants about their early church experiences. The participants were asked if they regularly attended church when they were growing up. This question was asked so that the researcher could examine participants' history with church and how this might have impacted them into adulthood. In Group A, 4 out of 10 said that they attended church while growing up. This means that 6 out of 10 men in in this group did not attend church when they were being reared. Group B showed that 8 of 10 men attended church regularly while growing up. Only 2 out of this group of 10 were not reared in church. In Group C, 10 out of 10 men stated that they attended church regularly. The overall results reveal that 73% of participants in this study were reared in church.

**Table 3.** Percent of Participants Reared in Church.

Men reared in church	73%
Men not reared in church	27%

In the questions about early childhood church experiences, the researcher asked participants if they were given a choice concerning their church attendance. In Group A, 6 out of 10 stated that going to church was not discussed or it was not an issue in their house. However, 4 out of 10 in this same group revealed that going to church was mandatory in their homes. In Group B, 8 out 10 men stated that church attendance was mandatory in their homes. In this group, 2 people revealed that church attendance was not a topic of conversation in their home. The results from Group C showed that 10 out 10 men said that going to church was required in their homes. The findings reveal that 100% of those participants reared in church were required

to attend. It also reveals that going to church was not a topic of conversation in homes of those who were not reared in church.

Question 10 asked participants who was responsible for taking them to church while growing up. In Group A, of the 4 who attended church regularly 3 were taken by their mothers and 1 was taken by his grandmother. Also, out of the 8 men in Group B who attended church regularly, 3 men stated that they were taken to church by their mothers and 5 men were taken to church by their grandmothers or an aunt. From the 10 men in Group C who regularly attended church, 2 of them were taken by their mother, 2 by a grandmother, and 6 were taken by their mother and father. This study reveals that of the 22 men who were reared attending church regularly (16 out of 22) 72.8% were taken by female figures in their lives and 27.2% (6 out of 22) were taken by their mother and father. This suggests that a majority of men in this study experienced women taking them to church as children. The answers from participants to this question support the research suggesting that most males are introduced to the church by their mothers or some other female figures. Lower numbers of participants revealed that their fathers had anything to do with their church attendance.

**Table 4.** Participants Taken to Church by Males or Females

Men taken to church by female figure: mother, grandmother, aunt	72.8%
Men taken to church by female and male figure: mother and father	27.2%

In question 12, the researcher asked participants what if anything was discouraging about church while growing up. From Group A, 4 men commented that church was boring. Of these same 4 people, 2 stated that the preacher was not easy to understand and 1 stated that there were

not enough activities for youth. One of these 4 participants also revealed that some of the people were mean. There were 6 in this group who simply did not attend church and had no thoughts on the matter. In Group B, participants also stated that church was boring to them. Three stated that the church catered more to an older generation. Four participants from Group B commented on the length of church services. Two of those who commented on the length of services also spoke to the frequency of church services. These 2 participants similarly expressed that they felt they stayed in church all the time and that this was too much. Also, 3 participants from this group expressed that they were not well taught or that the message was confusing. In Group C, 4 of the men stated that church was too long. Three men revealed that church was too frequent said that the preacher was difficult to understand. Also, 2 participants from Group C testified that they recalled staying in church all day and all the time when they were growing up. It appears from these participants that three themes arise from their childhood church experience. For those men who attended church regularly, they seem to have been frustrated by the boring nature of church as well, the lack of clarity from the minister, and the feeling of there being simply too much church.

**Table 5.** Participants Childhood Church Experiences

<b>Major Three Findings from Childhood Church Experiences</b>
1. Church was boring/lengthy (long services)
2. Lack of clarity and understanding from the minister
3. Church was too frequent (too much church)

The researcher inquired if participants had left the church when they became adults. Most participants who thought that church was too boring or too frequent or that the pastor was not clear revealed that they went through a time when they were disconnected from the church. A few of these participants said that they attended funerals or weddings held at church but were not otherwise involved. These participants expressed that the lack of feeling church related to them as young people, the need for something new, the desire to live life without restraint, and the lack of having made a real commitment to Jesus Christ were reasons they disconnected from church when they became adults. Three participants similarly expressed that when they became adults and were allowed to make their own decisions, they decided to take a break from church. One of these participants commented that he believed in God and respected the church, but he planned to come back when he was older. This study revealed that 18 out of the 22 participants who attended church as children spent time disconnected from church when they became adults. Four participants in this study indicated that they maintained some degree of church involvement as adults. Each of these 4 individuals similarly suggested that the routine of going to church as children helped them stay involved with the church as adults.

**Table 6.** Participants Reared in Church Who Remained Involved as Adults

Participants who were reared in church but left as adults	81.8%
Participants who were reared in church and remained as adults	18.2%

**Table 7.** Reasons Participants Reared in Church Left as Adults

The feeling that church didn't relate to them as young people
The need for something new
The desire to live without restraint
The lack of having a genuine commitment to Jesus Christ

### **Present Church Experiences**

The researcher asked several questions from in the third section of the questionnaire related to the present church experiences of participants. The aim of this section was to examine the present church involvement and experiences of men as they relate to CFTF Church. Questions 16 and 17 asked the participants if they had previously been a member of another church and why they left to join CFTF. Out of Group A, 4 of 10 had been affiliated with another church, and CFTF was the first church experience for the other 6 in this group. Out of the 4 who had been affiliated with another church, all 4 were members of these having grown up in these churches or because a parent or close relative was a part of the church. As for Group B, 8 out of 10 had been members of another church. Most of the men in Group B were a part of churches that they grew up in and stayed affiliated with in some form. In Group C, all 10 individuals had been a part of another church before joining CFTF. When participants from all the groups asked why they left their churches and came to CFTF, most men revealed they were looking for growth. Several participants similarly stated that they visited CFTF Church and understood what was being taught, and this had not always been the case the case at their previous churches. Some participants expressed that they came to CFTF because they wanted to be in a church that could help them grow spiritually. Other participants expressed that they joined CFTF because

they sought a leader who they felt could follow and respect. The prevailing reasons these participants became members of CFTF were the desires to learn the Word of God, to grow spiritually, and to follow a leader they could respect.

Question 19 asked participants to explain the initial experience they had in becoming a member of CFTF and what more could have been done to assist them. In Group A, 10 out of 10 participants stated that they were helped by CFTF's New Member Ministry, Bible study and Sunday morning worship services. Also, from this group, 6 out of 10 revealed that they were encouraged by seeing and connecting with other young men at CFTF. When commenting about what more could have been done to assist them, 5 out of 10 of these participants stated they would have benefited from more phone calls from other men or from having somebody encourage them along the way. Group B revealed that 6 out of 10 men benefited primarily from Sunday morning worship and Bible study. It is important to note that these 6 participants were founding members of CFTF who predated the organization of the church's New Member's Class. However, from this group, 4 out of 10 said they benefited from the New Member's Class as well as Sunday Morning worship and Bible study. From Group B, 8 men expressed that they needed nothing added to their initial experience. Nevertheless, 2 of the men stated that they could have benefited more if they had someone checking up on them more in some way. In Group C, 7 out of 10 men benefited in their initial experience at CFTF from receiving teachings at Bible study and Sunday worship services. As with some in Group B, these 7 participants from Group C were founding members of CFTF and did not have the benefit of a formal New Member's Class. Three out of 10 men in Group C stated that they benefited in the initial membership process from the New Member's Class and from their attendance of Bible study and Sunday worship. All 10 men in this group were satisfied with this initial membership experience



at CFTF and had nothing had concerning how they could have benefited more. These results reveal that of 16 participants who attended the New Member's Class, all of them benefited from it. Participants were unanimously helped in their initial membership experience by the teachings from Bibles study and Sunday morning worship. The answers also reveal that 8 (26%) men felt that their initial experience as new members of CFTF could have been furthered assisted by extra support in the form of phone calls or meetings with more spiritually mature men.

Question 22 asked participants to rate their involvement at CFTF as it relates to Sunday school, Sunday worship, Bible study and men's ministry participation and to explain their ratings. In Group A, 8 out of 10 participants stated they regularly attend Sunday morning worship services and weekly Bible study. In this same group, 2 participants revealed that they attended Sunday school, Sunday morning worship, Bible study and participated in men's ministry. Most participants in this group stated that their church involvement was necessary for their Christian growth and maturity, keeping them strong in Christ, and helping to make their lives better.

In Group B, 7 out of 10 participants revealed that they attend Sunday morning worship services and Bible study on a regular basis. Also, in this same group, 2 men revealed that they attended Sunday morning worship, Bible study, and participated in men's ministry. One participant stated that he participated in Sunday school, Sunday morning worship, Bible study and participated in an auxiliary activity. When giving an explanation as to their church involvement, most participants in Group B explained that their level of participation in church functions encouraged them to grow, helped strengthen them, and gave them more understanding about God and His word.

In Group C, 6 out of 10 attended Sunday school, Sunday morning worship, Bible study, and men’s ministry. The remaining 4 participants attended Sunday morning worship, Bible study and participated in men’s ministry. Explanations for their church involvement were similar to Group B participants and had to do with the need for Christian growth, strength for life, and the desire to learn more. Overall, the results reveal that 15 participants (50%) are in regular attendance for Sunday morning worship and Bible study at CFTF. It further shows that 6 people of participants (20%) stated that they were involved in Sunday morning worship, Bible study, and an auxiliary.

When considering the participants’ level of involvement at CFTF Church, this research shows that 9 participants (30%) are in regular attendance at Sunday school, Sunday morning worship, Bible study and Men’s Ministry. The results suggest that 50% of participants are not involved in Men’s Ministry and 70% did not attend Sunday School. The prevailing theme among participants concerning the reason for their level of church involvement were the desire to learn more of God’s Word and the desire to grow. This research suggests that participants in this study attended Sunday Morning Worship and Bible Study without exception. The research reveals that more attention must be given to increase involvement in the areas of Sunday School and Men’s Ministry.

**Table 8.** Participants’ Present Church Involvement

Sunday morning worship and Bible study.	50%
Sunday morning worship, Bible Study, and Men’s Ministry.	20%

Sunday School, Sunday morning worship, Bible study, and Men's Ministry.	30%
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**Table 9.** Participants Not Attending Sunday School or Men's Ministry

Participants not attending men's fellowship	50%
Participants not attending Sunday school	70%

As a follow-up Question 22 for the 50% of participants who did not attend Men's Ministry, the author inquired if they had any reason for not doing so. The prevailing issues most associated with not attending Men's Ministry were work related. Several participants stated that they worked Saturdays when most scheduled fellowship meetings are held. Some of these men voiced an interest in coming to events that might be held by the Men's Ministry at other times. Three of those participants not attending Men's fellowship voiced that they had no real reason and simply vowed to do better.

The author also inquired of the 70% of participants not attending Sunday school why they did not. The greater part of participants stated work-related issues. Many of them come in from work very late on Sunday night or early on Sunday morning and need to rest before coming to the Sunday morning worship service. A few participants suggested that they had never really attended Sunday school, and a few never really considered it or received encouragement to attend.

When specifically asked about the barriers participants believe keep men living in the immediate community away from CFTF Church, several themes emerged. It was suggested by 13 participants that some men in the community simply don't believe that they are good enough to come to church. One participant stated that when speaking to AA men who live in the church's immediate community, they often tell him that they will come to the church when they get some things straightened out. Several participants similarly suggested that AA men in the community and throughout the city believe that they must fix their lives *before* coming to church. Another participant stated that he speaks to AA men in the community and throughout the city who have the perception that people in church have their lives together and it is not a place for "people like him." This research shows that participants believe that there are significant numbers of men in the CFTF community who do not attend church because of the misconception that they are not good enough to do so.

Concerning barriers that keep men in CFTF immediate community from attending church, some participants suggested that men in the community may stay away from the church because they don't have proper clothing. Three participants similarly stated that AA men from the community feel that they will be looked down on by church people because of a lack of "church clothing." Four participants commented that they have invited people in the church's immediate community to come to church and the lack of dressy clothing is often an excuse.

The other theme that emerged among participants is that some men in the immediate community do not come because there has been no consistent effort to invite them. One participant said that CFTF Church men have not consistently gone out into the community to let people know what the church is about and invite them to the church. Two participants similarly stated that the men in this community need to know that the church cares enough to reach out to

community men and meet them where they are. One participant stated that when the church reaches out to men, then they will be more likely to come to church events. Another participant stated that he has found when a church in the community invites people to the church, most people will promise to come. He also believes that many of these individuals will after repeated invitations show up and that some AA men in the CFTF community will likely do the same.

**Table 10.** Barriers to Community Men’s Involvement in CFTF

The belief that they are not good enough to attend church.
The lack of proper church clothing.
The lack of the church reaching out to invite them.

Participants were also asked what if anything hindered their personal involvement at CFTF Church. The participants in this study overwhelmingly said that if anything hinders their church involvement, it is their work schedules. Several participants expressed that their work schedules sometimes conflict with church events and it is often difficult to attend. Some participants similarly stated that they worked two weekends out of every month and missed some events depending on the weekends in which these events are held. Others expressed that having to work long overtime hours sometimes keeps them busy and tires them out. Several participants in the group felt no real barriers to their involvement. Thus, overall, the overwhelming barrier that hinders church involvement for participants in this study is work-related issues. The participants in this study did not express any of the barriers to church involvement that were stated in Chapter Two of this project (dictatorial leadership, church being too emotional, services too lengthy, the lack of relevance, etc.) as hindrances to their own involvement. However, the participants do believe that some of those barriers discussed in Chapter Two could be reasons

why some AA men in CFTF church's immediate community may not commit to church involvement.

Question 26 asked participants what the things they appreciate about CFTF Church as AA males. Among these men, 95% stated that they appreciate the teachings that they get from the ministry. Several participants stated that for the first time in their lives they are receiving an understanding of the Word of God. Another 80% of these men similarly appreciated having a leader whose lifestyle they could respect. Two men similarly commented that they had previously been in a church where the pastor did not live honorably. One participant stated that his previous pastor's poor life caused him to lose respect among the people. Some participants stated that they appreciate having leadership with whom they can talk. One of the men in this study commented on how some pastors seem highly untouchable. He suggested that sometimes this image can be very unwelcoming to members and newcomers alike. Several participants also appreciated that CFTF assists the surrounding community. The men who appreciated this placed special emphasis on their appreciation for the church food pantry, clothes closet, and financial assistance to the community. Question 26 reveals that the men in this study have very high interest in what they consider to be good leadership. Also, several of the men said that they appreciated the loving atmosphere in the church. One participant stated that the love within the church is strong. Another participant stated the he appreciates the love in the church and how people make an effort to support each other. The overwhelming evidence shows that participants are drawn to a pastor who is touchable and relatable. Also, the evidence in this study suggests that these men look for leaders whom they can trust enough to live sound Christian lives. This study also revealed that participants like to see a church that is active in its community. Further,

these findings showed that participants appreciated a church where love is present and active. These findings agree with many of the assertions made by Kunjufu.

Question 29 asked participants what practices could be added to improve the involvement of AA men at CFTF. Several themes came to the forefront in this part of the study's discussion. Participants revealed that more activities that focus on men are needed. There were also requests for more fellowship opportunities for men to get to know each other and unite. One participant expressed that he feels men respond well to situations in which they can freely talk to each other. Another participant expressed that he would be more inclined to get involved once opportunities were presented for him to get to know other men within the church. Several of the men expressed wanting to travel or do a retreat specific to men. Some participants similarly expressed that they connected with other men due to the church's annual men's retreat. A few participants revealed they did not know or have conversations with some of the men in the church until a past men's retreat. Many of the participants were positively affected in some way by the men's retreats. Some men similarly expressed that they were able to get to know other men on a personal level and were able to see other men in a more positive way after participating in a men's retreat. It should also be noted that 6 of the young men from Group A expressed the desire for fellowship and outdoor sports activities like basketball.

Another prevailing theme thought to increase AA male involvement is the need for forums of teaching and training. Most of the participants in this study thought that it would be beneficial to add a variety of training classes for men. This would include teachings from the Bible aimed at helping men and classes that could assist young men as they face common challenges in life. One participant said that he loved God and the church, but sometimes he had great difficulty reading the Bible and grasping some of its teachings. He felt that there were some

other men within the church who were facing the same issues. Similar concerns were expressed by several participants. One participant remarked that a consistent Bible study for brothers would get men involved while giving them an opportunity to fellowship and grow in God's Word.

Another suggestion that came to the forefront concerning increasing the involvement of AA men was an outreach ministry aimed at reaching men in the surrounding community. An overwhelming number of participants spoke about outreach or evangelism in some form. It was similarly expressed among several of the participants that more men in the community might come to the church and get involved if they witnessed a stronger outreach led by CFTF men. Other participants highlighted that men would be attracted to the church by witnessing men who are excited about God. The outreach ideas presented by various participants included evangelistic efforts in which men would canvass the community and share the message of Jesus. Others suggested less formal opportunities when men in the community could come and eat or receive help with other basic needs.

Another area of focus that participants thought could help the church to increase the involvement of AA males was some form of ministry to help newcomers and men needing assistance. One participant said that he talks to men on his job who have so many problems. He feels that men who come to the church need seasoned men who are prepared to help them. This participant stated that CFTF would do well to add more support for men who are new to the church and those who are spiritually weak. Another participant suggested a ministry in which brothers from the church seek to introduce themselves to men who are new to the church. He felt that keeping up with newcomers and checking up on them would help them to stay connected to the church and eventually get involved. A few participants similarly suggested that a group of seasoned men should stand ready to assist those who need it. One participant stated that getting



strong men to step up could make a difference in the lives of those who needed help. Suggestions for helping men to grow varied, however, and several participants suggested that the stronger men make some effort to help the others to grow. This research reveals a great desire among participants to help newcomers, brothers weak in the faith, and men who are struggling with a crisis.

**Table 11.** Things to Increase AA Male Involvement at CFTF

Increase and create fellowship opportunities
Basketball/outside sports activities
Men's day services
Evangelism
Community outreach events to assist with basic needs
Annual men's retreat
Teaching and training moments for men
Efforts to help male newcomers and men who are weak in the faith

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

#### Summary

The goal of this study was to figure out ways to strengthen CFTF Church's ministry to AA males and inspire these men to become involved within the local church. As previously stated, the research suggests that men who attend church tend to be more productive and live more positive lives. This study sought to take a fresh look at the issues presently plaguing AA men in Wilson, North Carolina. Further, this research examined the potential barriers that may hinder the church involvement of AA men. Questions considered in this study included: What are the problems presently plaguing AA men? What barriers keep AA men from being involved in the church? What do men need from the church? What value do men bring to the church?

It is discussed that the AA church has been traditionally looked to as a beacon of hope in the AA community. In times of challenge and distress for the AA community at large, the black church has been known to offer solace.<sup>158</sup> There have been moments when the black church fought for the rights of people of color and stood strongly for causes of social justice. Sometimes this assistance has taken the form of marches and boycotts. Other times, it has required intense meetings, lockups, and sit-ins. In times of poverty and economic hardship, the black church has fed the hungry, given clothes to the destitute, provided shelter for the homeless, and given financial assistance to the less fortunate. It is noted that while other ethnicities have sought to find hope in family, accomplishments, and education, AAs are still most likely to turn to God

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<sup>158</sup> Barna and Jackson, *High Impact African American Churches*, 40–41.

and their faith.<sup>159</sup> This suggests that there is still a chance for the AA church to greatly impact the lives of people who make up the AA community.

Among those in the AA community who need the greatest assistance are AA males. This research has revealed that there still exists a strong disconnect between the black church and AA males. Studies estimate that 75% of AA church attendance is by women, and there is a significant absence of AA male in the pews.<sup>160</sup> The church must acknowledge the lack of an AA male presence and turn its efforts toward solutions that would assist in regaining AA male members.

Research suggests that there are many factors that plague the lives of AA men. In its quest to reach the AA male, the black church must examine these factors and consider ways that it might assist in these areas. Perhaps by examining the issues that AA males commonly face, the black church can begin to repair the damage to the relationship it has with men in the community. As mentioned throughout this study, AA males deal with struggles like drug offenses, fatherlessness, homicide, suicide, AIDS, unemployment, and educational disparities. These issues often make life very difficult for AA males. Examining these concerns can offer necessary information for churches that seek to reach this population.

This research assessed barriers that often keep AA men away from the church. The available research suggests that things like hypocrisy, dress codes, length of church services, tithing, and several other issues often stand in the way of men getting involved in church. Such

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<sup>159</sup> Barna and Jackson, *High Impact African American Churches*, 36.

<sup>160</sup> Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?*, 16.

research could assist the church in recognizing and addressing these possible barriers to the AA male's increased involvement in church.

In addition, this study examined how men benefit from going to church as well as how the church benefits from men attending. Research suggests that men who attend church for the most part lead better lives. Thus, the suggestion is that men who come to church benefit from doing so. Research was found that suggests that the church benefits from the presence of men. This research explained that men bring strength, finances, and motivation to take risks to a church. Studies also suggested that when men come to church, they bring their whole family, thereby helping overall attendance numbers.

Furthermore, research was examined concerning the needs of men. Though some of this research spoke to the needs of men in general, even general information would be inclusive of AA men. The research suggests that men need other male friends, vision, empowerment, challenges, and opportunities to be great. Further, men need strong pastors who can present solid examples and deliver positive messages. When these needs of men are understood and examined, they could possibly assist churches in structuring their men's ministry around meeting these needs.

Highlights from this research project supported prior research. The interviewees were 30 AA male participants from CFTF. This study examined the life experiences of these participants and what impact these experiences had on their church involvement. The study found that 50% of participants were reared without fathers in the home. The research also revealed that 96% of all participants completed high school. There was no significant difference between those who had a father in the home and those who did not, but the one individual who did not complete high school did feel that he might have done so if he had a father in the home. The findings from this

study did not demonstrate a vast difference in dropout rates among those who were without fathers in the home compared to those who had fathers in the home.

Also, it was found that 67% of participants attended church regularly while growing up and 73% of those who attended church regularly stated that church attendance was mandatory in their households. It was also revealed that 75% of those men who attended church regularly were taken there by the female figures in their lives. These results reveal the greater part of these men had attended church at one time in their lives and that most of them were not introduced to the church by male figures. This research seems to suggest that the importance of church involvement for most of these participants was not influenced by male figures. The research findings from this question supports the established research that suggests that most men are introduced to the church by the female figures in their lives.

This study also asked participants reared in church if they had left the church as adults. Over 80% of participants revealed that they had at some point left the church as adults. Less than 20% of those who were reared in church continued their attendance to their childhood church through adulthood. Those participants who left church after becoming adults revealed that they did so due to the church not relating to them, a lack of clarity in the church, a desire to live without restraint, a need for something new, and a lack of genuine commitment to Jesus Christ. The 4 participants who remained in church throughout adulthood similarly stated that being reared in church and the constant routine of going to church as children caused them to maintain their attendance as adults.

Further, this study inquired about the present church experiences of the participants, all of whom are members of CFTF Church. It was found that most of the participants had been members of other churches prior to their membership at CFTF Church. A primary reason

revealed by participants for leaving their previous church and joining CFTF was that their first church affiliation was their parents' church of choice and not theirs. The reasons revealed for these participants leaving their church and joining CFTF Church was the need to learn the Word of God, the desire to grow, and the belief that they would be following a leader they could respect.

Also, this study found that most participants felt that they received help during their initial experience of becoming a member of CFTF Church. Many of them revealed that they received help from New Member's Class, Bible study, Sunday school, and Sunday morning worship services. The research also revealed that 26% of participants expressed that the benefits of their initial experience could have been furthered by extra support from a phone call, meeting, or support from a spiritually mature man.

As it concerns the participant's involvement at CFTF Church, the research found that all participants attended Sunday morning worship services and Bible study regularly. However, the research suggested that 50% of participants did not participate in men's fellowship and 70% did not attend Sunday school. When questioned as to why some participants did not attend Sunday School and Men's ministry, some men revealed that their work schedules hinder them. Others stated that they had never attended these things, and some of them vowed to do better.

Furthermore, the researcher asked participants about any barriers to their church involvement at CFTF Church. Overwhelmingly, those participants who felt that there was a barrier stated work-related issues. These individuals said that their work schedules, long hours, and exhaustion from working sometimes hinder their ability to attend certain events. Other men felt that no real barrier hindered their church involvement.

When asked about the things that they most appreciate about CFTF Church, 95% of participants revealed that they appreciate the teachings they receive from the ministry. The researcher also found that 80% of men appreciated having a pastor that they believe to be practicing a godly lifestyle. A few men highlighted that they appreciate a pastor who is touchable and relatable. These participants revealed that learning the Word of God and having respectable and relatable leadership is a high priority for them.

In addition to the things these study participants presently appreciate about CFTF Church, they also revealed practices that could be added to improve the involvement of AA men at the church. The research found that participants wanted to add more fellowship opportunities exclusively for men, men's retreats, teaching and training classes for men, outreach ministry for men, and a support ministry for men who are newcomers or who just need help within the ministry.

### **Recommendations**

The specific intent of this research was to increase the involvement of AA men at CFTF Church. The study participants were interviewed and allowed to give their thoughts and feelings on a list of prearranged questions. The data gathered from these interviews allowed information to be gained that would be specific in assisting CFTF Church to increase the involvement of AA males within its local church setting and make specific recommendations to meet this intended objective. Again, involvement is defined as consistent church attendance and participation in Sunday school, Sunday morning worship, Bible study, and Men's Ministry. This study was approached with the intent of developing recommendations that would involve outreach, discipleship, biblical teaching, fellowship opportunities, and programs and activities designed for men. Ultimately, the information from this study will create an environment that is intentional

about ministering to the needs of AA men and getting them consistently involved within the ministry of CFTF.

These recommendations will also be used to build AA male relationships within CFTF Church. Furthermore, the information presented in this study will be used to facilitate an environment where men can grow in their love for God. It is noted that men will ultimately be drawn by other men, and this research will be used to assist the men of CFTF Church in becoming impactful representatives for God.

In addition, the information gathered in this study will be used to recommend efforts of increasing evangelism among the men of CFTF, hopefully resulting in more AA men making decisions to follow Jesus Christ. The greatest need the AA male has is a relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship with Jesus is the foundation that provides the faith and strength needed to successfully guide AA men through life.

These recommendations consider that CFTF's congregation is comprised of men who are at varying stages of maturity in Jesus Christ. Some of these men have never had consistent fellowship with men in a church setting, nor have they made any effort to become a part of a Christian brotherhood. This means that patience and consistency will be needed as the during the implementation of these recommendations. With God's help and an intentional effort to reach men, increasingly positive results are expected to develop over time.

### **Recommendation One: CFTF Community Soup Kitchen**

This research has already led to the creation of the CFTF Church Community Soup Kitchen. Participants in this study as well as from outside research done for this study suggests that community outreach is one way that AA men can be reached. The study shows that the men



at CFTF want to be involved in community outreach events that serve the needs of the community. CFTF church leaders were informed that one of the local soup kitchens responsible for feeding the poor and the homeless would cut their operations to six days per week, offering no services on Sunday. CFTF leaders understood that many people in the immediate area of CFTF Church depend on services from this local soup kitchen. Some of these individuals eat at the soup kitchen daily, and because of this change, many of them would be left without a meal on Sunday.

Furthermore, large numbers of these individuals who depended upon weekly food from the soup kitchen were made up of AA males. After a meeting among the leaders of CFTF, it was decided that CFTF would invest in this effort and take on the responsibility of hosting a Sunday morning community soup kitchen.

Each Sunday morning at 7:00 this community soup kitchen opens and is hosted in the cafeteria of CFTF Church. Thankfully, this outreach ministry was already in place by the time the local community soup kitchen closed its doors on Sundays. CFTF's program has now been running for the past two years and the community support has been remarkable. Led by two leaders of the church, several other CFTF parishioners have joined this effort. The soup kitchen, though it has female volunteers as well, has also created an opportunity for the men of the church to come together and work towards a common cause.

In many ways this program has been very successful. Weekly numbers show that on average, 85 people are served at the CFTF Community Soup Kitchen each Sunday morning. Many of the individuals being served walk from areas around the immediate church community. Also, approximately 85% of the weekly attendance are AA males. These men represent all ages, although the overwhelming majority are 50 years of age and above. Approximately 90% of those

individuals in attendance are AAs and about 10% who are of Hispanic origin. The soup kitchen has served well over 3,000 plates each year.

The atmosphere is purposely intended to be as relaxed as possible for those people who attend the soup kitchen. Most of the individuals who attend the soup kitchen live in poverty and many of them do not have many clothes to wear. With this in mind, there is no dress code established for those who attend. They are permitted to come as they are and be fed without having to be concerned about their clothing. The goal of this practice is that attendees can witness the love of Jesus Christ without feeling judged by the Christians who serve them. Because of CFTF's Community Soup Kitchen, men from the church meet men from the community and work together in outreach.

### *The Process*

On Sunday morning, the individuals arrive mostly on foot. They are usually greeted by men from CFTF Church who stand both outside and inside of the church. They enter the cafeteria with light music playing and there are lots of greetings and smiles. The interaction between those who attend the soup kitchen and those who volunteer is usually a very pleasant exchange, because several of the volunteers who have been longtime residents of the AA community in the city are familiar with the individuals whom they serve.

At around 7:30 am, once everyone is settled, the blessing is given over the food. At this point, those wishing to eat can line up and be served a very good breakfast. They are often given at least three or four choices of meats with grits, eggs, biscuits or toast, and a beverage. Once everyone is fed, those who desire are permitted to come and get more food. This is highly beneficial, and everyone leaves well-filled.

For those who desire it, a brief service is held in the cafeteria. This usually consists of a Scripture reading, a prayer, and a short message. Most of those attending the soup kitchen stay for the service. The message usually consists of sharing a word about the love of Jesus Christ and it ends in allowing those individuals in attendance an opportunity to receive Jesus as their personal lord and savior. Those in attendance seem to enjoy the food and the service, and they continue to come back each week.

### *The Purpose*

The purpose of this CFTF Community Soup Kitchen ministry is to share the love of Jesus Christ in words and action. This ministry is meeting a need within the church community and is a wonderful example of Christians doing positive things. The soup kitchen presents a time for men of the church to come together for a wonderful cause, and it serves the outreach and evangelism aspects of this research. Moreover, this ministry is truly a labor of the love that genuinely flows from the hearts of the volunteers to the people whom they serve.

Because this ministry endeavor attracts mostly AA men, it also the researcher's intent to see some of these men reconnected with the church. Most of these men attending the breakfast would not be compelled to come to CFTF Church otherwise. A community soup kitchen may seem less threatening, and it presents an opportunity for these men to see Christians in a different light than they often do.

Before this soup kitchen effort, it was highly probable that not many of these men in attendance had been to a church in a long time. However, the soup kitchen is now serving to connect AA men with the church in a positive way. It is the hope of CFTF leadership that by

continuing to serve this need, AA men are being positively influenced for Jesus Christ. This, as stated, is a primary goal of this research.

Also, this recommendation purposes to show AA men that CFTF Church does indeed care about them and their community. The negative opinions that AA men in the community may hold concerning AA pastors and churches is no secret. Many AA men believe that the church does not care about anything except money and that it only wishes to reach out to people who can benefit that cause. This community soup kitchen could help to limit this perception as it relates to CFTF Church. Displaying the love of Jesus through the service rendered at the soup kitchen can go a long way in reaching the objective of increasing AA involvement at CFTF Church.

### *Results*

The CFTF soup kitchen has been highly successful. As has been mentioned, it serves an average of 85 people weekly. It has been a great blessing to the community and its results are particularly notable among AA men.

Since starting the soup kitchen, 14 AA males from this ministry have become members of CFTF Church. These 14 AA males have come over the course of the two years that the soup kitchen ministry has been in existence. The CFTF Community Soup Kitchen reports a total of 63 decisions to follow Jesus Christ in its Sunday morning setting. Of those 63 decisions for Jesus Christ, 57 have been by AA men.

It has been a delight to witness what has taken place throughout the two years that the soup kitchen ministry has been doing its work. The results have been positive, and CFTF church leaders are highly encouraged that more decisions to follow Jesus Christ will be made through

this ministry. This soup kitchen meets a physical need, and it creates a door for people to get spiritual help as well. As a result, the CFTF Church will continue to promote this ministry with great expectations for AA males and the larger community.

### **Recommendation Two: Men's Discipleship Ministry**

The second recommendation was to create a Men's Discipleship Ministry. This ministry has been in operation over the last year. This study found that 26% of the participants said that they could have benefited more if CFTF would have provided someone to call and check up on them. Keeping new converts encouraged is highly important, and it is necessary to make every effort to ensure that AA males who are new converts get the help they need.

The facts presented in Kunjufu's study of AA males revealed how Muslims draw AA men because they provide big brothers to those who are considering converting to the teachings of Islam. This is a deeply troubling thought, and AA churches must make more effort to provide support to AA men who need it.

#### *The Purpose*

This study is devoted to finding ways to increase the involvement of AA males at CFTF Church. When there is a lack of initial support for AA males who are just entering the church, the likelihood of them losing interest in the church drastically increases. The male discipleship team lessen this likelihood for AA males at CFTF Church.

CFTF church wants to demonstrate great concern for retaining the presence of AA males in its congregation. The church does not want any AA male convert left feeling like he is not supported, and it seeks to provide the support necessary to help AA males move on to maturity in Jesus Christ.

The purpose of launching the Men's Discipleship Ministry is to assist men in the initial stages of their Christian growth. Upon accepting Jesus Christ, many AA men will encounter hardships. At these difficult moments, it is easy for these men to get discouraged and find themselves tempted to leave the church. Having a person to help disciple them can make a real difference in challenging moments like these. Having a person to help disciple them can help to keep the weak encouraged as they seek to grow in Christ. The Men's Discipleship Ministry at CFTF has its purpose rooted in helping new male converts to be successful as they mature in their walk with Jesus. People who disciple these men help them to stay involved in the local church. This ministry greatly assists in the overall objective of this study.

### *The Process*

The Men's Discipleship Ministry is made up of a combination of church elders, deacons, and other spiritually mature men who have proven consistency in their church involvement and maturity in their walk with Jesus Christ. There was a meeting with ministry members in which the objective to help new male converts stay encouraged, grow, and come to maturity in Jesus Christ was discussed. This ministry team is made up of AA men who are excited about helping other men grow in the Lord.

The process is as follows:

As a man joins the church, he is assigned a disciple person immediately. The disciple person will usually introduce himself on the same day. The convert's correct phone number will be given to the disciple person and they determine the best times to talk. The discipleship person will call the new convert to welcome him during his first week as a member and a follow-up call will be made at some point during the same week. Further, the discipleship person will share

Scriptures with the new convert, recommend Scripture readings and makes time to discuss these readings. The discipleship person will pray often with the new convert and encourages him to stay involved with the general church.

#### *The Results*

- The disciple leaders are very successful in keeping new converts engaged at CFTF Church.
- The church, for the most part, can account for the new converts who commit to the discipling process.
- The church is not unnecessarily losing new converts.

#### **Recommendation Three: Men's Evangelism Team**

The third recommendation is a Men's Evangelism Team. This research revealed that a significant group of men who participated in this study felt that CFTF needed to do a better job reaching out to AA men in the church's immediate community. It is recommended that a group of the spiritually mature men who are a part of CFTF Church come together and commit to this task. Moreover, the goal of this ministry is to influence the lives of all the men at CFTF, and train to be passionate and effective about sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### *The Purpose*

This study demonstrated that there was no consistent effort among CFTF men to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with men in the community. Some men will not come to church if someone from the church does not reach out to them. This evangelism team will focus on reaching the many AA males in CFTF Church's immediate community.

CFTF Church has been in this community since the building was constructed in 2006. Over these nearly 12 years, large numbers of AA men walk around who do not appear to be involved with a church. Many of these men frequently walk by the church while worship services are in session, and it is safe to say that most of these men have never once visited CFTF. If this has been the trend for the last 12 years, this scenario will not change unless some action is taken by the church.

It is not known what is going on in the minds of these men because there has been no intentional effort by CFTF to engage them. Many of them are very cordial and pleasant as they walk by the church, often speaking when spoken to. There is a need to engage these men within the immediate church community and to, at least, begin a process that might ultimately get them involved with CFTF Church. The community is overwhelmingly filled with AA men. CFTF must make an intention effort to reach and train as many of these men as possible.

### *The Process*

A group of men who are spiritually mature will be enlisted to consistently engage in this effort of evangelism. It is recognized that not all CFTF men feel that they are ready to go into the streets right away. On the other hand, there are some men within the congregation who have reached a level of maturity and comfort and are deeply desirous to participate in such an effort. These individuals will be used to form the Men's Evangelism Team.

While it is evident that not all men feel prepared to undertake a street evangelism effort, helping to strengthen every man in this area is necessary. It is understood that Christian men have varying levels of comfort with sharing their faith with different people. Those men who are not comfortable with doing street evangelism may still be strong witnesses among family



members, male friends, and coworkers. Considering this, the Men's Evangelism Team training will be open to all men who have a desire to share Jesus irrespective of the audience.

Evangelism classes that will be held on two weekends out of the month. The classes will be open to men who want to strengthen their understanding of their own faith and for those who want to learn how to effectively share the Gospel of Jesus. The book *Sharing Jesus Without Fear* by Bill Fay as the foundational text. This text has been a blessing to many people seeking to share the gospel because of its simple and straightforward approach. This text could also be a great blessing to the men who will participate in this class.

CFTF Church will purchase books for men who do not have the finances and those men who can afford the books will be given instruction to purchase them. A leader trained in evangelism will begin facilitating the class with the purpose of training other men who feel led to do the same. The class will be taught using the chapters of the book as the topics for each meeting. The men will be allowed to ask questions and make comments during the class meeting time. There will also be opportunities to do some role playing for those men who desire to. There will be an atmosphere created in which men can be comfortable to participate at their desired level. The comfortability among CFTF men is expected to increase with each meeting.

As each class completes the necessary sessions, those men who desire to participate in the Men's Evangelism Team will establish dates and times to evangelize within the community. The evangelism team plans to set up at different location in the community so that the church can introduce itself to community members. There will be times when the men of the church will cook on the grill for the community. This will create opportunities for the community and the church to interact in a nonthreatening atmosphere. Everyone will be reminded that the goal is to

be inviting. The evangelism team will adopt a nonconfrontational approach while being prepared to share Jesus as the opportunity presents itself.

### *Expected Results*

This Men's Evangelism Team has not formally started; however, it will be established by the end of August 2018. It is expected that class will be presented where men can be strengthened in their faith and can emerge wanting to share it passionately with others. Further, it is expected that those who participate in the street evangelism activities of the team will display love and concern for the men within the church's immediate community. Also, it is expected that this ministry will strengthen the faith of those who want to take the class but do not feel ready for the street evangelism aspect. Moreover, it is expected that this ministry is to be one more example of showing God's love to the AA men in the church's immediate community. It is also expected that this ministry will result in meeting the objective to increase the involvement of AA males within CFTF Church.

### **Recommendation Four: Men's Monthly Bible Study**

The fourth recommendation is the establishment of a Men's monthly Bible study. This research found that men at CFTF Church would like more opportunities to learn the Word of God. This Men's Bible study will afford AA men an opportunity to learn more about the Bible and to unite with each other in a male setting. This Bible study will always begin with 30 minutes of prayer at the altar for men who desire to do this. Encouraging men to pray will enhance the benefits they get from studying God's Word.

### *The Purpose*

AA men, like all others, need to be trained to know the Bible. The men of CFTF Church will be assisted in this effort by establishing monthly Bible study teachings in a men-only setting. It is wonderful to know that men within the church congregation have a desire to know more about the Word of God. As men learn more about the Bible, they will also learn more about how to serve God. Oftentimes, men are not the best they can be due to a lack of understanding of Bible teachings. As men are given an opportunity to learn God's Word, their lives will be changed for the better overall.

When considering the plight of many AA men, God's Word is the only thing that can offer them consistent hope. Often threatened by homicide, suicide, unemployment, and a lack of education, the AA male needs a strong anchor. The strength of the AA male can be maintained when he makes it his purpose to read and live by the Bible. As the AA men who are Christians learn and gain and excitement for the Word of God, it will increase the likely of them sharing the teaching of Jesus Christ with other AA males they encounter.

The purpose of a Men's Bible study is to help further spiritually educate men who do attend church and to create another avenue of fellowship among men. Many of these men have a desire to learn the Bible in the company of other men, and a bible study will be an opportunity to further unify the men of CFTF Church while promoting their spiritual growth. Men who may not feel comfortable coming into a larger church Bible study may gain more from a setting that is devoted to men.

This men's Bible study will have a purpose to help AA males within CFTF Church understand the fundamentals of the Christian Faith. Those men who have this understanding will see great benefit in their own lives and they have the potential to be a blessing to the lives of others. Also, the men's Bible study will seek to assist AA men of all ages in being confident

concerning their knowledge of God's Word. This men's Bible study can have a powerful impact on the immediate community and other AA males.

### *The Process*

Men's Bible study meetings will be scheduled for the second Tuesday night each month. This Bible study will be open to all men. Men will be publicly welcomed to attend this Bible study. The announcement of the Bible study will inform men that it will serve as a time of fellowship and study in a setting for men. This time during each month will present another opportunity for men who may work on the weekends and not be available to attend the usual men's functions to experience fellowship.

Classes will be taught by elders and other CFTF men with a teaching gift will assist in this effort as well. The Bible studies will begin with lessons about some of the basics of Christian doctrine. There will also be lessons about growth and maturity in Jesus Christ. Further, there will be lessons concerning matters that pertain to men like being strong husbands, fathers, and men of God. This setting will also be used to address the relevance of Jesus to AA men and the black community in general.

Men in attendance will be provided opportunities to ask questions and make comments about the various lessons. Special attention will be given to those lessons that might require more clarity and study for the men. Two baskets will be placed at the door as the men leave each study session. One basket will be for any questions the men might have, and the other basket will be for other topics they wish to discuss in future sessions. As previously stated, each Bible study session will be preceded by a 30-minute prayer time for those men who desire it.

### *Expected Results*

This recommendation has not yet been implemented among the men at the present time. This Bible study will launch as a part of a list of recommendations that will be presented to the men. It is believed that these men's Bible studies to create another avenue to possibly gain more AA male involvement at CFTF Church.

It is expected that the men's Bible study will benefit CFTF and the AA male community in several ways. Specifically, the men's Bible study will:

- Create a setting where AA males will be comfortable in attending and learning more about God's Word.
- Present teachings that will strengthen the faith of AA males.
- Motivate AA males to passionately pursue a personal fellowship with God on their own.
- Equip AA males to be confident about the basics of the Christian faith and to apply those principles in their own lives.
- Help AA men become the kind of husbands, fathers, and friends who honor and add value to lives of others.
- Equip AA men to learn the Word of God and feel confident about sharing it with others.
- Help the AA males see how Christianity relates to them and their community.
- Inspire more involvement by AA Men at CFTF Church.

#### **Recommendation Five: Quarterly Fellowship**

The fifth recommendation is a quarterly fellowship effort for the men of the church. Nearly all the men who participated in this study indicated their desire to have more fellowship time with other men. Most study participants who suggested this wanted to include activities outside of the church. Because some men at CFTF are unable to attend some Saturday events due

to work schedules, some of these fellowship event will be scheduled on various days throughout the week.

### *The Purpose*

These events will be aimed at giving men an opportunity to share in fellowship with each other outside of a church and worship service setting. The purpose of these events is to present opportunities for AA men to make friends among the CFTF Church brotherhood. It is the researcher's hope that these gatherings will create a space where AA men can build friendships that allow them to share their concerns with and gain encouragement from each other.

### *The Process*

The findings from this study suggested that 50% of participants do not attend the Men's Ministry. Quarterly events will be suggested in which all the men of CFTF church will be invited to take part. These events will involve activities like bowling, eating out together, and barbequing, and the men's retreat will even be reinstated. Church's Men's Ministry leaders will help to accomplish this. The men of the congregation will be encouraged to suggest additional fellowship ideas which they would like to try. Transportation will be provided by the church for each of these events. This will give men an opportunity to talk and to have fellowship together. A schedule will be given to the men concerning the event and opportunities will be given for these men to share and fellowship.

### *The Process of Outdoor Activities Onsite*

- The church will periodically host outdoor barbecues for men.
- Men will be allowed to show their barbeque skills.

- Outdoor activities will be available. The church will have several basketball teams made up of men who desire to play. There will be Bible trivia teams established among the men.
- Men will have a full day of fellowship.

### *The Process (Retreat)*

- The Men's Ministry will host an annual retreat for men in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and other recommended locations.
- Announcements concerning these trips and any associated cost will be made at least six months in advance. Men will be told that the retreat will offer fellowship and spiritual enrichment. They will be informed that each session will be designed to help them become stronger fathers, husbands, friends, and men of God.
- The Church will provide the transportation to the retreats, giving men an opportunity to fellowship.
- Each retreat will be held from Thursday through Saturday.
- The men will rent condos and meeting spaces.
- The researcher and other facilitators will provide a time of testimony, Bible teaching and life training for the men.

### *Expected Results*

The church has already hosted a few fellowship moments with the men. The last few events were attended by an average of 35 men. One on occasion, the men came together and had fellowship together at a restaurant. This event lasted about five hours and many men stayed longer and continued to have fellowship even after returning to the church parking lot. Similarly,

the men who have attended past retreats have highly enjoyed it. Many of the men who've experienced these events have shared testimony, participated in discussions, and been left highly motivated to come back the next time. These events also give more fellowship opportunities for men who cannot attend men's fellowship due to their work schedules.

- The men of the church continue to build friendships and often call each other throughout the week.
- Fellowship has increased among the men of the church even outside of quarterly fellowships. Groups of men from the church often do things according to their common interests and schedules.
- Men are becoming more comfortable with each other, offering encouragement to their brothers in times of grief, and supporting each other in other such moments in other ways.
- A strong brotherhood is being formed, and visiting men are drawn by the unity displayed among the men at CFTF Church.
- Men are more inclined to attend and participate in events scheduled for men.
- These events assist CFTF Church's overall objective to increase the involvement of AA males.

### **Recommendation Six: Men's Sunday and the Reinstatement of Men's Day Service**

Recommendation six is a Men's Sunday during every month and the reinstatement of a yearly Men's Day Service. This research revealed that men want to be more involved in the church. Men expressed that they would like to be doing something and feeling a part of church services.



### *The Purpose*

Men are more likely to involve themselves in the church when they are given something to do. The men's services being recommended are all about men being visible in worship. It is more likely that other AA men will be drawn to CFTF Church when they see men active in the worship service.

### *The Process*

The monthly Sunday morning men's service has been going on for approximately a year at CFTF Church. One Sunday out every month, men from the church preside over the regularly scheduled Sunday morning worship service. Men are encouraged to sign up for whatever they desire to do on the worship program, and provisions are made to get them scheduled for one of these services. If there are high numbers of men who want to do something, and they can be added to the program on any given Sunday.

Some details of the men's services include the following:

- Men are charged with doing everything in the church service such as singing, praying, and Bible readings.
- One man is chosen to preside, read the Scripture and do the prayer.
- A man is chosen to sign solo or show off another talent.
- A men's choir (men from CFTF) provides the music for the regularly scheduled worship service.

### *Expected Results*

Men are overall happier at CFTF. CFTF Men are frequently complemented and celebrated by women and other men who visit the church. It is not uncommon to hear how well the CFTF Male choir has performed and how nice it is to see men take charge. Men who help with men's services are creating an atmosphere of excitement for the other men, and it's serving as an evangelism tool encouraging more AA males to visit and become a part of CFTF Church. Approximately 8 men over the last few months who have recognized the emphasis on men have stated that this has drawn them to become members of CFTF. Furthermore, there is visible excitement among the men of CFTF, and men who were not previously involved are increasing their participation.

### **Recommendation Seven: Young Men of Valor**

Recommendation seven is a program to mentor young African America adolescent and teen males who are growing up in CFTF church. This study revealed that over 80% of participants who were reared in church ended up leaving in adulthood. The study participants expressed a lack of connection to church, a desire to live without restraint, and lack of genuine commitment to Jesus Christ as reasons for leaving the church. Recommendation seven has the aim to build a passion for Jesus Christ among young AA males. Making this happen will involve investing in the lives of young AA adolescent and teen males. If youth and teens can be mentored and reached for Jesus Christ early, it is much more likely that they will remain connected to the church in their adulthood.

#### *The purpose*

The purpose of a Young Men of Valor Ministry is to offer support to adolescent and teen young men, and to see these young men being intentionally taught how to live for Jesus Christ.

This group will also teach young men how to make good choices as they are confronted with different situations in life. This study uncovered the need for life-training classes among men, and the researcher would like to use this group to promote education and life skills among young men. Also, this ministry will seek to inspire young AA males by exposing them to examples of successful AA men.

Positive influences in the lives of AA adolescents and teens can help them grow into strong adults. Many young men within the CFTF Church do not have fathers in the home and need to experience good AA role models in their lives. Further, men at CFTF can assist single mothers who may be attempting to raise AA males alone. Having the strong influence of Christian AA men in their lives can offer relief to these young men and their single mothers. The researcher wants every young AA male who attends CFTF Church to know that he is not alone. This recommendation can help every young man know that he has men in his life who stand ready to assist him if he needs to advice, encouragement, or someone to listen.

### *The Process*

The name of the group will be Young Men of Valor. The group will be primarily for young men who are being raised in or who have joined CFTF. Young men from the community who wish to join and have the permission of their parents will not be turned away. The group will be led by three AA men at CFTF Church. This group will be available to young men ages of 11 to 17. The group will meet monthly every third Saturday at 11:00 a.m.

The group will discuss topics like salvation, living for Jesus, being led by the Holy Spirit, and sound decision-making. The group will also have special sessions and all-day events. During these events, leaders will bring in AA males from the community and surrounding areas to

encourage these young men. Speakers at these events will be positive role models like AA male superintendents, principals, teachers, college professors, physicians, financial planners, and business owners. The young men will be given the opportunity to have fellowship other young men in a positive setting.

### *Results*

The Young Men of Valor Ministry has been running for the last year at CFTF Church. It has had a consistent group of 10 to 12 AA teens and adolescent boys ranging from ages 11 to 17. These young men are eager to come out and be in the fellowship of men and young men their age. This ministry has been able to hold several teaching sessions that have helped the young men to better understand salvation, living for Jesus Christ, and making better decisions. They have also been to rest together and have participated in activities like bowling and skating. The researcher adds that this group has not yet scheduled a day to bring in an AA role model, but such an event will take place in the coming year.

### *Results*

- The young men who attend are excited about participated in these meetings.
- The young men have had an opportunity to fellowship and get to know other young men in the church who are their age.
- More communication has been established between the young men at CFTF Church.
- Some of the young men have received the teaching and made sound decisions for Jesus Christ.
- More young men are becoming serious about their walk with God.

- The accomplishments of these young men have been celebrated within the group and recognized in the general church forum. These young men are receiving praise for doing positive things and are being encouraged to make positive contributions.
- Young men who attend church are having more interaction with the men of the church. This allows the men of the church to offer the young men encouragement and help when needed.
- Young men are gaining a positive view of CFTF Church.

### **Recommendation Eight: Pastoral Announcement of Men's Fellowship and Sunday School**

The eighth recommendation is an announcement being given by the pastor about the importance of the Men's Ministry and Sunday school and their benefit to the church. This recommendation stems from the finding that suggests that 50% of participants were not attending Men's Ministry and 70% were not coming to Sunday school. Though some men attributed their lack of attendance to work-related issues, there were a few participants who had not given any consideration to Sunday school. The pastor has not consistently spoken of the importance of these ministries and he seeks to speak more of them in the future. A high value is placed on matters within CFTF Church when the pastor takes time to speak about them. Parishioners often look to the pastor to lead the way. Sunday morning worship services are usually the best time to make these types of announcements. During Sunday morning services, the attendance of men will be greater than for any other service or meeting time. Understanding this, the pastor can take time to speak of the importance of men's fellowship events. In the same manner, the pastor will highlight that Sunday school is another opportunity for men to learn the Bible while having fellowship with other believers.

*The Process*

During Sunday morning worship, the pastor will stand to announce that he wants to strengthen CFTF's ministry for men. The pastor will explain that men have always been important to the plan and purpose of God, and that fact remains. The pastor will announce men's fellowship meetings, men's Bible studies, men's outreach, and men's discipleship meetings. He will state that the church has strengthened its aim of helping every man who joins the church grow in the faith and become a man on fire for God. Further, he will invite all men to take part in these events to be strengthened as better husbands, fathers, brothers, and men of God.

The pastor will also become active in announcing the importance of Sunday school. He will personally invite all men to come out and be a part of the variety of classes that are in session of Sunday morning. Men will be encouraged to purchase Sunday school texts and will be told that these classes present an opportunity to study the Bible and mature in Christian character.

### *Results*

It is expected that pastoral attention to these events will assist encouraging men to become involved. Men will get excited about learning the Bible and having fellowship with other men. Finally, it is also expected that men will apply the teachings and become mature disciples.

### **Further Considerations**

Though several recommendations have been made in this study, it is that so much more possible can be done to increase the involvement of AA males at CFTF. Within CFTF's church setting and immediate community, there are so many issues confronting AA males. It is not the hope of CFTF to offer only pity, sorrow, and temporary relief to the condition of those AA males who suffer within the church and community. Instead, the goal of the church will be to

implement training and other programs designed to liberate AA men from the difficult cycles they may find themselves in. For this reason, CFTF will continue to add ministries and other programs intended to improve the plight of AA men.

### **Long-Term Recommendations**

Although the options are endless, a few long-term projects which will be considered include the following:

- *Men's Transitional Homes.* Designed for men who need a fresh start.
- *Second Chance Employment Services.* Designed to help offenders find employment after jail or prison. The plan is to create jobs within the church and finding outside employers and partners who will assist in the surrounding community.
- *Drug Recovery Program.* This program will assist those who are trying to escape life on drugs. It will assist them in reaching a place of stability and wholeness.
- *African American Male Training for Life Group.* This group will assist AA males in adopting the correct mindset concerning life. It will offer spiritual advice from a biblical viewpoint. It will also offer training concerning job interviews, parenting, marriage, and being responsible citizens. Further, budget and financial planning classes will be offered as part of this effort.
- *GED Classes.* The church will host classes for those who desire to further their education and job readiness skills.
- *Gang Recovery Program.* This program will be designed to help AA males who are seeking to escape gang life and commit themselves to positive endeavors.

## **Conclusion**

This research project sought to find ways to increase the involvement of AA males at CFTF Church. It has examined factors that often plague AA men and barriers which hinder their church involvement. From disparities in education to economic distress, AA men in most communities encounter many difficulties. The AA church must once again rise to the occasion and assist AA men. As the church shows concern and commits itself to consistently acting upon this cause, it can begin the process of restoring its relationship with the AA male.

The AA church must remind itself that God loves AA men. It must consider the ministry of Jesus and take notice of the time and attention He placed upon training men. If there will be success in witnessing passionate AA male church involvement, this model of Jesus must be adopted. Jesus Christ made positive investments in the lives of the men who walked with Him, and they were inspired to change the world around them. Likewise, the AA church must understand that reaching, loving, training, and creating fellowship opportunities for AA men are essential keys for their spiritual development. If each church would begin adopting this kind of mindset, it would do much good for the state of AA males and black communities throughout the nation.

As it concerns CFTF, this project has greatly assisted efforts to improve church involvement of AA men at CFTF. This project showed that the men of CFTF are willing to increase their church involvement as more activities and ministries are designed to include them. Also, this study revealed that the men of CFTF seek more fellowship, Bible teaching, outreach opportunities, and discipleship ministry programs than they currently have access to. Further, it was discovered that some AA males sincerely desire to be involved at CFTF Church, however, their schedules often prevent them from doing so. Understanding this has led to the scheduling



men's events on different days throughout the week. This practice is already bringing new men into fellowship who could not have previously attended. Though the men of CFTF Church have had various life experiences, this research showed that they remain very much willing to grow in their church involvement.

CFTF Church has already been deeply blessed by this study. The church has been led to assess its practices concerning men, and it has become more intentional about making positive changes in this area. Several of the recommendations offered in this study have already been implemented. As previously stated, the church has witnessed growth in its AA male membership. From the young men at CFTF Church to those who are senior in years, the overall attitude among men has improved. Noticeably, there is more love, fellowship, interaction, and support among the men within the church. In recent months, it has not been uncommon for the to be in the community and receive compliments concerning men's ministry from individuals who have visited CFTF.

Personally, the researcher emerges from this study highly inspired to minister to the lives of AA males. This project has broadened his view concerning the conditions of the AA male and the barriers that often keep him away from the church. CFTF will continue to give serious attention to overcoming these barriers and creating a church environment that will holistically minister to AA men. This study has stirred an even greater passion within the researcher for AA males, and he am inspired to do all that is necessary to continue increasing the involvement of AA males at CFTF Church. This means that CFTF will be diligent in encouraging programs, training classes, strategies, fellowship opportunities, and other methods that will promote increased church attendance, more decisions for Jesus Christ, greater maturity among men, and higher ministry participation. The researcher's life has been inspired by this project, and he vow

to lead the church in remaining effective and intentional about impacting the lives of AA males for Jesus Christ and increasing their involvement at CFTF.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: A MODEL FOR MALE CHURCH INVOLVEMENT**

From the findings of this project and from previously established research, it has been suggested that the lives of men are greatly improved when they are committed to regular church involvement. This project is approached with great concern for increasing the involvement of men already at CFTF Church, and it has specifically addressed this issue through the recommendations offered in the previous chapter. However, this project also bears great concern for the AA males who reside in the community surrounding CFTF Church. As previously stated, the community that surrounds the church is plagued with many problems, and the AA men who live here need help. The primary need for these men is spiritual in nature, although material needs are a high priority as well.

### **Explanation of the Model**

This project sought to create solutions based on the findings of this study and addressed many of these things in recommendations section of this project. Again, this study has addressed how to improve the involvement of AA men who already attend CFTF in the above chapter of this study. However, due to the concern for the plight of AA males within the immediate community of CFTF Church, the suggested model is developed to address what the church can do to lead community men to Jesus Christ and church involvement and on to Christian maturity. The suggested model is based upon the findings of this research and the previously established research that shows that some AA males do come to church because they are not often invited. Also, this suggested model considers the findings of this research and previously established research that reveals that some men do not see the church as being relevant to their lives. The suggested model is intended to reach men in immediate CFTF community with the love of Jesus

Christ. This model also creates space to assist with the material needs that often plague some AA men in low- or no-income situations within the community. This study revealed that male participants desire opportunities to do outreach, discipleship, and fellowship. Thus, this model will give the men of CFTF an opportunity to unite and offer all these things to men in their church community. Furthermore, the goal of this research is to increase the involvement of AA men at CFTF Church. As stated previously, CFTF has been weak in reaching the AA males in its immediate community, and the suggested model is intended attract men to Jesus Christ, grow them in discipleship, and keep them encouraged through fellowship.

This model will include three stages: evangelism, discipleship, and fellowship. The evangelism aspect of this model will involve the outreach component to bring men to saving faith in Jesus Christ and into the church. During moments of evangelism, the AA men in the community will be introduced to men who live for Jesus Christ and who are already committed to church involvement. Further, the love and gospel of Jesus Christ will be introduced to men within the community by having men from the church assist them with some of their most basic material needs. Men from the church in the community could offer great encouragement to those men who view the church as a place for women, and this effort can open the door for a great spiritual revival throughout the immediate church community and beyond.

The discipleship aspect of this model will offer teaching and support to help men come to maturity in Jesus Christ. This study revealed that 26% of participants felt that their initial experience with CFTF Church could have been better if they had more support from a man who would have called to assist and encourage them. Findings of this study further revealed that men desire teaching and training, and this discipleship aspect of the model can address these concerns at the initial stages of men coming to the church. As men within the immediate church

community and newcomers to the church enter, this model will suggest a process to assist them in their early walk with Jesus Christ.

Working in conjunction with the evangelism and discipleship aspect of the ministry will be an opportunity for men to experience fellowship. The findings of this study, along with established research, suggest that men desire fellowship with other men. Thus, the fellowship aspect of this model will offer time for men to unite, bond with each other, and build lasting and impactful relationships. This will likely allow men throughout the church to build a Christian brotherhood that will encourage an increasingly greater number of men to become involved in the local church.

When men are reached through a strong and effective evangelism effort, it can start a process that will positively change people's lives forever. Upon coming to faith in Jesus Christ, men can find a deeper hunger for God through consistent discipleship ministry. This type of ministry can help men to grow in their walk with God and can lead them to become mature disciples. Moreover, good discipleship can encourage church involvement and cause men to become excited about being actively engaged with other believers who share their faith. The excitement for church involvement is further increased through consistent fellowship with other men. Most men are inclined to involve themselves in church when someone they know is already involved.

### **Evangelism**

An evangelism effort should be centered around the immediate community in which the church is located. Evangelism events should be planned for two Saturdays of every month to establish visibility within the community. This could be on first and third Saturdays or second

and fourth Saturdays. Hosting these events in this manner would not create an overload to the community or the men of the church. The first 6 to 10 Saturdays, men of the church will host events at the community park or possibly on a vacant lot within the community. These locations will present an alternative place for those individuals who may not be comfortable coming to a church. Further, this will offer a neutral place in which men of the community can meet men from the church without feeling threatened or pressured.

Once a presence is established within the community, the church should begin transitioning some of the events to the physical church grounds. This will help those men who may not be comfortable attending church services to familiarize themselves with the church without being overwhelmed by a formal worship service.

The men from the community will dress down. There will be no suits ties, or dressy clothing worn. This practice could help to calm the atmosphere for those men who may feel threatened by people in more formal clothing. Also, the more casual dressing style among church men takes into consideration that some men within the community do not have suits and may possibly stay away from church because they do not feel that they would be received well without such clothes.

The initial meeting would be an informal meet-and-greet of men from the community and men from the church. Men from the church will wear name tags while introducing themselves. The events can include food and drinks. Something as simple as hotdogs and chips would encourage those passing by to stop and inquire about what is happening. The food can be donated by businesses, church members, or possibly the sponsoring church. Also, the outreach could include a variety of events to meet the needs of men in the community. There could be

health screenings, clothing or food distribution, or even job fairs. These kinds of offerings would be a great blessing to many people who live in low-income communities.

The events could include short testimonials from men who would like to share the love of Jesus and how their own lives have been impacted by Him. These testimonies should be presented in five to seven minutes. Shorter lengths like these hold the attention of the audience and don't consume too much time. Often, the church has male members who have experienced the love and power of Jesus in many ways, and their testimonies can be very impactful in helping men to come to faith in Jesus Christ. Two or three of these testimonies can be shared.

After testimonies are given, an opportunity can be presented to men who want to come to faith in Christ. A simple invitation to accept Jesus Christ will be extended, and prayer will also be made available to men who desire it. Mature men from the church will be selected and prepared to pray with those men who seek it. The prayer will be simple, brief, and specific to the need of the person requesting it.

The church will get the contact information from men who make decisions for Jesus Christ or who desire more understanding, and a mature brother from the church will be assigned to make contact at least by the following Monday. The purpose of the call or visit will be to see how the individual is doing and to encourage them in the faith. The person interested will be invited to the local church to be in the fellowship of other believers and men of faith.

All evangelism events will be announced, and flyers will be distributed throughout the community stating the date, time, and location of the events. Men of the church will handle the distribution of flyers both 30 days and 1 week before the event is to take place.

## **Discipleship**

The discipleship aspect of ministry will be overseen by mature church male leaders who are solid in their faith and can assist others who are seeking to grow. The goal of the discipleship team will be to help bring men to maturity in Jesus Christ. The discipleship ministry will be open to all male newcomers and any individuals who feel they need the extra support. Upon coming to faith in Jesus Christ and becoming a member of the local church or upon request, individuals will be assigned discipleship leaders.

Discipleship leaders will call or introduce themselves to the men who they will assist on the same day these men accept Jesus Christ. The discipleship leader will congratulate the individual for his newfound faith in Jesus Christ, welcome him to the church, and find out if he has any questions or concerns. If there are resources offered by other ministries of the church such as clothing or benevolence, the discipleship leader will direct the individual appropriately.

The discipleship leader will setup a regular schedule to meet with or to call the individual who has been assigned to him. The discipleship leader will encourage church attendance for spiritual enrichment and growth. He will also encourage the individual he is assisting to complete new member's classes and discuss and review with the individual the topics being taught in each class. Each call or meeting should provide a time for the individual being assisted to ask questions and discuss his concerns with his disciple leader.

A brief review of the teachings or discussions from the previous phone call will be given by the discipleship leader on every call. This will offer a moment to answer any lingering questions from already reviewed teachings. The discipleship leader will discuss the meaning of salvation, the assurance of salvation, and the results of salvation. Further, he will discuss the Person of the



Holy Spirit and His benefit in the lives of believers (suggestions for these teaching can be found in Appendix D). Moreover, the discipleship leader will discuss with the individual the importance of Christian character and the importance of the spiritual disciplines of prayer, reading the Word, and walking in application of the Scriptures (see Appendix D).

The discipleship leader should seek to contact the person he is assisting weekly. There may be times when short check-up calls are necessary, and other times for training, discussion, and instruction. The times of training and discussion should be centered around the individual and could last 30 minutes to an hour. Discipleship leaders should prepare to assist this individual for nine months to one year, depending on the need of the individual.

### **Fellowship**

The Men's Ministry will have simple fellowship opportunities that will take on various forms. At least once a month a fellowship activity will be planned by the fellowship leader.

There will be fellowship activities at the church including cookouts, prayer meetings, discussion sessions, and meet-and-greets. Men will be encouraged to meet other men they do not know or with whom they are not deeply acquainted.

A simple survey will be given to determine other events men would like to see at the church. Also, a survey will be given regarding outside events the men desire to have. Opportunities will be provided for men who want to share a word of encouragement at fellowship events. Men will be allowed to submit any prayer request that they would like shared among those who attend the fellowship.

Events outside of the church will include: eating out, bowling, and other events recommended by the men of the fellowship. The church will provide transportation to activities, and there will be a budget provided by the church for men's activities. Men will be asked to financially supplement for events wherever it is fitting and proper.

Times will be announced for leaving the church and return from these events. Men will be asked to sign up for events to determine a head count of those attending. This will ensure that arrangements are sufficient and comfortable for the men. Every event will be announced no later than 30 days before it is to take place. This will give men ample time to make all necessary arrangements to attend. The pastor will announce fellowship events and encourage men to attend.

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## **APPENDIX A:**

### **Participant Participation Letter**

Dear [Participant]:

I would like to invite you to participate in a study on the church involvement of African American men in Contending for the Faith Church Ministries. You have been selected because you are an African American man who holds an active membership in this local church body. Participation is completely voluntary. You may freely choose to participate or not. The information you share with me will be used for my dissertation study at the Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.

The purpose of the study is to better understand how the life experiences of African American men influence their church involvement. Particularly, I am interested in how African American men describe the ways in which their formative and current experiences influence the ways in which they view the church and particularly Contending for the Faith Church. Further, I would like to use this information to suggest ways of increasing the involvement of African American men at Contending for the Faith Church.

I would like you (the respondent) to participate in an in-depth interview of about one hour and a potential follow-up session, which may last up to an additional hour to learn about your experiences. During this time, I will ask you questions about your life growing up, including your family structure and culture with your home and community and how this culture influences your view of the church and your church involvement. You may answer these questions in any way you like. Whatever you say will be important and helpful to me.

With your permission, I will digitally record your interview(s). After each interview, the recording will be transcribed into a Word document. All recordings and transcripts will remain protected in my care.

Some of the content will be shared with professors who serve on my dissertation committee and may appear in the dissertation. There are no anticipated risks involved in this study. I will not use your real names in any discussion or writing about the information I collect.

I will keep the data generated from this study safely for five years. I will use information from these interviews to complete my dissertation study and not for any other reason without your permission.

If you choose not to participate at any time during the study, any and all information collected from you will be omitted from the study. If you have any concerns about this study at any time, you may contact me.

Sincerely,

Dameion L. Royal



## **Consent Form for Participant Interviews**

### **CONSENT FORM**

#### **Increasing the Involvement of African American Men in Contending for the Faith Church in Wilson, North Carolina**

Dameion L. Royal

Liberty University

Baptist Theological Seminary

You are invited to be in a research study of African American men in a local church congregation to learn about your life experiences and how, if at all, those experiences influence your church involvement. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently a member of and attend a southern black church. Your level of involvement will be examined during the interview process should you decide to accept this invitation. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Dameion L. Royal, a doctoral student in the Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the experience of African American men at Contending for the Faith Church and how to increase their involvement. This research will consider this question: How do African American male parishioners in the Contending for the Faith Church Ministries describe their experiences at church and what practices and strategies might be adopted to increase their church involvement?

#### **Procedures:**

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

1. Complete this consent form by signing below and returning in the envelope provided.
2. Agree to be interviewed in a session that could last up to two hours
3. Agree to a follow-up interview if needed to clarify any data collected, which may last for about an hour.
4. Agree to your interview being recorded as a part of this research study.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

The study may have risks. Should at any time during the interview I learn of information that may include abuse, neglect, or any event that requires mandatory reporting to the authority, I will be obligated to make such a report to the proper officials. Should you feel uncomfortable at any time during such an event or at all, you may terminate your involvement in this study at that point. If during the study you find that discussing your past experiences becomes difficult, then we may postpone the interview and I may suggest counseling or other types of support to assist you and continue with the interview only if you agree. Other risks are minimal.

The benefits to participating in this study are many. This will be an opportunity to tell your story and how it has shaped you into the person you have become. This may have far-reaching benefits to other black men who may have or could be experiencing some of the same or similar life events. Your telling your story could have a broader impact not just on what this church can learn from you, but also other churches and how they learn from your experience.

**Compensation:**

You will NOT receive any payment for your participation in this study as it is strictly voluntary.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report that I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. I have taken every measure to make your involvement confidential. The packet of information you have received this letter in was unmarked on purpose to keep your potential involvement anonymous. Throughout the study every measure will be taken to keep your identity and information confidential. Once this study is complete, I will keep all notes, tape recordings, and other data collected during this study in my personal files, which are securely locked. I will maintain these data for at a minimum of three years as required by federal regulations. After the time requirements expire, I may shred and destroy all data collected as another means of maintaining confidentiality. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The limits of this confidentiality lie partly in your responsibility. I encourage you to keep your involvement in this study confidential. This will help to further protect your identity and lessen the chances to compromise the integrity of this study.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Contending for the Faith Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Dameion L. Royal. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Dameion L. Royal or my advisor at Liberty University, who is Charlie Davidson at [c davidson@liberty.edu](mailto:c davidson@liberty.edu).

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, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

\_\_\_\_ By placing a check in this blank, I give consent to my interview being audio-recorded.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**IRB Code Numbers:**

**IRB Expiration Date:**

**APPENDIX B:**  
**IRB Approval Letter**

May 28, 2013

Dameion L. Royal IRB Approval 1578.052813: Increasing the Involvement of African American Men Church in Contending for the Faith Church

Dear Dameion,

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

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

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

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D. Professor, IRB Chair Counseling

**(434) 592-4054**

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**APPENDIX C:**  
**Interview Protocol**

**Background Information**

1. What is your name and age?
2. Are you married?
3. Where do you live?
4. Who raised you?
5. Did you have a father in your home while growing up?
6. What is your highest level of education? How did having a father or not having a father in your home impact your educational achievement?
7. Where are you employed?
8. Have you ever been arrested?

**Early Church Experiences**

9. Did you regularly attend church growing up?
10. Who took you to church growing up?
11. Were you given a choice to go to church in your household while growing up?
12. Was there anything discouraging to you about church while you were growing up?
13. If you attended church growing up, what impact did it have on your life?
14. Did you ever leave the church after you became an adult? If so, why?

**Experiences at Contending for the Faith**

15. Are you a member of Contending for the Faith Church?
16. Were you ever a member of another church before joining Contending for the Faith?
17. If you were a member of another church, what caused you to leave and become a member of CFTF?
18. How did you find out about Contending for the Faith Church?

19. What initial help did you receive upon coming to CFTF? What more could have been done to better assist you?
20. How would you describe the activities presently available for men at CFTF?
21. Have you ever considered leaving CFTF Church? If so why?
22. How would you rate your church involvement considering Sunday School, Sunday morning worship, Bible study, and men's fellowship currently? Why?
23. How important is church to you and why?
24. How long have you been a member of CFTF?
25. Having become a member of CFTF, what do you believe would be helpful for men just joining this church?
26. What are the things you appreciate about attending CFTF?
27. What barriers if any hinder your involvement at Contending for the Faith Church?
28. What are barriers that keep African American men from being involved Contending for the Faith Church?
29. What types of things do you believe would be effective in increasing church involvement among African American men at CFTF?
30. What things could CFTF do to reach African American males in its immediate community and surrounding areas?

**APPENDIX D:**  
**Bible Study Teachings**

**STUDY LESSON:**

**The Salvation of Man**

**Man's only hope of redemption is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.** On the cross, Jesus Christ became sin and sickness providing both salvation and divine healing for all mankind (Ps. 103:3), being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. For by grace we are saved through faith. "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8; Rom. 10:8–10). Salvation is being granted everlasting life. It is deliverance from the eternal damnation. God grants this gift to repenting sinners by their acceptance of the redemptive work of Christ.

**Salvation** is received when an individual by the leading of the Spirit exercises repentance and saving faith.

- **Repentance** requires that the individual, upon being convicted by the Holy Spirit, becomes godly sorry for the error of his way. This godly sorrow is evidenced by his asking God's forgiveness and a willingness to turn away from his old life of sin.
- **Saving faith** is another ability given by the Spirit that causes the individual to believe the Biblical truths that are revealed about Christ, and it is demonstrated by trusting in, clinging to, and relying on Christ as personal Lord and Savior.

**The evidence of salvation.** The inward evidence of the believer's salvation is the direct witness of the Spirit (Rom. 8:16). The outward evidence to all men is a life of righteousness, consecration, obedience, and endurance in the teachings of Christ. "And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us" (1 John 3:23). "No one born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God." (1 John 3:9). "If ye continue in my words, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31).

**The assurance and permanence of salvation.** Those who are saved are recipients of an irrevocable payment of penalty and they are sealed by the Holy Spirit until they inherit their final salvation. (Eph. 1:13,14). They cannot be lost because they are born again after the Word of God, a seed that can never be destroyed (1 Pet. 1:22-23; 1 John 3:9). The word of God has promised that once men truly get in the Father's hand, no man can pluck us out. "No man" means no man, including those who might consider jumping out. If any man could escape the Father's hand, he has become greater than God is (John 10:28–29). For a believer to be lost again would be in violation of the Scriptures (John 3:16, 6:39–47, 10:27–31; Eph. 1:13,14; 1 John 2:19). God never saves anything that He can't keep (2 Tim. 1:12; Jude). Thus, we believe that only those who endure to the end are saved. Perseverance is the

distinguishing factor that will ultimately separate the truly born-again believers from superficial professors.

### **Benefits of Salvation:**

- **Free from power of sin:** Those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior have been set free from the power of sin. This means that the believer is not under the rulership of old sinful deeds. The believer has been given God, the Holy Spirit, as a permanent resident so that we can yield to Him and experience complete victory over sin. The believer must understand that sin has no more dominion over him. If an individual is saved, he does not sin because he must, he only sins if he chooses to (Rom. 6:1-15).

**Free from penalty of sin:** Jesus paid the debt for our sins that we were unable to pay. The debt has been satisfied, and those who have received Jesus are thereby freed from the penalty of eternal damnation. Because Jesus paid it all and the believer has accepted Christ and his payment, he (the believer) needs to offer no more payment for sin.

**Faith and works.** Salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ and not by human works; however, the quality of our works will determine our rewards in eternity (Rom. 10:9–12; 2 Cor. 5:10). The believer is saved by faith in Christ alone. Nothing that man can do is good enough to gain the favor of a holy God. The Father is only pleased with the true righteousness of His Son (Matt. 3: 17). Good works will never grant salvation; however, the believer is encouraged to maintain good works as a fruit of his salvation (Titus 2:14).

**Sanctification:** All believers are sanctified or set apart unto God at salvation. This is referred to as immediate sanctification. However, sanctification must be also viewed as a progressive work in the lives of believers called progressive sanctification. This progressive work is a continual process of purging and cleansing in the life of the believer. Although the child of God is saved, he must be brought totally into the likeness of Christ. The Word and the Spirit of God are continually transforming the believer into the image of Christ. This process will continue to take place until the believer stands before God, at which time he shall be completely sanctified (glorification).

### **STUDY LESSON:**

#### **The Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is God. He is the third person of the Godhead who is responsible for convicting, baptizing, indwelling, sanctifying, leading, enlightening, infilling, empowering, gifting, and sealing the believer. He is God residing in the believer.

#### **Three Automatic Works of The Holy Spirit**

1. **Baptism of the Holy Spirit.** All believers are baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.12:13). We become members of the body of Christ by being baptized by the Spirit. This is the promise that Jesus gives to each of his followers.



2. **Indwelling by the Spirit.** All believers, upon salvation, are made the temples of the Holy Spirit. God comes to live in you (he's a resident). God will never save a life that he can't indwell (John 14:16–17; Romans 8:9, 8:14, 8:16; 1 Cor. 3:16, 19, 6:19)
3. **Sealing by the Spirit.** All believers who are truly born again are kept safely by the preserving power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Cori. 5:3–5).

### **The Commands Concerning the Holy Spirit**

1. **Walk in the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16).** This means to follow the dictates of the Spirit as he personally leads and to walk in accordance with the teaching of the Scripture. One cannot do this except if he/she yields to the Spirit. To walk in the Spirit is to walk out the Word of God. Once we walk in the will of the Spirit, He empowers us not to give in to the desires of the flesh (lower nature).
2. **Be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph.5:18).** To be Spirit-filled is to be Spirit-controlled. Just as wine controls one who is drunk with it, so are believers called upon to be controlled by the Holy Spirit (James 4:7). The believer is responsible for yielding himself to the Holy Spirit who lives within. Believers don't need more of the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit needs more of the believer. When the Spirit controls us, He's our president.

### **The Holy Spirit and Tongues: Forsaking Two-Class Christianity**

The Bible does not teach that tongues is the defining or initial evidence of salvation or the Holy Spirit. This teaching usually comes from a misinterpretation of the Day of Pentecost and a few flawed presumptions of the Book of Acts. Tongues is but one of many gifts that the Holy Spirit gives believers for the edification of the church. Though a nice gift to have, the Bible is very clear that not all believers have it (1 Cor. 12:29).

### **The Evidence of a Life Controlled by the Spirit Is:**

1. **A life in which the qualities of Christ-likeness are consistently evident. This life** simply yields, and as a result the production of Spiritual fruit (character) is an automatic result (Gal. 5:22). The fruit of love is a good indicator (John 13:35).
2. **A life that is empowered, effective and victorious.** It is an overcoming life. Those who are under the control of the Spirit are often tested and tried, but during it all the lead a victorious life. They claim victory over the devil, the flesh, and the world (Romans 8:37).

### **STUDY LESSON:**

#### **Romans 12:1–2**

God wants His people to experience an abundant life of peace and victory in the face of the great trials and pressures that are presented in our lives. Many believers fail to experience such peace and victory because they have not properly prepared their minds to do so. This teaching will highlight some things that followers of Jesus can do to proclaim victory in their minds.

**The Mind:** The greatest place of warfare. It has been said that the mind is very much a spiritual battlefield. It is an area (a plot of ground) in the believer's life in which the enemy places most of his demonic resources.

- The unrenewed mind must be adequately addressed in every believer: Those who are saved have not always been such. The Scriptures are clear that men are born in sin. This suggests that all men are born into the world with a bent towards sin and wrongdoing. As people operate in this world with minds that have not been renewed, they interpret the world accordingly. The unrenewed mind lends itself to darkness, incorrect thinking, and, ultimately, ungodly behavior patterns, actions, and practices.
- The unrenewed mind is a gift to Satan. Because the unrenewed mind is bent towards darkness and wrongdoing, it can be easily influenced by Satan's lies and deceptions. Thus, the unrenewed mind is a breeding ground for Satan to influence the course of an individual's life and keep him bound in negative patterns.
- Satan's chief and most preferred weapon of warfare comes through attacking the mind. He hopes to keep sinners from repenting and experiencing God's saving grace through keeping their minds and thoughts locked up in darkness.
- Satan fights believers in their minds. He comes to infiltrate the believer's thought patterns with lies. He tries to get believers to totally rely on their senses and to discard faith in what God says. It is Satan's ploy to contaminate the believer's thinking with lies, old thought patterns, and things that challenge God's Word.
- Satan's goal is to get the believer to think contrary to God's Word. He wants to create a feeling of fear and dismiss any semblance of faith. He wants to keep the believer from experiencing the fullness of Christ and experiencing those things that are promised to them through their faith.
- Satan understands that if he can gain a foothold in somebody's mind, he can negatively impact their whole life. He understands quite well that as a man thinketh, so is he. Thus, Satan understands that a man's life will ultimately produce no more than his mind will allow. He understands that if he can convince someone to think defeat, for the most part that person will produce defeat.
- Satan knows quite well that environment, teaching, and the way we perceive those things will impact the way we think about life. Thus, he seeks to connect us to dangerous environments (people, relationships that are negative), get us under dangerous teachings (teachings and information coming from a variety of sources that challenge faith in God and honor), and he hopes that we adopt and accept this incorrect information in our lives. Satan knows that poor thinking is the breeding ground for defeat.

**The Call of the Believer:** Be not conformed to this world. The *world* describes the system of darkness that is Satan. It is the sphere overseen and governed by Satan that glorifies his environment, patterns of thinking, and negative outcomes. The believer must not subscribe to or pattern his or her life according to this dark system. The believer must actively and intentionally loosen himself from the old patterns and begin the process of adopting new patterns after the ways of God. This call denotes that true followers of Jesus have experienced a shift and must adopt into their lives a different and more glorious pattern of living.”

**Be transformed:** The call of the believer is that he be changed. His whole life is to be changed. This means that your coming to Jesus was never intended to end at just the saving of your soul; God is after saving each believer's whole life!

**Transformation by renewing your mind:** This teaching says that the believer must undergo a mind renewal. The mind of a victorious believer must be purged and reprogrammed to please God. If one is to be a victorious believer, he must do the following:

- Have a willingness to adopt the mind of Christ and be taught (not stick to stuff proven wrong in the Word of God). God will promote you in proportion. When you become unteachable, you also become stuck, and unusable.
- Have humility and be able to acknowledge old patterns. You cannot fix what you refuse to face.
- Desire the mind of Christ
- Pursue the mind of Christ. Purge and replace unrenewed thinking. As you study the Word of God, cast down imaginations and guard your mind.

## **INSPIRATIONAL TEACHING NIGHT MESSAGE:**

### **A New Normal**

**Text: John 5:1–11**

Jesus comes through Bethesda (the so-called House of Mercy). Here they group impotent folk in three classes or groups:

- The halt
- The withered
- The blind

Jesus took a detour to make a visitation at Bethesda.

- This is one blessing of the text: God will detour to come and see about you!
- He's never too busy to take the side road to come and see about you!
- While everyone is running by Bethesda trying to do what they deem very important things, Jesus stops by to make a visitation. He is drawn to your needs. If you have a need today, I have good news for you: God is drawn to your need. When men don't understand, and folks pass you by, and those you thought would help you disappoint, Jesus will make a visitation.
- I would rather have a visitation from God than a visit from anyone. Some people can come in and see you down and drive you further down in the hole. However, when God visits he can help you, deliver you, heal you, lift you, bless you, and transform you.
- I know this because I've had a visit.

**The people in this text were waiting for an angel to trouble the water.** They believed that a certain time the water was troubled and whoever went in first was made whole. However, the text turns towards this man who is lame, and we are told that he has been on his pallet for 38 years.

- He represents all of us who understand what it like to struggle. The eyes of the Lord are upon those of us who are in a struggle. Jesus is drawn to your struggle. When people walk by, that is when God will walk in.
- The issue is that this man’s last 38 years had trapped him. It had been his normal; he had been on that bed 38 years. It had become what he was used to. It had become what he learned to live with; it had become what he settled for!

**Thought:** Some of us are like this man; our normal has not been very good. Being down has been your normal: feeling defeated, wrestling with depression, crying lots of tears, looking for acceptance, seeking everybody’s approval. Each of these things might represent your normal.

### **The Question of Jesus to This Man and to Us All: Will You be Made?**

- God wants to give the man a new normal, something different. He wants to lead people into something better, greater.
- I came to give you wholeness, to bring things together. You must embrace the transformation.

In this hour, God is doing things out of the norm for those who trust him.

- When God is blessing, you must make sure you are not still trying hold to your old normal. God wants to grant you a new normal. Think outside of what has been your normal and embrace your new normal. It’s time to walk into your new normal, receive, embrace, seize, and lay claim to it.
- Yes, a new normal for a new you. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: Old things have passed away, and behold all thing have become new (2 Cor. 5:17)! God want to deliver your new. Not only is your spirit made new, he wants to make your life new.

**Will You Be Made Whole?** “Will you allow me to issue you an upgrade?” the Lord asks. It’s a matter of choice. You must allow yourself to receive what God has for you. He says, “I want to give it to you; it’s already ordained for you, already set up for you, already purposed for you to get. Will you be made whole?”

- “I see where you have been hanging out, but I see you in a better place: Will you allow it? Will you cast down everything that keeps you from receiving it? I came to drop something off. You can accept it or reject it.”
- It’s already prepared. Your new normal is already here: peace unquenchable (that’s your new normal), joy unspeakable, confidence unbreakable, faith unshakeable, victory unstoppable! New normal, baby! You are the recipient of a new normal.

Jesus is highlighting something here:

- The man's dysfunction had become his normal. And his old normal kept him from embracing his new normal.
- The Lord wants to take you out of some spots where you've been hanging out. He wants to deliver you from some areas where you have been dwelling. For too long, low living has been your normal, bringing up the rear, walking in defeat, holding back, walking in fear, wallowing in shame, backing up in doubt, giving in to pressure, backing up when things get hard, breaking down when because you feel hated, walking out because you feel unsupported. Today is the day to shake off the old and embrace the new. The Lord is releasing those who would believe in a new normal, a better normal, a victorious normal, an overcoming normal.

Will you receive it? Will you embrace it? Will you accept it? The package is ready (new normal). If you had it good, it's getting ready to get better; if it's been great, it's about to get greater. You must arise to a *new normal*.

**What does this new normal look like?** Well here it is: The man had been down on a bed, in a low place, unable to get around. He was down, but the Lord spoke to him!

**Rise.** Get up and embrace the new life Jesus gives: God wants to put you back on your feet. You have been down long enough, in a low place, wallowing in dysfunction, held up (long enough), and held back.

**Take up your bed.** The bed. The thing you lived through, the stuff you survived, the thing you used to lay in: pick it up! Jesus says, in essence, this: What used to hold you up, I'm giving you the grace to pick it up. The stuff you survived, carry it with you.

**Walk with it.** Use your bed as a testimony to bless somebody else. Embrace your new normal!

**Appendix E:**

**PowerPoint Project Overview**

# Dissertation Overview

**PROJECT TITLE: INCREASING THE INVOLVEMENT OF  
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES AT CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH  
CHURCH MINISTRIES**

DAMEION L. ROYAL

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

- Contending for the Faith Church(CFTF) is the place where the author serves as pastor.
- The church is a predominately African American church centered in the heart of an African American community.
- The author has noticed that the participation of African American males at CFTF is greatly lacking and desires to address this issue.
- The author recognizes that African American males who attend church could positive role models for their families and community.

## GOAL OF THE PROJECT

- This project seeks to increase the involvement of African American males at CFTF.
- Involvement in this project includes church service participation, Sunday School, Bible study, and Men's Fellowship.
- This project will explore the issues that keep African American men from consistent church involvement, and it will create a model to effectively address this issue.
- This project will offer recommendations to address increasing the involvement of African American Males at CFTF.



## **THEORETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS**

- **Theoretical Basis:** This Project is grounded in the belief that African American men have a profound impact on the state of the African American community and family. The author believes that the church teaches principles which aid men in positively impacting family and community.
- **Theological Basis:** This project grounds itself in the biblical command to go into the world and make disciples. The author believes that evangelizing and training men through the church assist this effort.

## **CHAPTER TWO: Discussing The African American Male**

### **Problems Plaguing The African American Male**

- Educational Disparities
- Employment Concerns
- Drug Offenses
- AIDS/HIV Epidemic
- The Prison System
- Fatherlessness
- Overemphasis on Sports

## **Barriers To African American Male Church Attendance**

- Hypocrisy
- The Dislike for Tithing
- The Church Is Viewed as Irrelevant
- Church Services are Too Lengthy
- A Dislike for Dress Codes
- Homosexual Males in Attendance
- The Lack of Evangelism
- Church Is Too Eurocentric

## **Exploring What Men Need**

- Men Need a Relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Men Need to be Great.
- Men Need to Hear Positive Messages.
- Men Need to be Empowered.
- Men Need to be Challenged.
- Men Need High Standards.
- Men Need to Defend Against Satanic Attacks.
- Men Need Good Pastoral Leadership.

## **Men and Their Value To The Church**

- Men Help the church to take risks.
- Men Bring Strength to the Church.
- Men Bring Finances to the Church.
- Men Bring Their Families to Church.

## **CHAPTER THREE: Research Process and Findings**

- **Participants:** There were 30 research participants. These participants are reflected in three Groups: Group A ranging from ages 18-34. Group B ranging from ages 35-50. Group C ranging from 51-65.
- **Research Protocol:** Data was collected through interviews during which participants were asked to respond to a questionnaire prepared by the author.
- **Research Acknowledgements:** The researcher serves as the pastor for the participants in the study, and while there he has no financial or supervisory authority over the participants, there is an element of spiritual leading present in these relationships.

## Context for this Project

- **Ministry Context: Contending for the Faith** Church is located in is not a very culturally diverse ministry. It would be characterized as a predominately AA church with less than 1% of the congregation representing other ethnicities.
- **Church Ministries:** There are also several auxiliary ministries at the church. These auxiliaries include a Women's Fellowship, Men's Fellowship, Choir Ministry, Praise and Worship Ministry, Dance Ministry, Young Men's Ministry, and Young Ladies Ministry, Youth Ministry, Married Couple's Ministry, Single's Ministry, and Senior's Ministry.
- **Community Profile:** Contending For the Faith Church rests in the eastern part of Wilson in the heart of predominately AA community. The community is plagued by low-income, crime, and single parent homes.

## **Research Findings: Participants Early Years**

- 50% of Participants grew up without a father in the home. These men were mostly reared by a mother or grandmother.
- This study reveals that there is no significant difference in educational accomplishments among the participants who were reared with fathers in the home and those who were not.
- The results of this survey show that the arrest rate among those without fathers in the home is greater than the rate for with fathers present.
- 73% of participants in this study were reared in church .



## **Research Findings: Childhood Church Experiences**

- The findings reveal that 100% of those participants reared in church were required to attend. It also reveals that going to church was not a topic of conversation in homes of those who were not reared in church.
- Most participants were introduced to the church by their mothers or some other female figures.
- Participants described their childhood church experiences: Church was too boring and lengthy, the minister was not clear, and Church attendance was too frequent.

## **Research Findings: CFTF Involvement**

- 26% of participants felt that their initial experience as new members of CFTF could have been furthered assisted by extra support in the form of phone calls or meetings with more spiritually mature men.
- 50% of participants are in regular attendance for Sunday morning worship and Bible study at CFTF.
- 20% of participants stated that they were involved in Sunday morning worship, Bible study, and an auxiliary.
- 50% of participants are not involved in Men's Ministry and 70% did not attend Sunday School.

## **Research Findings: CFTF Involvement Continued**

- The research reveals that more attention must be given to increase involvement in the areas of Sunday School and Men's Ministry.
- Of The 50% of Participants not attending Men's Fellowship, the majority of participants stated work related issues, and a few participants said that they never considered attending.
- Of the 70% of participants not attending Sunday school the greater part of participants stated work-related issues as the reason.
- Of the 70 % of participants suggested that they had never really attended Sunday school, and a few never really considered it or received encouragement to attend.

## **Research Findings: Barriers that Keep Men From CFTF**

**Participants suggested several Barriers that keep Men in the Immediate Community from attending CFTF. The following reasons were suggested:**

- The Feeling that they are not Good Enough to Attend
- A Lack of Dressy Clothing
- A Lack of Evangelism or Invitation from CFTF

## **Research Findings: Increasing AA Male Involvement**

**Participants gave several suggestions as to how they thought AA male involvement can be increased at CTFE. The suggestions are as follows:**

- Increase and create fellowship opportunities.
- Basketball/other outside sport activities
- Men's Day services
- Evangelism to men
- Community Outreach to assist with basic needs
- Annual Men's Retreat
- Teaching and training Moments for men
- Efforts to help male newcomers who are weak in the faith

## **CHAPTER FOUR: Recommendations**

**The author suggested several recommendations to increase the Participation of AA males at CFTF. Recommendations are as follows:**

- A CFTF Community Soup Kitchen
- Men's Discipleship Ministry
- Men's Evangelism Team
- Men's Monthly Bible Study
- Quarterly Fellowships/ Annual Men's Retreat
- Men's Sunday/ Men's Day Reinstatement
- Young Men of Valor
- Pastoral Announcement of Men's Fellowship and Sunday School

## **CHAPTER FOUR: Conclusion**

As the pastor of CFTF Church, the researcher emerges from this study highly inspired to minister to the lives of AA males. This project has broadened the researcher's view concerning the conditions of the AA male and the barriers that often keep him away from the church. This study has stirred an even greater passion within the researcher, and he is inspired to do all that is necessary to continue increasing the involvement of AA males at CFTF Church. This means that the researcher will be diligent in encouraging programs, training classes, strategies, fellowship opportunities, and other methods that will promote increased church attendance, more decisions for Jesus Christ, greater maturity among men, and higher ministry participation. The researcher's life has been inspired by this project, and he vows to lead the church in remaining effective and intentional about this effort.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: A Model For Male Church Involvement**

### **Introduction of The Model**

The author suggests a model that will reach men in his immediate church community with the love of Jesus Christ. He also wishes to assist with the material needs that often plague some AA men in low- or no-income situations. Also, the author understands from his own study that male participants desire opportunities to do outreach, discipleship, and fellowship. This model will give the men of CFTF an opportunity to unite and offer all these things to men in their church community. Furthermore, the goal of this research is to increase the involvement of AA men at CFTF Church. The author acknowledges that CFTF has been weak in reaching the AA males in its immediate community, and he seeks to suggest a model that attracts men to Jesus Christ, grows them in discipleship, and keeps them encouraged through fellowship.



## **THE MODEL: Evangelism, Discipleship, And Fellowship**

- **Evangelism:** Focuses on Sharing the Love of Jesus with men and assisting them in coming into a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ.
- **Discipleship:** Focuses on helping men to grow into mature disciples of Jesus Christ who can duplicate the process of making disciples.
- **Fellowship:** Focuses on helping creating strong male relationship between Christian men. These relationship can be a great source of support and strength among men.

## VITA

Dr. Dameion Royal is a native of New Bern, North Carolina. He graduated from North Carolina State University where he earned a bachelor's degree in communication disorders. He went on to complete his Master of Theological Studies and his Master of Religious Education from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Royal also completed his Master of Divinity equivalency and Doctor of Ministry at Liberty University School of Divinity.

Dr. Royal has been a minister for nearly 28 years, and he is the pastor and founder of Contending for the Faith Church in Wilson, North Carolina. In 2015, he also had the distinct honor of assuming the role of senior pastor at Philippi Church of Christ in Greenville, North Carolina. This church was pastored for nearly 40 years by his uncle, Bishop Randy Royal.

Dr. Royal offers training and assistance to African American pastors and ministers located in rural areas. He has great interest in offering support to small churches, and it is his plan to do more to help these churches and pastors reach their full potential.