

The logo for 'FATHERING STRONG' features a white shield-like icon on the left, composed of four quadrants. To the right of the icon, the words 'FATHERING' and 'STRONG' are stacked vertically in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a dark blue rectangular background.

FATHERING STRONG

The Real Epidemic Today

Based on the latest Fatherhood research and the 2020 Census Data



Table of Contents

01

Introduction

02

The Impact of
Father Love

03

The Facts of
Father Absence

04

The Positive
Impact of a
Present Father

06

Effects of Father
Absence on
Children

07

Father Absence
Effect on
Mother's Well-
being

08

Correlation
between Father
Absence and
Mass Shootings

09

The Cost to
Society Due to
Father Absence

10

Different Types
of Fathers Bring
Different
Challenges

11

Predictors of
Father Absence
and
Engagement

12

What the Bible
Says About
Fathers

14

Building Fathers
Into Real POPS

15

Breaking the
Cycle of Father
Absence

16

Next Steps

17

Work Cited

Introduction

Children Need Good Dads

An article written by Bob Griffin stated the real problem; *"The need for a father is on an epidemic scale, and the 'father deficit' should be treated as a public health issue."*



According to the 2020 U.S. Census, 18.4 million children are living without a biological father. This means that out of the 73 million children in the U.S., 25% are without a present father. This number has doubled since 1968 and continues to increase. Literature associated with father absence indicates that growing up in a father-absent household can be associated with negative well-being and life adversity among children. Father absence can have negative effects on a child's life such as depression, drug and alcohol abuse, anxiety, psychological issues, a tendency for violence, and sexual and criminal activities. Absence is also felt by the mothers as they work through pregnancy, birth, and raising a child alone.

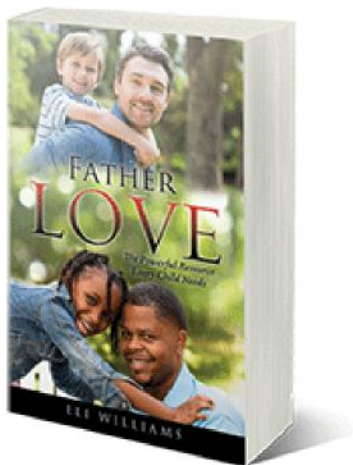
A detailed research study titled, "Father Facts Eight Edition," published in 2019, by the National Fatherhood Initiative consolidated over 212 research projects and studies conducted on the effects of families and communities due to a lack of a father in the home.

The research is overwhelming and makes the point with unequivocal evidence: **children need good dads.**

The Impact of Father Love

Eli Williams, the author of the book, "Father Love – The Powerful Resource that Every Child Needs," defines what it means to be a loving father and the protector, order keeper, provider, and stabilizer the family and community need to remain strong and vibrant. In the book, he ties together the important aspects of not only working to become a better father but also making the commitment to be a loving and faithful servant to God. Becoming a stronger father means becoming committed to the word of God. It is the belief that giving your life to Christ is the way to becoming a more loving and stronger father.

The last verse in the Old Testament of the Bible that was written before Christ came to this earth is in Malachi 4:6 – "And we will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." A clear statement of the impact a father plays in the role of his children and the stability of society.



Causes of father absence is a complex phenomenon produced by many circumstances and situations. Some are related to choices people make about fertility, marriage, and cohabitation. But others are the results of unexpected events, illnesses, or incarceration. It is very likely that fatherlessness has different meanings and implications for those of differing social classes.

A father is called to be the leader and protector of the household. This may be foreign to most fathers who choose to be absent in their child's lives.

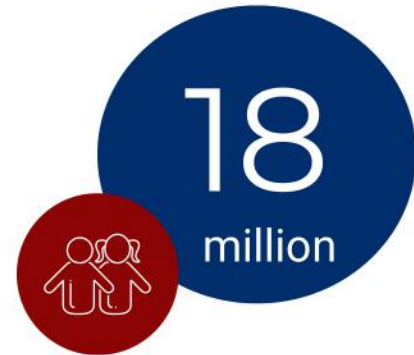
This paper supports the impact statement of the mission for Fathering Strong, a network and community established to build up fathers and support their needs to become stronger and more committed leaders of the families and followers of Jesus Christ.

”
**And we will turn the hearts
of the fathers to the
children, and the hearts of
the children to their fathers.**

Malachi 4:6

The Facts of Father Absence

At a national level 18.4 million children are living without their biological father.



Father absence disproportionately affects black children, and nearly a quarter of American children live in father-absent homes. The table below identifies the percentages by ethnicity.

Ethnicity of Children	Lived with Both Parents	Lived with Mother Only	Lived with Father Only	Lived with Neither Parent
White	74.6%	17.4%	4.4%	3.6%
Black	39.7%	48.1%	5.0%	7.1%
Hispanic	67.0%	24.9%	4.0%	4.2%
Asian	86.8%	8.5%	2.2%	2.4%

In 2017, 35% of unmarried parents cohabitated and 53% of unmarried parents were solo mothers. Resident fathers had consistently higher levels of involvement than separated/divorced and nonresident fathers; however, both types of fathers did not have statistically different involvement when their child was 1 year old. Some additional facts revealed by the study included:



Separated and divorced fathers

had a higher level of involvement than nonresident fathers.



Father Involvement

was found to decrease over time.



Fathers with Education

including high school or bachelor's degree were found to be more involved.

The Positive Impact of a Present Father



Children need an involved father in their lives. Research has proven that children that grow up with a father in their lives do better in almost every aspect that was measured.

In a study conducted by professors at the University of Missouri, it was found that adolescents who had resident biological or adoptive fathers were shown to have higher GPAs than those with unknown fathers. Adolescents with unknown fathers, deceased fathers, and non-residential fathers all had lower GPAs than those with residential biological fathers. Divorce, non-marital birth, and child abandonment all negatively affect a child's GPA and ability to do well in school.

A subsample of Black adolescents from the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health revealed the impact a father figure (i.e. non-biological fathers) can have on the education of a child. The research showed that:

Female adolescents and participants who had a parent who attended college were more likely to believe they would finish college.

Adolescents with nonresident, biological fathers were less likely to expect to finish college.

Communication about school yielded the most significant positive influence on participants' grades.

The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health studied the influence of six different categories of father type—resident biological fathers, resident stepfathers, resident adoptive fathers, non-resident biological fathers, unknown biological fathers, and deceased fathers—on adolescents' school performance from seventh through twelfth grade. The researchers found that:

Adolescents with resident biological fathers had higher school performance than adolescents with nonresident fathers.

Adolescents with stepfathers had higher rates of school failure than those who lived with their biological parents.

Adolescents without a resident father figure and who didn't know the identity of their fathers had the highest risk of school failure.

The Positive Impact of a Present Father

The National Fatherhood Initiative released in 2015 eight areas where a child's life improved due to having a father in their lives.



Better able to control their emotions – these children were less likely to have emotional or behavioral problems and four times less likely to have a mood disorder.



Better physical health – children with involved fathers were less likely to be overweight and 2 times less likely to die as infants.



Healthier relationships – a good, involved father's views affect what his daughter looks for in a boyfriend or husband. His views affect what kind of dad or husband his son will become.



Feel safe and confident – children are safer when their dad lives with them. Children that grow up without a father are at a greater risk of child abuse.



Less likely to use drugs and alcohol – children who abuse drugs and alcohol do so because they lack the love and connection a father and other family members provide.



Perform better in school – when a father is present children are more likely to get A's, 2 times less likely to repeat a grade, and less likely to have behavioral problems in school.



Less likely to be poor – when a father is present children are 4 times less likely to live in poverty



More likely to stay out of trouble – fathers play an important role in keeping children from taking harmful risks and committing crimes.

Effects of Father Absence on Children

Father absence places children and communities at a greater risk for many of the problems that law enforcement deals with daily.

The data supports that the root cause for most problems in society today could be prevented if fathers were present and actively involved in their child(ren)'s lives. The research points to the importance of father involvement as a protective factor against these top five areas that affect a child's well-being.

Higher Rate of Depression and Suicide

The quality of father involvement is associated with higher levels of behavioral problems. Research found that children with stable father figures had better cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes.

Greater Chance of Substance Abuse

The quality of a father's involvement has a direct correlation to early substance abuse regardless of gender. An absent father, children with abusive fathers or those that abuse drugs are at a much higher risk.

Higher Rate of Crime

Father absence has been closely linked to criminal activity for young men and was a predictor for higher rates of youth assault. Also, a poor-quality relationship has an impact on delinquency.

Earlier Sexual Activity

Studies link earlier and riskier sexual behavior to father absence. Adolescents from father-absent homes were 3.5 times more likely to experience pregnancy than adolescents from father-present homes.

Poor Educational Outcomes

The duration of a father's absence has been proven to be a factor in a child's educational success. The lowest achievement and highest risk of school failure were from adolescents without resident father figures.

Effects of Father Absence on the Mother's Well-being

If the dad is involved, it means good health outcomes for mom and baby.

A father not only negatively affects their child's well-being with their absence but the mother of their children as well. Contemporary culture encourages promiscuity by redefining freedom and prioritizing autonomy over responsibility. When sex outside the marriage becomes normal, it is mostly the women who are left on their own to raise the resulting children.

Antenatal depression can creep up in the absence of a husband/partner. It has been shown that mothers who are either married to or co-parenting with a father have less stress in their parenting. Even if it is just a matter of helping with chores or interacting with the child it provides less stress for the mother.

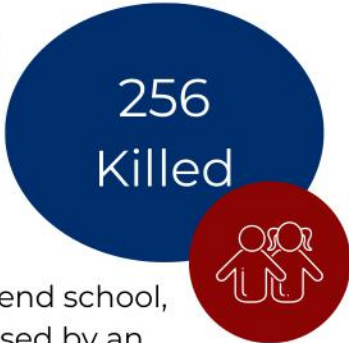


In a national sample of women ages 10-19 who experienced pregnancy, it was observed that a lack of partner support correlated with harmful birth outcomes. Low birth weight that often results in child loss was less likely in pregnancies where the pregnant mother was receiving partner support. Specifically, teens that are pregnant and have partner support are less likely to have preterm birth. If the dad is involved, it means good health outcomes for mom and baby.

A study conducted in 2018 revealed that when fathers showed low sensitivity, high intrusiveness, and provided little opportunities for child social engagement, the family process was less cohesive. This implies a decrease in the family's harmonious, warm, and collaborative style.

Correlation Between Absent Fathers and Mass Shootings

By the spring of 2022, there had been 250 mass shootings which had killed more than 256 people and injured 1,010 through the end of May. Many of the young male perpetrators had problems going on at home. Whether the father was physically or mentally absent the shooter was lacking a father. Mass shooters have been known to have mental illness, delinquent behavior, and violent tendencies. They also frequently do not attend school, hate it, or are failing out. These are all problems shown to be caused by an absent father.



A large factor missing in the life of mass shooters is a positive psychosocial influence. In a study conducted by the Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, it was shown that 85% of the mass school shooters they researched suffered from depression. When they spoke of depression this included diagnosed depression or significant symptoms including suicidality, anhedonia, hopelessness, guilt, and sadness.

This lack of a positive psychosocial influence meant:

- a lack of established academic or other goals in their lives
- little to no encouragement to make goals for their lives and seek to complete them

Researchers concluded that children with a positive psychosocial influence are less likely to engage in mass violence.

In 2016, psychologist Dr. Peter Langman compiled biographical data on 56 American school shooters. He found that 82% had grown up in dysfunctional family situations, usually without two biological parents at home. The trend sadly continues. The shooter in Uvalde, Texas had not lived with his father in years. The Sandy Hook shooter hadn't seen his father in the two years leading up to that massacre.



The Cost to Society Due to Father Absence

The total expenditures add up to a startling **\$99.8 billion**.



In 2008 a study, the first of its kind, provided insight into the estimated cost to taxpayers due to father absence. It estimated the annual expenditures made by the U.S. federal government to support father-absent homes. The total expenditures added up to a startling \$99.8 billion.

The study supports the fact that father absence contributes to financial poverty. Thirty-nine percent of single-mother families live in poverty. But only 8.8% of families with fathers present lived in poverty. The \$99.8 billion was spent on programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child support enforcement, food and nutrition programs, housing programs, and the State Children's Health Insurance Plan (SCHIP).

The \$99.8 billion cost is a conservative estimate, as it leaves out 3 significant, but hard-to-measure, sources of costs:

1. Federal benefits programs improve whole communities or individuals regardless of income.
2. Indirect costs related to the poor outcomes of children of single-mother families, such as greater use of mental and physical health services, and a higher rate of involvement in the juvenile justice system.
3. Long-term costs in reduced tax income due to the lower earnings of children of single-parent families, and long-term costs due to the higher incarceration of children of single-parent families.

In 2010, President Obama signed the Claims Resolution Act which provided \$150 million per year in grants to promote healthy marriage (\$75 million) and responsible fatherhood (\$75 million).

The most obvious consequence of father absence is the effect it has on household income and the corresponding increase in single-mother households' use of means-tested benefits programs. The best overall aggregate estimate available is that 20.1 percent of single mothers would leave poverty if marriage rates returned to what they were in 1970.

Different Types of Fathers Bring Different Challenges

Building stronger fathers means meeting them where they are. There are many circumstances that create barriers to being a good father and understanding the different types of fathers helps build programs that meet their needs and help them be the best father based on their requirements.

Teen Fathers	Teen fathers have many risk factors associated with transitioning to fatherhood including lack of education, unemployment, societal treatment, and the fact they are still growing up themselves. Getting teen fathers engaged with the mother and child is the key to long-term success.
Single Fathers	Single fathers make up a small but rapidly growing population. The largest proportion is single fathers due to a divorce. They spend, on average, more time with their children than fathers in other family forms but less time than single-mother families. Little is still known about their specific struggles in raising their children.
Divorced Fathers	Divorced fathers often have to overcome hurdles such as the court system to have the level of involvement they want with their children. Differences arise based on custodial arrangements and support from the mother. The higher level of productive involvement by divorced fathers in the lives of their children shows better outcomes.
Nonresident, Noncustodial Fathers	Nonresident fathers, many of whom are noncustodial have to balance responsibilities to be with their children with the level of access they have to their children. The father's involvement with the children has proven to be a positive influence but many have barriers such as lack of visitation, financial issues, and depression.
Incarcerated Fathers	Incarcerated fathers must work especially hard while they are in prison to stay connected with their children and studies show that the majority of them report having some contact with their children since imprisonment. However, studies have shown that children are at a higher risk of antisocial, delinquent, and aggressive behavior.
Military Fathers	Military fathers are motivated to be involved in their children's lives but struggle during deployment to stay connected and reunify with their families. Struggles include missing developmental milestones, nurturing, and staying involved. PTSD can have a negative effect on parenting.
Stepfathers	While there is variability in stepfather involvement and relationships with their stepchildren, the majority of stepchildren feel close to their stepfather as they enter adulthood. Stepfather involvement has been shown to improve the nonresident biological father-child relationship and the children's adjustment.

Predictors of Father Absence and Engagement

Fathers involved with their children as infants tend to remain involved as their children age.

Researchers that have analyzed predictors of father involvement found that living situations, marital status, substance abuse, and self-esteem were significant predictors of father involvement. Age, race, employment status, income, depressive symptoms, social support, and stressful situations were not. Their findings indicate the need for more comprehensive fatherhood programs.

The influence of race and ethnicity on nonresidential fathers' involvement in terms of time, engagement, shared responsibility, and co-parenting with mothers was researched. The results found that black fathers shared responsibilities more frequently and displayed more effective co-parenting than both Hispanic and white fathers.

Impact of Marriage

Researchers found that fathers who either were married to the mother or cohabitated demonstrated the highest levels of father involvement. The findings also revealed:

- children born to cohabitating parents were five times more likely to experience the separation of their parents compared to children of married couples.
- fathers who transitioned to marriage increased their level of involvement over time at a faster rate than the continuously married fathers
- 82% of married fathers played with their very young coresidential children (under the age of 5) every day compared to 68% of cohabitating and unmarried fathers.
- single parent and cohabitating households are more susceptible than married households to family instability, which subsequently hinders early child cognitive development.

What the Bible Says About Fathers

Fatherhood was one of the first responsibilities God gave men.

Fatherhood was one of the first jobs God gave men. Immediately after creating Adam and Eve, God commanded them to “be fruitful and multiply.” (Genesis 1:28) One of His primary purposes for marriage was offspring who would fill the earth with God’s praise and glory. However, providing sperm for conception is merely the beginning of God’s expectations for fathers. The Bible provides many points of guidance on what God’s expectation is to be a good father.

Here are just a few verses that describe a father’s role:

- **Psalm 103:13** - As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.
- **Ephesians 6:4** - Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- **Proverbs 20:7** - The righteous who walks in his integrity— blessed are his children after him!
- **Colossians 3:21** - Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.
- **Proverbs 4:1-9** - Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching. When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me and said to me, “Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments and live. Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.
- **Proverbs 13:24** - Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.
- **Proverbs 22:6** - Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.
- **3 John 1:4** - I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.
- **Psalm 127:3-5** - Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

What the Bible Says About Fathers

An article published by Got Questions Ministries identified ten characteristics of a godly father. Some men who want to be good fathers have little understanding of what a godly father looks like. Here are the 10 characteristics identified:

- 1 A godly father knows God** – It should be without stating, but many men want their children to have a relationship with God but do not have that relationship themselves. Children model what they see. So godly fatherhood begins within the heart of a man.
- 2 A godly father loves and honors his wife** – it has been said that the best gift a father can give his children is to love their mother. Even if a man is divorced or single, he can still model respectful behavior toward his child's mother. Children imitate what they see.
- 3 A godly father accepts responsibility for his children's spiritual training** – While providing financially for a family is an important responsibility for fathers (1 Timothy 5:8) it is not their only responsibility. A father must encourage Christian character in his children by his example as well as his words of instruction and the expectations of behavior he sets forth for and enforces with his children.
- 4 A godly father is continually aware of his influence** – fathers may not realize it but everything they do is influencing their children. Words alone are not enough.
- 5 A godly father models selfless service** – much of Jesus' earthly life was given to serving others. As followers of Jesus, we are to imitate that service (Matthew 20:28). Godly fathers figure out ways to involve their children in acts of service.
- 6 A godly father is consistent** – nothing confuses children more than inconsistency, either in discipline or example. A father that is loving one minute and angry the next creates insecurity in his children.
- 7 A godly father disciplines his children appropriately** – discipline is a part of child-rearing and should not be ignored or solely delegated to the mother. Hebrews 12:9-10 reminds us that earthly fathers disciplined us for our good and our heavenly Father does the same.
- 8 A godly father does not allow himself to be controlled by outside influences.** Addictions such as alcohol or drugs often create a home environment marked by insecurity, fear, and depression. Fathers that display addictive behaviors often teach their children to do the same.
- 9 A godly father is a man under authority** – Due to his sinful nature, a man will fight to be his own boss. However, Jesus demonstrated that He was a Man under the authority of his heavenly Father. He readily gave credit to God for His successes and submitted Himself fully to the will of God.
- 10 A godly father will lead** – the world is in desperate need of men who will lead wisely. Leadership is not domination or control. A leader is one who goes first. He sets the pace for the family by practicing what he preaches. He is on the lookout for dangers and takes initiative to protect his family from them. He is a man that his children can be proud of (Proverbs 17:6)

Building Fathers Into Real POPS

Being a strong father is making a commitment to being the best POPS, Protector, Order keeper, Provider and Stabilizer to your children, families and communities.



Keeping Kids Safe

Protector

Mature, responsible fathers play an indispensable part in making homes, neighborhoods, and schools safe for children



Prevention and Pride

Order Keeper

Fathers are vital to the well-being of families and preventing family and community violence



You are your child's biggest resource

Provider

Effective fathering includes providing for your children's financial, emotional, spiritual, and educational needs.



Encourage, empower, and engage

Stabilizer

The biggest key to a stable family and community is active, loving, committed, engaged, and involved fathers.

Breaking the Cycle of Father Absence

It is time to address this epidemic of fatherless homes. The facts prove this is a major problem that only continues to grow. It hurts families, communities, and most importantly children. It has become a large cost to society both emotionally and financially. It is time to take a stand.

Fathering Strong was built to reach fathers where they are. Our platform provides fathers a network for peer support, mutual encouragement, and educational resources to maximize their efforts to enhance their relationship with their children, small steps at a time. The Fathering Strong community seeks to build godly fathers all over the world as they connect and share their experiences and struggles while getting the support they need to grow within their faith journey. We believe fathers are better together.

The need is clear. The time is now.

Fathering Strong is the Answer



Next Steps

Get involved with building the online community where fathers can join together to build stronger fathers and stronger communities.

Fathering Strong is an online community where you can build relationships with others and be a part of building stronger fathers. It is a place for resources, connections and outreach.

01

Join the community

Go to FatheringStrong.com to sign up. It's free to join.

02

Participate in discussion

Once you sign up, complete your profile and begin engaging with others in the community. Find topics and groups that best meet your needs.

03

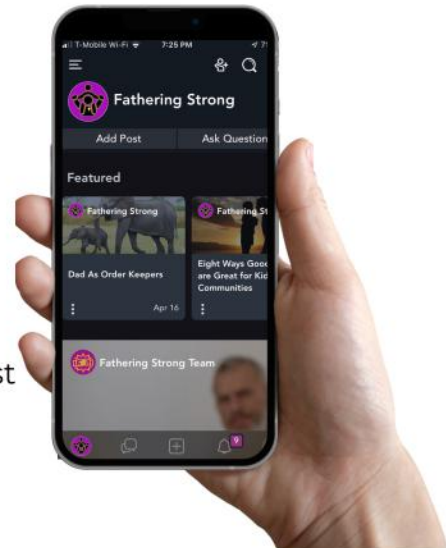
Build groups of like-minded men

Join groups of individuals just like yourself who are experiencing the same issues and challenges and discover ways to enrich your fathering.

04

Actively participate

Don't sit back and watch. Get involved. The value of the community is in the participation. Build online and local groups where you can share your stories and learn from others.



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We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the Heavenly Father

Contact

www.fatheringstrong.com

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