

## Evergreen Baptist Church Men's Ministry

### Study Guide for Chapter 7 in *Hazards of Being a Man* “Absence”

For Saturday, March 9, 2008 (**Remember – No Tuesday Class**)  
(8:00-10:00 A.M.)

The following questions are designed to help you prepare for the Men's Meeting, even if you do not have the book.

1. Pastor Miller opens with the touching story of the little boy in the play area of the mall that “adopted” him as a surrogate dad. Children without a positive male role model in their home is, sadly, not very uncommon today. How many examples of this phenomenon have you witnessed? Why do so many men desert their children? What are the consequences of these men's desertions in the lives of their children? What are the results in our general society?

2. Ephesians 6:4 is one of the best known verses of instruction to fathers about their responsibilities to their children. Read it in your Bible, and then compare how it is presented in several other versions. “Fathers, do not irritate and provoke your children to anger [do not exasperate them to resentment], but rear them [tenderly] in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord.” (AMP) “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.” (NLT) “Fathers, don't exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master.” (MSG) “And the fathers! provoke not your children, but nourish them in the instruction and admonition of the Lord.” (YLT)

- a. What are the two commands God gives to us as men in this verse?
- b. How can a man irritate, provoke or exasperate his children?
- c. How is he to properly rear them? What is his role to look like?
- d. How do you think the average American father measures up in regards to the Lord's expectations in this verse?

3. Samuel is presented as an example of an absent father. It is related in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 7:15-8:5. It seems he was too often physically absent from his sons due to his work. But men can be physically present but emotionally absent with equally devastating results in the lives of their children. Look at David's sad example in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 13.

- a. What was going on in David's family to which he seemed totally oblivious?

- b. When his children broke God's commands, what was David's response?
- c. How well did David do in measuring up to God's expectations we just saw in Ephesians 6:4?
- d. What may have been the underlying cause of David's apparent inability to get involved in the lives of his children, especially in those critical circumstances?
- e. What were the results of David's emotional absence?

4. What is your reaction to these quotes from chapter 7? Do you agree or disagree with Pastor Miller's statement, and why?

- a. "Sometimes the marriage is intact but the father is on the job more than at home.... And sometimes the father is physically present but emotionally absent. He escapes from his wife and children, who may be just one room away, either working on the computer or watching TV. None of these scenarios is acceptable. The long-term consequences of an absent father can be serious."
- b. "Time, like money, is a gift to invest, and there are endless opportunities for us to spend it. .... We are all equally rich in time. .... But we are pursued by endless opportunities to spend our time. Saying yes to one thing requires us to say no to something else. We have to invest our time strategically, knowing that the amount of return we collect on our investment depends on the market in which we invest it. Investing time in relationships will pay wonderful dividends, but it may take years to realize them. Often we postpone the investment in developing relationships in favor of projects that seem more urgent, leading us to spend our precious time reacting to time-critical issues that simply aren't important."
- c. "Earlier I identified three types of absence that can damage our families. The first type is out-of-town absence.... The second type of absence is that caused by excessive hours at work. .... The third type of absence happens when the father is in the next room. For many men, we are present physically but absent emotionally. We come home; we check out."
- d. "There are no substitutes for our presence with our family. No good excuses exist either. Consider the following four myths that many men have bought into: 1. '*Although my family doesn't see me during the week, I always make it up to them on the weekend.*' Spending time with our family only on weekends makes us a visitor, not a family member. .... 2. '*Although my family doesn't see me all month, I always make it up to them with family vacation.*' .... A man who interacts with his family only when he takes them out of town will create an unhappy home. .... 3. '*Since I work from my house, I am present with my family all day long.*' Physical presence is not the opposite of absence. Our goal is not proximity but participation. .... 4. '*Since I'm home every evening with my family, I must be a good husband/father.*' We must consider whether our time in our home is wasted or invested."

- e. “Most jobs do not require the unrealistic hours we work. Rather, our ambition drives us to go above and beyond the call of duty, leading many of us to work excessive and late hours.”
- f. “Relationships are sometimes messy, rarely predictable, and never easy to control. For those reasons, many men avoid close relationships. We forgo time with our wife and children because they are not as easy to fix as the problems at work. We find checking off completed projects at the office quite rewarding, but the project of our families is never ending.”
- g. “For most of us just ‘quitting busyness’ is not an option. Another solution must be out there. If busyness cannot be abandoned, then it must be outsmarted. We need practical help for living intentionally in our calendar-controlled lives. The key to living a meaningful life rests in the daily accumulation of minutes that we invest in significant matters. .... [After tallying the hours of work, commuting, activities, etc.] How much time does that leave you? Thirty hours every week to live intentionally. .... Maybe we are not as busy as we think we are. .... Maybe we should reevaluate how we’re spending our available hours and redirect them to benefit the people we claim to love.”
- h. “We can cite many reasons for a father to be present instead of absent in his home. For one, children need a model of a healthy man-woman relationship. .... Another reason ... is to provide parental balance...a father who challenges and a mother who comforts. But the greatest reason fathers need to invest time in their children pertains to a child’s perception of God. Right or wrong, children often project their father’s qualities – both good and bad – onto God. .... Which of our character qualities will our children project onto God? How will our children view God differently as a result of our failures? Specifically, how will our children view God differently because of our absence – physical or emotional?”

5. Pastor Miller points to the example of Jesus and His care for His mother as a positive example of a man in Scripture who did not neglect His familial duties. In spite of His hectic ministry schedule, Jesus made visits home. (Mark 6:1-6; Luke 4:20-30) Even on the cross He made sure that Mary’s needs would continue to be met. (John 19:26-27) Trying to find proper examples of fathering in the Scriptures is a challenge. We looked at Noah in our study of chapter 3. Job (in Job 1:5), Solomon (in Proverbs 1:8-19), and Joseph (in Luke 2:40-52) give us glimpses of fathers who took care to look after the spiritual upbringing of their children.

- a. What can fathers learn from the examples of these men?
- b. Can you think of any other men to add to the list of positive fathering role models? If so, who?
- c. Why do you think it is so difficult to find examples of men in Scripture who are investing in their children?

6. Pastor Miller concludes with five action steps to help us learn how to increase our presence and thus avoid the manly hazard of absence. Prayerfully consider how you can implement them in your life and evaluate how following them would impact your family. As Pastor Miller cautions, “If you have built a lifestyle of absence, suddenly deciding to be present may cause confusion and conflict in your home. But the investment is worth it, and over time your loved ones will once again feel just that – loved.”

- a. “*Reduce your travel schedule.* .... [W]hen travel is unavoidable, call daily ... and speak with each member of your family.”
- b. “*Identify signs that you are avoiding your family.* .... Investing time with your family will yield higher long-term dividends than any short-term investment can offer. Examine your schedule. Pay particular attention to the time you get home on weekdays and to the family activities you participate in on weekends.”
- c. “*Don’t try to store up family time.* .... Better to spend a few minutes each day with each member than to commit only one entire day to them. Likewise, don’t think a week of family vacation will make up for three months of absence.”
- d. “*When you are home, be at home.* .... Instead of turning off your energy when at home, you should redirect it.”
- e. “*Review your schedule with a trusted and truthful friend.* At least once a month – though preferably every week – discuss your time investments with someone outside your family.”

7. The memory assignment for this chapter is Deuteronomy 6:6-7, “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” Now consider how the NLT puts it: “And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.” How will following the instructions of these verses help you to invest your time wisely in your relationship with your family? How will they help you avoid the hazard of absence?