

BLACK CHILD LIBERATION THEOLOGY: A CONTEMPORARY
CHRISTIAN MODEL FOR MENTORING
BLACK BOYS AND GIRLS

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ABSTRACT

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The context for this project is The Young Kings Mentorship Program, in Atlanta, Georgia. The impetus for the venture is the American epidemic, a national decline in some young Black children's zeal for spiritual, intellectual, and emotional development. The hypothesis is if young Black children experiencing despondency are strategically mentored by positive Black Christians, as early as the third grade; then they will instead exhibit the behavioral patterns and dispositions of inner strength, courage, boldness, passion, limitless potential, beneficence, and community contribution in a word, liberation. The instruments used to address the problem will be weekly, curriculum guided mentorship sessions.

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INTRODUCTION

'Cause we're a winner
And everybody knows it too
We just keep on pushin'
Like your leaders tell you to
At last that blessed day has come...

— Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions

Late one-night, vaunted soul musician Curtis Mayfield awakened from a dream, sensing an urgent impulse to pen a lifting ballad for the Black community beginning with the words that also became the song title, “We’re a Winner.” Upon recording that midnight inspiration with melodic eloquence in RCA Victor Studios in Chicago, could Mayfield have known that his 1967 lyrical message of supreme identity designation, valuation of mentorship, encouragement to carry on, emphasis on unity, declaration of victory, and calling on a gracious God would be a preeminent and obligatory theological message for Black children, today? The answer to such a question is debatable. That his classic canticle is rich with solutions to today’s challenges in the Black Christian and non-Christian community is not debatable.

The Black community in general and the Black church in specificity are facing a tragic pandemic: young Black men are being marked ‘new member’ behind bars and in morgues more frequently than at houses of worship and halls of higher education. President Barack Obama said in a February 27, 2014, afternoon speech in the East Room of the White House, about the “My Brother’s Keeper” Initiative, “...by almost every

measure, the group that is facing some of the most severe challenges in the twenty first century in this country are boys and young men of color.”¹

This challenge is due to the massive shift from Black men of faith and substance being present in the lives of Black boys in times past, to some currently being absent. These young men grapple with the absence of positive role models in the media they spend hours viewing each day as well as in interpersonal relationships at home and at school. The void of positive images is destroying the perspectives and dreams of young Black boys. America is a country where a mass incarceration strategy against Black men is designed to ensure that there are more Black men locked in prison chains today than were locked in chains of slavery 170 years ago.² Christian and non-Christian Black men and women must do everything possible outside of the Black community to fight injustice. That work must carry on. However, this research argues for co-laboring effort that must be done inside the Black community, the development of Black children.

One’s mentality creates one’s reality. The scriptural law of reciprocity teaches that what is sown is what is reaped. Thoughts become things; whatever are the contents of the mind eventually become the status of the life. Contemporary spiritual and intellectual giant and gift to Christendom, Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright quoted these words in the Foreword of *Adam! Where Are You?*, “You can’t *be* what you can’t *see!*”³

¹ Barack Obama, “My Brother’s Keeper Initiative,” White House Press Conference, Washington, DC, February 27, 2014.

² Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2012), 179.

³ Jawanza Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?* (Chicago, IL: African-American Images, 1994), viii.

The ancient proverb teaches, “As a man (or woman) thinketh in his heart, so is he.”⁴ In other words, what people (or in the hypothesis of this dissertation, children) see is what they become. This irrefutable reality appears in the fact that children born in China often speak Mandarin or Cantonese dialect. Why? Most obviously, because they were exposed to the language and as a result learned to use it as the normative means of communication. They also often eat rice, some wear Han Chinese clothing, and bow for formal greetings. Varying cultural expressions exist for children of all nationalities as a result of what they are exposed to during formative years.

If children become what they see, producing positive images and relationships will result in children forming positive spiritual and cultural habits. When black boys are exposed to positive black men of faith, the church and university will welcome more black boys than do prisons and morgues. As such, the spiritual and cultural mentoring of black boys by black men of faith are the objective of the Doctor of Ministry Project. The process is simple in theory, complex in praxis: establish virtual and interpersonal relationships between Black men of faith and virtue and young Black men willing to learn from them. The goal is for young boys who are often not regular church attenders to recognize their regal value as children of God and to obtain goals that empower them and their communities. Young Black boys (as is true for young Black girls) can, should, and must be spiritually, mentally, socially, emotionally, and physically liberated persons. Specific methodology includes creating film and establishing a rites-of-passage mentoring program that allows young Black men to develop a God-centered mentality and subsequently a God-centered reality. The supposition is if young Black boys are

⁴ Proverbs 23:7, New Revised Standard Version. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the NRSV.

strategically affirmed and instructed by the words and actions of mentors, they will exhibit behavioral patterns that directly resemble the content of that encouragement and instruction.

The area of ministry to be addressed in the doctoral project will be that of service to youth. The theme is that some young Black boys in the West End of Atlanta were having difficulty sustaining desire and effort toward educational excellence and personal goal achievement. While serving as a Youth Advocate in Atlanta Juvenile Courts, I wrote over one-thousand letters to youth and families, changing the salutation from Ms. to Mr. less than five times. Was the lack of men in the household actually the reason children were in trouble with the juvenile court system? As I connected with each family, it became apparent that for some youth the answer was, “Yes” and for others, “No.” Whether a missing father contributed to negative behavior or not, one thing was sure, each child could benefit from having access to a positive male role model.

The first challenge of the project will be to define freedom and liberation as it relates to the following five categories: spiritual, mental, emotional, social, and physical. The second problem will be to prove that these types of freedom can be quantified or measured. The third task of the project will be to fashion a data set that legitimately quantifies the growth of spiritual, mental, emotional, social, and physical freedom in black boys. The fourth, and most significant aspect of the project will be to foster the development of this defined “freedom” in students within the five to twenty-session time frame. The parents (and students) will serve as human research subjects to compile statistical data. The data sets will be based upon their perceptions regarding specific

behavior improvements of the boys, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, socially, and physically.

The project model as formulated for ministry, will take place in Atlanta, Georgia at the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) STRIVE (Success Through Rigorous Instruction, Virtue, and Enrichment) Primary School. The project operations will consist of mentoring meetings, held on Fridays between two o'clock and five o'clock or on Saturdays from ten o'clock to one o'clock. The project will entail a Rites of Passage curriculum, with lesson plans and activities that span five to twenty mentoring sessions. The lessons will be spiritually and culturally relevant for Black third, fourth, and fifth graders residing in regions across the United States of America. Each session will have a lesson plan which will include the theories to grasp, focus question, at least thirty-minutes of instruction, group breakout time, an activity, and a measurable outcome for the entire session. The curriculum will be simplified such that a mentor with a sixth-grade education can administer it. This would make it possible for students completing the program in the fifth-grade, to immediately and seamlessly transition into mentors and assistant-mentors.

The proposed, expected results of the project will include the positive transformation of ten Black boys in the areas of spiritual, mental, emotional, social, and physical freedom within five to twenty contact sessions. Through adhering to the curriculum, the boys will experience positive behavioral modifications. Behavior modifications could include, praying each morning instead of starting the day with social media, a habit of leisure reading for one hour more per week than before the program, the tendency to think instead of reacting negatively when frustrated, the ability to interact

with other students amicably instead of aggressively when unnecessary, forming the habit of healthy eating and exercise, the propensity to trade stocks instead of buy sneakers, or to treat young Black women as royalty instead of as subordinates. Such results will be quantified by the description of behaviors and frequency of behaviors that parents (and or teachers) can attest to.

A description of the project in application is a weekly, three-hour mentoring session between ten Black boys and at least one Black male mentor. The participants in the program will include professional associates that serve as administrators, other shareholders will be teachers, mentors, students, and parents. At the outset, teachers and parents, serving as research collection subjects, will be made aware of the program and will respond to a questionnaire that addresses positive behavioral patterns on perception scales of zero to ten or daily actual frequency from zero to ten.

Students will retain normal schedules at school and home, during the five to twenty-session program. At the close of the program, the questionnaire will be issued to survey the adult participants perceptions of change in the students and to assess the viability of the project. The program founder will lead and prepare mentors, administer questionnaires before and after the program, develop the curriculum and lesson plans, lead the weekly program sessions, and analyze the research data. The context and professional associates will serve as guides to ensure that the data is compiled accurately as well as to provide insight from personal research and experience. It is expected that one context associate, a staff member or counselor at the KIPP STRIVE Primary school, will serve as an additional, potentially more neutral source of data and assessment.

The central aspect of the project will be the Christian principles that guide the curriculum. The details of each lesson plan are significant, and if administered in entirety, can be transformative. For example, the title of each lesson is an affirmation, and the affirmation is not individualistic, but advocates fellowship. The Break-Out Sessions and activities are opportunities for intense growth and include tangible take-aways that can be posted on a bedroom wall or kept for a lifetime, as a reminder not only to be liberated, but to stay liberated. To provide substantial evidence and undergirding research giving credence for the project, this document has been prepared.

The chapters that follow include Ministry Focus, Biblical Foundations, Historical Foundations, Theological Foundations, Interdisciplinary Foundations, and Project Analysis. Ministry Focus specifies the area of service the project is centralized in, the locale, purpose, and viability of the work, as well as the birth of passion for this ministry. The biblical foundations will entail exegesis of the scriptural point of departure as viewed through the hermeneutical lens by which the ministry is approached. The historical foundations consist of contemplative research and archival proof that the project is not only necessary today, but long has been. The theological foundations include a reconnaissance of theories of divinity that prove project serviceability.

The interdisciplinary foundations chapter intersects a discipline outside of theology with this Christocentric themed project, using an additional field of study as a catalyst for wide-angle thinking. The project analysis provides details about and clarifies the success or failure of the project, hypothesis, methodology, and thesis; a ‘spoiler alert’ caution is advised. To read it first would be similar to fast-forwarding to the end of a movie to see how the plot evolved. It is suggested that the entire document be reviewed

chapter-by-chapter, from beginning to end. Similar to blockbuster cinema that ends with a climactic finale, the journey through the script is always worth the time. The initial song of the film soundtrack (performed by Curtis Mayfield) began playing as the document opened... may the story of Black Child Liberation Theology commence.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The *mis en scène* for the ministry project was the Westview section of Atlanta, Georgia. The Young Kings Mentorship Program is located at 1448 Lucile Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia 30310. We are a new mentorship program for Black boys in grades three, four, and five held in the gymnasium of the KIPP STRIVE Academy. Our program was launched on November 11, 2017. The KIPP STRIVE Academy is a charter-public school founded in 2009. I met the founder, Ed Chang, as a result of doing research on duplicating school systems. It was my hope to create educational programs that can multiply as a result of being organized systems that can be rooted and developed anywhere there is a need from residents and a desire in the hearts of leadership. When Ed and I met, KIPP STRIVE was merely an idea.

After joining the advisory board and aiding him in the founding process, a school was created. Now, eight years later, KIPP STRIVE serves three hundred-fifty-five Black students in grades five through eight. There is also a new ten-million-dollar building attached via a bridge, erected in 2012 that serves four-hundred Black students in grades kindergarten through fourth. The KIPP STRIVE Academy is a free charter school located adjacent to the Beltline corridor. The school is housed in the former, J.C. Harris Elementary school building. KIPP STRIVE Primary was opened in 2013.

Forty-six million youth, ages eight to eighteen, live in America. It has been said, that of that number, sixteen million do not have a mentor or a trusted adult providing them with support and encouragement. In other words, a third of our children are growing up without the guidance and assistance they need in order to survive and thrive. The rising epidemic of police brutality and gang activity in urban neighborhoods merely add other obstacles for youth to overcome.

Worse, the unemployment rates prove it is especially difficult for Black males to find gainful employment. Some school administrators argue that students who have mentors are over 50% less likely to use illegal drugs and alcohol. Additionally, a catalyst for the program is the research and writing of Jawanza Kunjufu, which identifies the third and fourth grade levels as pivotal points in the learning experience of Black students.

According to Dr. Kunjufu, by the close of the third grade, something has transpired in young Black males that results in their losing interest in education. Prisons in America are built based upon third, fourth, and fifth grade anticipated poor academic performance of Black male students. Current mass incarceration rates indicate that Black men are imprisoned at more than five times the rate of whites.¹

Young men and women who have positive role models have an advantage and can face social challenges successfully. Mentorship then, is one obvious solution for the obstacles faced by today's young Black males. Youth are 30% of the population today, but are 100% of the population of tomorrow. Efforts made to mentor and support youth will determine the future success or failure of our community and world.

¹ Jawanza Kunjufu, *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys* (Chicago, IL: African-American Images, 1985), 5.

As James Baldwin, famed novelist and social critic once said, “For these are all our children. We profit by or pay for what they become.”² The Young Kings Mentorship Program is a remedy in the form of mentorship, workshops, movies, group activities, dream and team building, guest speakers, as well as physical fitness, financial literacy, self-awareness, community service, and love. Participants will be third, fourth, and fifth grade male students of the KIPP STRIVE and KIPP STRIVE Primary Schools who will benefit from positive male role models. Leaders and believers in the value and possibility of each student serve as role models who are sensitive to the uniqueness of the African American male experience. The Young Kings program provides a culturally responsible pedagogy that contributes to the learning and unlearning necessary for the survival and success of young Black men.

The purpose of The Young Kings program is to erase the misguided societal perspectives of Black manhood and to create a new generational trend of young Black men who are physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially, and mentally strong. The program will enable young men to realize their potential and forge a future where they are holistically equipped to be responsible and productive men.

On October 28, 2017, a group of five Black men from varying backgrounds and careers met to dialogue about the state of this problem. Out of this discussion, several concepts surfaced. One was the reaffirmation and development of young Black men. The opportunity to serve third, fourth, and fifth graders at KIPP STRIVE Primary school was presented. The men, each an answered prayer, committed to serve as mentors. The evolution of The Young Kings and the mission to reaffirm and develop young Black men

² James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1983), 74.

who are confident, culturally conscious, courageous, caring, contributing members of the Black community and of the world was and is underway.

I was born a few city blocks from where Crispus Attucks took the bullet that ignited the American Revolution, Harriet Tubman courageously underwent brain surgery without anesthesia, Coretta Scott planted her last, first kiss on the lips that would deliver the legendary “I Have a Dream” speech, young Red, later called Malcolm X did the Lindy Hop across the Roseland ballroom dancefloor, and a young Illinois State Senator named Barack Obama catapulted into public discourse as he delivered the Democratic National Convention keynote address.

My father was a professor, director, and dean at Harvard University, who supported Black students earning their doctorates by advising them on their dissertation projects, as well as serving on reviewing boards. Just after my birth, he left the ivied walls of higher academia to serve with humility in urban Boston as pastor of a fledgling congregation unable to adequately pay him for the first years of his ministry. My mother, also a dean and professor of English at Northeastern University developed the African American Institute, designed to empower Black college students in Boston. I came home from the hospital with these two blessings of parents, lovers of God and servants of their people. As far back as my memory serves, my childhood was like Saturday morning cartoons come to life. My mother was Wonder Woman, my father was Superman, and my younger sister was Supergirl. I did not have to look far for role models as I grew older. My hero and she-roes slept in the next rooms.

I spent third and fourth grades at a Catholic school that served the mission field of urban Boston, also an all-Black student body, but was my first encounter with white

teachers. While it was a positive experience, the school was slated to be closed after my fourth-grade year. Once again, my parents, Wonder Woman and Superman came to the rescue. By fifth grade, they had built an elementary school called Imani (Kiswahili for faith) Institute at my dad's church for local Black students with a rigorous curriculum and focus on Africentricity. Our readings and essays were from authors like Langston Hughes, Toni Morrison, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Maya Angelou, Zora Neale Hurston, and James Baldwin. I learned to play the African djembe drum, bongos, and cow bell.

Every morning alternating classes led the entire school in the Kenyan tradition of Harambee (Kiswahili for all pull together). Our Harambee time consisted of beginning our school day with thirty minutes of prayer, singing "Lift Every Voice and Sing" and other children's gospel songs like "This Little Light of Mine," reciting the Nguzo Saba (Kiswahili for seven principles), standing and saying our names, grade levels, and sharing ideas. This daily exercise of public speaking and uniting in song and prayer instilled in each of us faith in God, self-awareness, confidence, and a deep sense of community.

I had the benefit of an earthly father who introduced me to my heavenly Father. I joined the church at age nine. I remember walking down the aisle toward my father, as he gave the invitation to salvation and discipleship after his sermon. My parents never asked me to or pushed me to, as a matter of fact, my dad never tried to preach at me at home. I had long since prayed the prayer of confession in church and at home. However, I knew in my heart that it was time and I went. I had seen a man of faith, now I longed to be one.

Each Sunday morning, leaning forward with baited breath against the vintage brown wooden pews of the historic New England church, I sat awaiting my father's next words from the corridors of Heaven. As he proclaimed God's Word, I would listen for the wisdom and insight he had received and prepared to share with the hundreds of Black congregants, of lower and middle-class status. Like me, these urban Bostonians had come for inspiration to carry them through the next week as they faced poverty, racism, and discrimination with steel lined spines and smiling faces. They likely were wearing masks that hid the pain of being treated as second-class citizens in a segregated town, run and operated by people with no hue and often no concern for the other side of the story. However, these parishioners had the blessed benefit of hearing messages that reminded them of their power, utility, and ability to change themselves and to change the world.

There was nothing quite like Sunday mornings. Maybe it was the way in which my spirit could sense and even draw from the spirits of other believers. Maybe it was the organist, drummer, pianist, choir, and soloist's ability to minister to my soul, as they led us in "Amazing Grace," "Just a Little Talk with Jesus," or "I Surrender All." Maybe it was the regal manner in which my dad wore his robe and held the Bible with the authority of one who was a close friend of God's. Daddy had read the Bible in its entirety more times than he could count. His sermons were rich with substance and meaning and his three points every Sunday for twenty years were always alliterated as a pneumatic device for hearers. Sermons were full of humor, stories woven into parables delivered in his tenor voice and northern preacher cadence.

Sundays at church also meant the unique experience of walking up to Daddy, the pastor, after church, trying to get to him before the crowd came, watching him pop in a

peppermint and wipe his brow with a fresh white handkerchief before hugging visitors and members. Every time, he gave me a special greeting, the biggest hug. He would give me the keys to his office so I could go there and hang out while he greeted everyone. I would relax in the pastor's study and eat the cake, cookies, sandwiches, and juice left on his desk by the lovely senior mothers of the church for him to have after service. These mothers loved my sister and I deeply, they would cuss people out (as we learned as adults) who messed with us, and one even left her property to us in her will. I felt like I was on the inside, a part of something divine, safe, powerful.

The church sanctuary was more than just a room with wooden pews, maroon rugs, hymnals and Bibles in the pew backings, space for hundreds of parishioners, a wide pulpit with three stairs, choir loft, and Hammond organ. For me, it was truly a sanctuary. It was where I was fed spiritually by my father, met the Holy Spirit, where I was a junior usher, prayed, cried, laughed, met my first girlfriend, hung out with friends in the balcony, learned the value of tithing, lip-synced in the youth choir, where I learned about the God of my ancestors, and later delivered sermons about my God, using the fullness of my own voice. The sanctuary was the home of my first job, where I swept, vacuumed, and picked up tissue, paper, and candy wrappers after Sunday worship services.

While my sister and I had two parents who served the local church and community, there was still evidence of challenges on the local scene and a need to have an even greater positive impact. An example was when my bike was stolen, outside our place in Roxbury. Then, my mother's purse was snatched outside the same apartment not long after. As a result, my mother decided we should move to an area she felt more comfortable in. She and my dad found a house to rent in the white suburb of Newton,

Massachusetts. While living in the suburbs, we commuted to school and work in the city. Mom taught English to her college students and directed the African American Institute at Northeastern University. Her building was at a predominately white university, but was home to Boston's Black college student mecca. In essence, I spent my junior high and high school years at an unaccredited, unofficial, small Historically Black College and University (HBCU). The Amilicar Cabral center, named after a famed Cape Verdean revolutionary, was a big room on the first floor with a pool table, ping pong table, chairs, a jukebox full of 80's hip hop music, and a kitchen that sold sandwiches, beef patties, pizza, chips, and juice.

The years of being sheltered at home was made up for, by being exposed to the more advanced, cool college students from Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Atlanta, Connecticut, and Philadelphia. After I finished my schoolwork in the library upstairs, I would come and play table tennis and billiards all afternoon until my mother, always the late worker, was ready to go home. Many of the students who came through the Ujima (Kiswahili for collective work and responsibility) Program at the African American Institute, are still my lifelong big brothers and sisters. Men and women who have given me job positions, provided me a place to stay, taken me on vacations, have come to my book tour stops to purchase books, and been there in my time of need.

It was this community of faith and solidarity that afforded me a sense of hope for the future, confidence in my own identity, and positive examples to learn from and emulate as I grew. It was also my experiences that prepared me to encourage other young Black boys in years to come. However, the single most significant experience in my ministry journey that prepared me for the Doctor of Ministry project was the transition of

my father. It has been said that, “your greatest pain is your greatest ministry.” The loss of my father, in many ways, made serving as a father-figure to others a deep part of who I am.

While I was in college, my dad was featured on the front page of the Boston Globe, wearing his red and white Sunday morning robe and surrounded by the Black children he served every day in the school he founded. Dad did not tell me I should be a minister, he just did Bible studies with me that addressed whatever my challenges were. However, he was becoming terminally ill and I did not believe it was as serious as it was. He had amyloidosis, a rare disease that affected his heart, and has a median life expectancy of less than a year. I did not know the details, only that dad was getting weaker and I would hear the stories of him preaching until paramedics were called or having to take days off to go to the hospital. For my personal superman to take a day off was strange. He did not go on vacation, had not missed a Sunday ever, served at church seven days a week. He washed clothes, made us breakfast every single morning, paid the bills, founded and ran a school, served various boards around the city, shepherded a church, helped raise his grandchildren, paid his mother’s bills, took us to school, came to every school or other type of event to support me and my sister, paid our college tuitions, came to visit and stock us up on groceries and whatever else we needed. He took a day off? This must be serious, I thought. So, I began to pray.

Early in 2002, our church celebrated his twentieth anniversary as senior pastor. The guest preacher delivered a sermon called “Blessed, Broken, and Given Away.” I made my public acceptance of a call to ministry. “It thrills my heart,” was one of the things daddy said that day. I remember just after his anniversary banquet, where I pushed

him in a wheelchair through the huge crowd at the Westin Hotel, we did a quick home Bible study on Nehemiah. He reminded me of the beauty of a dependence on God, as well as the need to never forget about the needs of my people, in my quest for success. It did and still informs many of my life choices.

Dad always had a remarkable faith. One day, he had a heart attack. I was home visiting and heard him fall in the basement. I came downstairs to help him into a chair and listened as he began to breathe slowly and calmly quoted Isaiah 41:10, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” The episode ended and before the paramedics arrived, he and I were discussing plans for the remainder of the weekend. God gave him grace and a little more time.

A few months later, on another trip home from New York, I was with my father in the hospital. We spent the night watching the NCAA championship as we always did, but this time he was not watching attentively as Maryland played against Indiana. He would glance off from time to time. After the game, we did a three-part routine every fifteen minutes consisting of prayer, then I would read a Psalm and he would recite it with me as if he was holding a Bible too, lastly, I would check his vitals. He knew he was dying. As his blood pressure dropped and he prepared to take his final breaths, he did not cry, scream, or panic. He smiled at me. Made me smile. He whispered prayers as the pain climaxed. He had fought to live through the entire ordeal, holding on to hope, but also submitting to whatever was God’s will. In his final moments, he asked God to fight for him.

I was oblivious. I knew God was going to bring about a miracle. I mean, look at how much of his life was devoted to serving God. I knew murderers who were spared in tragedies, surely grace will cover the most authentic servant I knew! Besides, I had just accepted the call to devote my entire life to serving Christ. Who would guide me in the sunrise of ministry? I did not want a billion dollars, I gave that dream up to serve God, surely a small request like letting my father live would be answered with a, “Yes.” An hour or two later, dad said, “It won’t be long.” At the time, I was not aware of what he knew. I mean, he was acting so normal. Talking, smiling, just being dad. I told him I loved him and shed a tear on his back as I had to lean him over for the nurse to clean him up. He held my hand, squeezed it, and patted me on the back, comforting me. Looking back, I wish I was the man I am now, with more pastoral care experience, wisdom, and faith. I would have comforted him. I did get to wash his feet, to shave his mustache and use a warm towel, to clip his finger nails and chuckle to myself as I almost clipped his skin, reminding of the times he would almost clip my neck, putting on my clip-on neckties in elementary school.

That night he preached the greatest sermon of the hundreds I heard him preach. A sermon I will never forget. I am not even sure what the title was. For decades, he had taught me to live. That night, he taught me how to die. I saw a man with a faith that I had always admired remind me why I admired him so much. As Saul may have said after watching Stephen remain faithful while being stoned, “The God whom this man serves... so must I” (Acts 7:54:60). I learned about sincerity and depth of faith, to be strong and of a good courage, and that healing takes on many different forms. I learned that weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. I learned gratitude and

perspective, for example, what if I never had an incredible father at all? Imagine all the years of joy and wisdom and adventure and love I would have missed!

What if I wasn't allowed to be there with him so he wasn't alone in his final hour? What a GOD, who gave such gifts to me and still has so many more to give! What shoulders I have been privileged to stand upon and what great lessons I now have to share with the world! While I later asked GOD the hard and even borderline offensive questions about why my father died, when I sat still long enough to await the answers... I found myself more deeply aware of my foolishness and limitations and of GOD's unconditional love and limitless wisdom. If not then, exactly what date would I have told GOD would be better and wouldn't have been equally as upset when that day arrived? If I never experienced the transition of my childhood idol, I'd have never been able to realize GOD should be my only idol! And by the way, what a baton hand off from idol to Idol! I never had to be alone. I always had favor. I could write a whole separate volume of theses about GOD's grace just during that time in my life. Those who called and encouraged me on GOD's behalf... how our family grew closer together. How I grew in faith and trust in GOD, beginning the night my father's spirit became no longer bound by human flesh. My faith was stretched and increased that night at Brigham and Women's hospital. In the very hospital I was born in, I was born again! God did grant a miracle!

My father was present at my birth, I was blessed to be present at his passing on, to allow him to know that his legacy was in-tact. He was aware, I think, that I would carry on the tradition of serving God and mentoring young boys as he had so faithfully modeled for me. Opportunities to serve presented themselves in the form of youth ministry in Brooklyn where on Fridays I would have the boys at Cornerstone Baptist

Church come over to visit at my apartment. We would watch Malcolm X, The Spook Who Sat by the Door, and discuss Bible verses. The conversations were enlightening, even for me, as seldom would an evening go by where I did not learn about the minds and hearts of the future leaders I spent time with.

When a major shooting occurred in Boston, where four young Black boys were murdered by a lone gunman, I was asked to deliver my first eulogy. I looked to Dr. King's message about the four little girls as inspiration, and the sermon ended up in the Boston Herald. What was most difficult was feeling helpless and unable to save Black boys from this type of violence. What could I do? I decided to use my dad's school as a tool to reach Black children in new ways. I was invited to panels to discuss the education of Black children, promoting the idea that influencing today's children is the key to taking over tomorrow's world.

At my father's school, I created a summer camp program for children ages three through nine as well as an after-school program. I had the opportunity to develop educational programs and activities for children in the city of Boston. I created curriculums for classes in Swahili, piano, mathematics, science, advanced textual lineage, dance, African drums, and voice lessons. I planned activities such as skating, bowling, and swimming, and trips to museums, animal zoos, and African heritage trails. I managed a budget of over a quarter-million-dollars as well as a staff of forty employees.

I also had the opportunity to work in student services at Morehouse College in 2007 and for a brief time, mentored students there, one of whom became valedictorian of his class upon graduation. Ministering as a Youth Advisor at Historic Ebenezer Baptist

Church in Atlanta for three years was a rewarding experience wherein we led several young Black boys and girls to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

While having the privilege of doing youth advocacy at the DeKalb County Juvenile Court for five years, I redirected over 1,000 youth who were in the justice system back into school and coordinated two programs designed for their benefit. One program, Teen Court functioned as a courtroom session where real cases were heard by students I trained to serve as judge, defense attorney, prosecutor, bailiff, and probation officer. We used mercy over justice and restorative concepts for the youth that came into the courtroom. The Youth Diversion Program allowed me to connect community volunteers to youth facing court offenses in the form of mentor and mentee relationships.

As mentioned, of the 1,000 letters I wrote to make contact with the youth, I changed the salutation from 'Ms.' To 'Mr.' less than five times. In other words, over ninety-nine percent of the youth finding themselves in the juvenile justice system did not have the benefit of a father-figure at home. In my current context, I have been able to spend time with counselors of the young men I serve, who in each case point to the absence of fathers in the lives of the youth. While there are likely other challenges being faced, the absence of a father-figure who cares is certainly a problem I am poised to address.

The most significant opportunity to engage and empower young Black boys has been a result of meeting my best friend and life partner, Tennisha Beckaroo. She presented me with the gift of two teenage boys, Elijah and RJ, who I now claim as my own sons. Mentoring children on weekends is rewarding but could never be as character developing, love demanding or as great a divine blessing and supreme joy as becoming

instant father-figure to two young men. I am eternally grateful for RJ and EJ, the two Black boys I consider the original Young Kings.

The Doctor of Ministry Project will be the synergy of my personal experiences, interests, skills, my context needs and challenges. This intersection is called The Young Kings Mentorship Program, currently housed at the KIPP STRIVE Academy. In addition, The Young Kings Curriculum will be released during my studies in the Doctor of Ministry program. The content will highlight the power of relationships and images of men of faith and how it can be transformative to young boys who may come to realize that faith comes by hearing and in seemingly contradictory terms, a strong faith walk comes by seeing.

The scope and methodology that will be presented in written and cinematic format includes: brotherhood, entrepreneurship, self-awareness, personal development, servanthood, and core values. Each characteristic is identified below:

Brotherhood

- Unity Around a Common Goal: Create group Mission Statement and confidentiality pact
- Trust Is Earned, Respect Is Deserved: Improvisation skits, showing respect to each other, women, and elders
- Teamwork: Teams for special events (debate teams, Black History Quiz Bowl teams)

Entrepreneurship

- Spend Big, Spend Right: Set up savings accounts and or investment accounts

- Be a Producer, Not Just a Consumer: Establish The Young Kings and Queens clothing line to raise funds for the program
- Stock Trading Basics: Establish a The Young Kings Investment Club

Self-Awareness

- Who am I?: Create vision boards and affirmations
- Making Black History: Enhancing students' textual lineage, study of ancestry, Swahili language, and planning contributions in this generation
- Rap and Hip Hop: What are we listening to?

Personal Development

- Becoming a Gentleman: Personal hygiene, dining etiquette
- How You Dress Determines How You Are Addressed: Learning to tie the “four-in-a-hand” necktie knot
- Leadership 101: What makes a great leader, great?

Servanthood

- Mass Incarceration Is Unjust: Write letters to incarcerated Black men as a sign of support and hope
- If Not Me, Then Who?: Trip around local neighborhood for clean-up day
- Going Home: Trip to West Africa to experience the culture and interact with African students (at minimum, a study of the continent of Africa)

Core Values

- Love
- Financial Literacy

- Knowledge
- Self-Improvement
- Community Service

The Young Kings mentors are a 100% Black, group of men and women of faith ranging from age twenty-eight to forty-nine. These leaders include five of my friends who I invited to participate as well as three KIPP STRIVE teachers who agreed to share their time and energy. Each of the leaders is serving in a volunteer capacity. The historical backdrop of Black success and resistance in Atlanta must continue in the form of efforts such as this one. In addition, the attempted gentrification of the city and removal of Black residents can be combatted with the development of new community faith leaders who will be prepared to serve as pillars of the tomorrow's Westview, Atlanta.

Made possible by the graciousness, guidance, and undying support of the visionary Ms. Omy Mair and the administration of KIPP STRIVE Primary, The Young Kings program meets on Saturdays at 10:30 a.m. with an average attendance of thirty people, including nine students. The Saturday schedule consists of gymnasium play, Harambee, break-out session, activity, snack time, Audacity to Love circle, and group board games. The entire program lasts for two hours.

Each Saturday session has a measurable outcome. For example, the creation of a take home vision board, a written letter to be given to an incarcerated Black male, a T-shirt to keep for the group clothing line, or the ability to recite principles of the Nguzo Saba.

At the end of the school year, The Young Kings Rites of Passage Ceremony will be held, where parents and community are able to witness the progress the young men

have made, the lessons learned, and their ability to confidently present that information on stage.

What is most important as a ministry to the youth is that they are aware of who they are and whose they are. The program mantra is, “A royal mentality creates a royal reality.” That sentiment is also echoed in the form of a poem that the young kings recite on Saturdays. This ritual is designed to “give shape to (our) common life together” and to be an intentional presentation of who we are.³

If you think you're beaten, you are;
 If you think you dare not, you don't;
 If you'd like to win, but think you can't
 It's almost a cinch you won't.
 If you think you will lose, you've lost;
 For out in the world we find,
 Success begins with a Young King's will,
 It's all in the state of mind.
 If you think you're outclassed, you are;
 You've got to think high to rise.
 You've got to be sure of yourself
 Before you can ever win the prize.
 Life's battles don't always go
 To the stronger or faster man,
 But sooner or later the one who wins
 Is The Young King who thinks he can.⁴

Black men and women who take seriously the life and work of Jesus value other Black people. Jesus openly distinguished between Jews and Gentiles, and is not recorded as speaking negatively about his Jewish heritage. There are some Black men and women who have little regard for themselves and those with similar skin tone and heritage.

There are white men and women who have high regard for those with greater melanin. In

³ Nancy Ammerman et al., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 84.

⁴ “Walter Wintle,” Wikipedia, last modified November 9, 2017, accessed November 12, 2017, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thinking>.

a cultural environment where the need for positive images and role models seems more necessary for groups of people with certain skin tone, color is unavoidable. There is no need to be color blind, instead color appreciative. Diversity is an aspect of God's creativity and to be admired, not ignored. To ignore the beauty of skin tone is to denigrate the creativity of God. My personal project includes ensuring that Black children are protected, highly regarded, and taught to value their identity.

The tendency of Black men to appear in film as victims of circumstance and complainers about racism is dangerous. The progressive Black faith community finds excitement in new films that retell the same old, brief and negative portion of the Black experience as if they are liberating or helpful. What occurs instead is similar to a recovering shooting victim celebrating a gruesome and horrific film of their shooting. It would likely be psychologically stressful and oppressive. The retelling of stories is vital, the deeper concern, however, is what stories are being told. It would behoove the shooting victim to celebrate a film about the joys of their life prior to the shooting or cinema about their recovery and victory over the injury.

Fortunately for Black people, there is a rich heritage of genius, creativity, faith, unity, power, and love that can be retold, relived, and reframed. For the majority of Black history (pre-1600's) Black countries were dominant powers, founders of arts, mathematics, and hubs for other world countries to visit and learn from. This best and brightest of the Black experience is what will be shared in The Young Kings program.

I was led to create the program curriculum and film visuals not as a result of needing a context for the doctoral program, but out of an age-old desire to work with

children. It was divine providence that the week it finally came to fruition was the same week I was to begin work on my contextual analysis paper.

During our mid-term intensive, several thoughts were shared about my spiritual autobiography. What came to light was the deep hurt I experienced upon my father's passing. In addition, I recognized the freedom I have been given as a result of my parents. I now see that one of the greatest gifts I have been given was love which at its core is about freedom. As mentioned, my father shared a Bible study moment with me wherein we read and discussed Nehemiah. Nehemiah had the freedom to leave his people behind, but instead chose to use his freedom to liberate others. I hope to be a liberating force in the lives of young Black boys (and girls) in this season, in the same way my parents have been for me. The physical transformation of my father now reminds me of the need for me to share that same fatherly love with other young men. The Young Kings Mentorship Program is one of the ways that can happen. It has been rightly stated, that "Russian-born children, seldom celebrate Kwanzaa." It is a logical expectation, then, that if Black boys are exposed to the principles of spiritual, mental, emotional, social, and physical freedom, they will exhibit behavior that is in line with those lines of thought. The parents and school staff will notice a significant, positive difference in students after the program as compared to before the program. The transformation, specifically, will be the attainment of deeper spiritual, mental, emotional, social, and physical freedom within a five to twenty session time frame.

What I found interesting was that of the nine new students that attended orientation in the first week, three had names that stuck out... one was named Darryl, a given name we share; the other was named Boston, which is the city I am from; and one

was named Christian, which is the theological leaning I hold. Having served in the juvenile court for five years and coming to the rescue of over one thousand young men and women, I never served a Darryl, Boston, or Christian. However, with only nine students, three of them have names that may signify the fact that I am doing work that I am purposed to do. I have high hopes for the development of faith and character in the young kings we meet with on Saturdays, The Young Queens Mentorship Program that must be created one day, and the birth of Black Child Liberation Theology. The birth of any authentic, systematic theology must find its conception in scriptural exegesis. In the case of Black Child Liberation Theology, an undergirding text is the Israelite story of Joshua, specifically, the biblical foundation of Joshua 1:5-9.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Hebrew Bible features an instructive book, the first superseding the Pentateuch, otherwise considered the final entry of the Hexateuch, entitled Joshua. This historical transcription is a land conquest narrative, some argue, that has been written by a single hand; while others contend that it was compiled over the course of several centuries by a host of authors and redaction writers. More significant than authorship is the message and theme of the book. In specificity, the tenor of chapter one, verses five, six, seven, eight, and nine wherein we find the voice of God, giving charge, command, direction, and encouragement to Joshua regarding the Israelite conquest of new land. This passage is an intimate encounter with a promise keeping God who divinely intervenes in the lives of the Hebrew people, graciously preparing to lead them by a conduit named Joshua toward conquering Palestinian territory in the Thirteenth Century B.C.

While setting forth to write and rewrite this biblical exposition, a stunning thesis appeared as suddenly as the walls of Jericho falling in the sixth chapter of Joshua. Much of the writer's previous study of Joshua, including the hearing of pulpit exhortations on various passages in it, yielded the conceptuality that this descendant of Ephraim named Joshua, who received his marching orders and validation as Israelite leader in the plains of Moab, east of Jordan, is the protagonist of the text. However, a hermeneutical lens

rendering clearer depth of field would lead one to consider that instead, God is the protagonist and main character of the book of Joshua. So much so, that the Book of a Black People's God could be a more fitting title than the Book of Joshua.

Bible scholars traditionally exegete Joshua 1:5-9 with a focus on the person of Moses and Joshua. Understandably so. These two supreme warrior commanders are presented as charismatic, heroic, faithful, obedient servants of God. Their respective characters, in summation, are noble and worthy of readers' attention. As well, their mutuality is restrictively inclusive. Without Moses, there is no Joshua and without Joshua there is no Moses. At the open of the passage we will exegete throughout this chapter, Joshua 1:5-9, we find a connection point to Deuteronomy the thirty-first chapter. In a sense, it is the continuation of the words of Moses a few verses before. Therefore, Joshua 1:5-9 is not an independent passage, but instead is a continuation of a story that leaves off in Deuteronomy. The passage serves as a connection between the life of Moses and the leadership of Joshua. Moses has already been told that he will not lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land, and he appoints Joshua as his successor in this task. God confirms it and commissions Joshua to lead Israel into the land. As such, Joshua 1:5-9 requires context. While it has its own substance and meaning, it can only be more deeply comprehended as a result of a juxtaposition with the life of Moses (and if it were in the purview of this chapter, the fullness of the Bible narrative).

Joshua, namesake for the title of the book wherein we find our pericope, is the son of Nun as well as Moses's successor, designated and anointed by God to lead the people of Israel to the Promised Land after forty years in the wilderness. The people of Israel had been landless for nearly five hundred years. Over four hundred years of slavery in

Egypt had finally ended under the leadership of Moses. Our passage opens with the Israelite people camped at the river Jordan, awaiting instruction from their new leader, Joshua which means “Yahweh saves or Yahweh delivers.”¹ In essence, this post-twelfth century B.C., disposed people were transitioning from being an enslaved people with no land, to a free, land owning people.

The twenty-four-chapter book of Joshua details the conquest of Palestine by the Israelite people following the death of Moses. This account of the military strategies and battles by the Hebrews is primarily about their acquisition of land. The invasion of Palestine and conquest of territory is split into two equal sections: twelve chapters outline the story of conquest and twelve chapters explicate the allotment of land. The military campaigns are successful, due to the fact that the leader, Joshua, follows the directives God provides. Only when Achan, an Israelite, disobeys the instruction not to take religious items from the enemy, do the Israelites face failure at Ai. As soon as Achan is dealt with, the battle victories continue.

By some scholars, Joshua is seen as an afterthought when compared to Moses, the hero of many retellings of this Israelite historical record. Moses served as mentor to Joshua, as well as the legendary, leader and lawgiver for the Hebrew people. Moses led the Israelites out of oppressive captivity in Egypt. Joshua, following his on-the-job training, led the Israelites into dominion in Canaan. Other scholars see both Moses and Joshua as equally valuable, because the journey of the Hebrew people is incomplete without either. For some scholars, Moses’ parting of the Red Sea was as vital as Joshua’s causing the Jordan River to run dry.

¹ David Howard, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, vol. 5 (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 27.

Both men of faith participated in ensuring that the people of Israel crossed over into their divine destiny. Moses spoke face to face with God, as though a close friend. Joshua is the only figure in the Bible to give God a command that was followed, which was to make the sun stand still. It has been said that the test of great leaders is not their own legacy of successes but how great the achievements of their successors are. While Moses' investment in Joshua released God's power in Joshua, it was Joshua who had to bear the mantle as Moses' heir and to stand well in his own shoes. Moses' influence on Joshua would depend on it.

However, the book of Joshua, and more specifically Joshua 1:5-9, says less about Moses' legacy and Joshua's life than it does about the character of God. Indeed, there is a leader who is called to lead the Israelite people into the Promised Land, however, the divine guidance and support he receives is the veritable message of the text. Joshua, as was Moses, is merely a conduit for the grace of God. Joshua is only able to be strong and of a good courage because God strengthens and encourages him. Joshua is only able to meditate on God's laws because God has shared the law with him. Joshua finds good success delivering the people of Israel into a new dimension of domination because God is with him. Joshua's journey from the Jordan River to Jericho and beyond are a direct result of God's loving presence, ultimate power, and integrity in the keeping of God's promises.

To responsibly exegete Joshua 1:5-9, is to take into account the personhood of Joshua and Moses, but to recognize the danger in focusing on either figure. The central figure, protagonist, and main character of the book of Joshua is God. God is presented in the passage as giver of the law, trustworthy promise keeper, inheritance guarantor,

protector from harm, heart encourager, granter of wisdom, and an abiding presence. It is with this brief description of the passage and its context as well as a suggested lens through which to further engage it, that we move to the exegesis of Joshua 1:5-9, also known as “God’s Commission to Joshua.”

This chapter is organized to research a specific biblical passage in the book of Joshua, providing evidence of the thesis and putting to use the following exegetical tools, to be found in order of appearance in the essay: a verse by verse historical criticism, form criticism, literary criticism, and textual criticism of the pericope followed by the researcher’s brief kerygmatic insight from a Black theological hermeneutic. The exegesis of the five verses is followed by a conclusive description of how the study of the passage is foundational to the writer’s Doctor of Ministry project. The passage in Joshua that chose the writer is Joshua 1:5-9:

No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

The initial verse of the pericope in chapter one of the book of Joshua, verse five, can be loosely translated from the Hebrew lexicon in this way: Not any man can take a stand in your face, for the entire days of your life.² According to the way God was with Moses

² Howard, *The New American Commentary*, 80.

(the great leader and lawgiver); you can relax, you will not be left or loosed. Here, God allows Joshua the confidence that no one will be able to stand up to him, none will be able to face him. The Hebrew word used is “yatsab” meaning anything so as to stay or stand.³ This guarantee is not given for a solitary event or battle. This promise is made for a lifetime. In other words, Joshua can expect to be challenged and to face challenges, but in the midst of them, no man or woman will be able to conquer him, defeat him, or even stand against him. Ever! What an encouraging promise.

God bequeaths to Joshua invincibility. Moses gave Joshua his name, which was formerly “Hoshea,” but God gives Joshua everything else he needs.⁴ Verse five has been deemed the “spiritual climax and highlight of the first part of God’s charge to Joshua,” an exciting, powerful, hopeful promise that Joshua has nothing to worry about.⁵ This portion of God’s commission sets the tone for the remainder of the passage, the entire book even. God addresses the new leader of the Israelite people with a promise guaranteeing triumph over every enemy.

This promise would serve as an anchor in the storms of Joshua’s life. It also would serve as a reminder of the character of God. A god unable to deliver on a promise is not much of a god in the first place. However, a god who keeps promises is worthy of trust, adoration, and honor. God gives credence to God’s omnipotence by stating the words found in verse five and providing proof of them throughout the book of Joshua. Those words are a source of security, hope, comfort, and peace for those who accurately

³ Francis Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 315.

⁴ Howard, *The New American Commentary*, 83.

⁵ Howard, *The New American Commentary*, 84.

sense a promise from God today. They too, can be sure of the impending, tumbling down of walls and challenges and the overtaking of new territory in their lives.

The fifth verse of the first chapter of Joshua begins in the middle of a divine instruction and encouragement from God to his newly appointed leader of the Israelite people, Joshua son of Nun. This inspiring guidance from God written in Hebrew, first person, and is addressed to a masculine singular recipient.⁶ In other words, the message is unique, specific, and personal, emphasizing Joshua's special positioning with God. God shares with Joshua in verse five that there will be in essence, no competition throughout his life. No one will be able to conquer him or stand against him as long as he lives. While this promise of divinity holds true throughout the text, it is likely that it provided a deep sense of courage to Joshua even before he witnessed it become a reality with his own eyes. In the coming days of his life Joshua could remain fearless knowing that the enemy, Jericho, would not be able to stand against him. However, the real reason Jericho would fall was not merely Joshua, but more so Jehovah (God).

In addition, Joshua was presented with a further missive of encouragement in the following sentence of the verse. God informs Joshua that His dealings with a legendary leader and lawgiver who would become one of history's greatest men of faith, was a model for how God would deal with Joshua. Moses, the one who led Israel out of Egypt and spoke to Pharaoh on God's behalf to liberate a chosen people. Moses, who parted the Red Sea, had a face to face with God on Mount Sinai, and came down the mountainside with the Torah to deliver to Israel and to the believers who walk earth even today. This very Moses, who walked with God and accomplished the virtually impossible through

⁶ Howard, *The New American Commentary*, 84.

God, was to be Joshua's benchmark for a spiritual relationship. Not because Joshua hoped for it, but because God, God's self said so.

The significance of historical excavation and exegetical criticism appears in verse five in the form of a double entendre. The words of God include, "As I was with Moses" (Jos. 1:5). Here, we take note that God is reminding Joshua and readers of the history of Joshua that what has happened prior to this day is of value and meaning. To accurately exegete this verse, then, would require one to be aware of what happened between God and Moses, but first, the text must be bombarded with questions of history itself.

The Israelite people departed from their bondage in Egypt in the Late Bronze II B age, circa 1240 B.C. This nomadic traverse through the wilderness for forty years concluded in 1200 B.C. at the start of the Iron Age I.⁷ The book of Joshua was finalized as a Deuteronomistic Historical Work circa 598 B.C., after the reigns of Saul, David, Solomon, and the end of the southern kingdom of Judah.⁸ The passage, chapter one, verses five through nine detail God's instructions to conquer a land that is currently inhabited. How could a God of love and grace give indirect instructions to Joshua to murder defenseless people and direct instructions to take their property? "Is this historical account a justification for man's inhumanity to man, religion being sued as its buttress?"⁹

Joshua is a book ancient Israel used to archive the faith of her fathers and a description of how their people became inhabitants of ancient Palestine. The challenge the text provides for readers is to decide if this trajectory of the people of Israel was

⁷ Robert G. Boling, *The Anchor Bible Joshua: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* (New York, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1982), 1.

⁸ Boling, *The Anchor Bible Joshua*, 2.

⁹ Boling, *The Anchor Bible Joshua*, 4.

parallel to the God of grace that appears throughout scripture. Indeed, it is. God, the major character in the Joshua passage presents as Warrior of Infinite Divinity. This omnipotent being must enter into the human experience and bring about a desired result through the mediums of humanity. As verse five indirectly forewarns, to conquer an evil people will require battle and war.

As the good-hearted man or woman may inquiry, how could God be so aggressive, in accord with war and violence? Joshua is presented as a noble and righteous servant, meanwhile being instructed by God, our protagonist, to wipe out an entire tribe of people? God's charge to Joshua is not unlike other books where God calls warriors to fight in the name of Heaven. Fighting is a necessary aspect of the life of faith. War when done according to God's law, is called Holy War. Certain aspects of Canaanite culture were ruthless, such as mutilating and sacrificing babies and forcing young virgins into prostitution. The Midianites, who Joshua is ordered to destroy, were known for throwing newborn babies into burning fires. War is occasionally necessary to preserve freedom, to destroy injustice and protect those who are innocent.

Joshua, by God's decree in verse five, that no one would be able to stand against him, was one who was meant to emerge victorious. By hearing that as things were with Moses and God, so they would be with he and God, to a certain extent, Joshua was not even in need of faith. Merely a decent memory. Joshua was marked present for the Passover, the exodus from Egypt, the spying expedition when Moses sent him to survey the enemy, when Moses went to the mountain of God, and in the tabernacle when Moses saw God face to face. If only Joshua could remember what God had done with Moses, he

would know what was possible. If God could do it then, surely God could accomplish great and even greater things again.

The final portion (Jos.1:5) of the verse has also been translated in this way, “I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.” This promise was especially beneficial to Joshua based upon the time at which it was received. A few sentences before, God remarked, “Moses my servant is dead” (Jos. 1:2). Only recently, Joshua had lost his father in ministry, mentor, leader, and pastor. He likely felt abandoned, alone, hurt, possibly even afraid. It was a timely reminder to be made aware, in the midst of feeling forsaken, that he was not alone, but that God and God’s help were there with him.

That may have been a difficult emotional juxtaposition for Joshua to manage. On the one hand, his great mentor, leader, and father-figure is gone. On the other, God, his greatest mentor, leader, and father-figure charges him with a new task. Surely, he was still grieving the loss of his liberating mentor, but he is told to continue across the Jordan River. This serves as a pastoral counseling model for today’s church. God, the book of Joshua’s main character and protagonist is imparting a teachable moment. In the midst of loss, what people often need most is not a sermon, self-help advice, or motivational words. What is most helpful, is just presence. Being there. God notices that Joshua needs comfort and God affirms the most tremendous stay of all, divine presence.

God’s guarantee to never fail or forsake Joshua is, in essence, a promise of inward sustenance and outward collaboration. In other words, God will not be lax in support and assistance, nor absent in time of trouble or necessity. The security God guarantees, His ministry of presence, has bearing on Joshua’s soul and Joshua’s situation. Joshua has

more than mere hope, he has actual tangible and intangible help from the Almighty; from henceforth, he will never be alone.

In verse six, God continues this encouragement of Joshua by advising him to be strong, brave, confident, courageous, determined as he would need to be, in order to lead his people to take possession of the land God promised to their fathers. The Hebrew word in the verse for strong is “chazaq” which means “to fasten upon, to seize, conquer.”¹⁰ The Hebrew word for good courage is “amats” which by definition is to “be alert, physically (on foot) or mentally (in courage).”¹¹

The first word is an aggressive term in Hebrew translation, signaling an attack or overcoming of an opponent. The second is not much different, pointing to alertness and preparedness, reminiscent of the posture of a lion or tiger crouched and ready to pounce. In this verse, we find two distinct words with similar meaning wherein God inspires Joshua to be bold and to master his fears.¹² It is interesting that God emphasizes a singular thought by using two different words. Was the message so important that Joshua would need to meditate on it repeatedly, from various perspectives?

In this one sentence verse (v. 6), God begins a trinity of repetition, instructing Joshua to uphold the twin virtues of strength and courage. Joshua, through leadership experience, would soon come to know how valuable it can be to be strong and courageous. Fear would not bode well in a fight against Jericho or in the taking of Canaan land. Indeed, Joshua would face threats and challenges, but strength and

¹⁰ Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 452.

¹¹ Brown, et al, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 452.

¹² Boling, *The Anchor Bible Joshua*, 8.

courage, even the strength to be courageous would be invaluable. Today's reader of Joshua may refuse to set a goal because it seems someone else already has what pertains to the goal. That would be unwise. For example, a job or position, house or land that is already occupied is not necessarily meant to have the same occupants it currently has. In other words, God makes room for people of faith who walk boldly with strength and courage.

It has been said, "Fear is the little darkroom where negatives are developed."¹³ Fear causes negative thoughts and actions. This may be why scriptures teach believers not to fear. There are three-hundred-sixty-five mentions of the words, "Fear not" in the Bible. It appears there is literally one reminder for each day of the year. However, fear happens to even the most devoutly faithful. The answer is courage. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to act in spite of fear. When the desire to freeze or run or throw in the towel arises, it is then that those courageous in character rise to the occasion and step boldly forward by faith, not as a result of their feelings.

God's mention of Joshua's need to remain strong and courageous additionally was a subliminal indication that difficult days were ahead. God did not merely proclaim, "Walk over to Canaan with the people, there is milk and honey waiting on every table, it's yours. Enjoy it." Instead, God, named Yahweh in the passage, admonishes Joshua to be strong and courageous. In other words, "Trouble is coming, get ready. You will succeed, but it will require faithfulness, courage, and strength."

Joshua is given his verse six instructions for a purpose. God makes his purpose plain immediately, by saying, "... for you shall put this people in possession of the land I

¹³ Michael Pritchard, "Giving While Growing," TEDxYouth, Summit Prep, Redwood City, CA, October 12, 2014.

swore to their ancestors to give them” (Jos. 1:6). The people, or nation, flock were to occupy a new land that was promised prior to the time of God’s charge to Joshua. In order to obtain this land, Joshua would have to fight for it. It was not to be delivered, first class, with a bottle of champagne, atop a silver platter. Joshua’s coming fight would require him to “chazaq veematz” (be strong and courageous).¹⁴

Of the sixty-six books now considered the official canon and Holy Bible, there are over seven thousand promises issued by God.¹⁵ Verse six includes one such promise. What is of interest to the writer is the fact that some promises of God are given even to people who are not designed to be the beneficiaries of the promise. It was the ancestors of the Joshua generation who were granted a promise, but it was their descendants who reaped the rewards of the promise. Could the faithfulness of one generation become the blessing of another? One may posit that the prayers, hopes, and obedience of one generation becomes grace and mercy toward its descendants.

Surely, God would only make a promise of blessing to a people whom God loves. God’s oath to the ancestors of the people of Israel was a gift for their children. This is another glimpse into the character of God. This divine being comes bearing gifts to the children of a people. It is one thing for someone to give a gift, however, to bestow a gift on someone’s child is indicative of big-heartedness and genuine fondness of a person. Simplified, it says, I love you so much that when I see your children, I am reminded of how much I care for you that I want to be kind to them as well.

¹⁴ Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 453.

¹⁵ David Firth, *The Message of Joshua: The Bible Speaks Today Series* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 49.

The Joshua, chapter one, verse six promise from God would ultimately lead to the people of Israel taking over Canaan. Faith in the promise would mean following a seemingly strange set of instructions. Joshua was told to walk around the walls of Jericho one time a day for six days and on the seventh day to walk around seven times silently and then shout. Upon doing so, the wall came down and the land was soon theirs. Talking, threatening, or bragging were not instructed, just walking and specifically walking by faith. This is the testimony of the child of God, to not give free advertisements for evil by discussing fear or apprehension. Instead, to walk forward, by faith and with courage toward the divine destiny that God has promised. The subsequent Hebrews' battle in Joshua is God's method to bring about their acquisition of land; soon, they would build pillared houses with Middle Eastern stones.

God's words in verse six are written in the future tense.¹⁶ The taking of the land is to happen later. This will require a waiting period. The lesson may well be that Kairos time is best for humanity. Indeed, waiting our turn is a valuable lesson to learn. Similarly, God does not speak to Joshua until the death of Moses. There is only one leader at a time and the successor must await his appointed time. The true waiting time began with the ancestors of Joshua and the thirteenth century people of Israel. The ancestors were promised that their descendants would one day rise up. God issued the promise again to the generation of Joshua. God, in essence, kept a promise to several generations at once.

As a result, Joshua had to become aware of a sense of time. God's instructions included the words "shall and will" (Jos. 1:6). In God's time, Joshua and his people

¹⁶ Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 457.

would have the blessings God promised. It would not be immediate, but it was imminent. God's promises are fulfilled, in God's time. Sure enough, Joshua and his people realized the words God spoke in verse six and they inherited the land God swore to their ancestors to give them. The promise comes true, regardless of the opposition. Israel would face enemies from Egyptians to Midianites, but they all fell. God took care of his people, just as God promised.

The Hebrew lexicon renders verse seven loosely in this fashion: "Surely, be firm and strengthened, and abundantly stout and bold; keep watch and do the entire instruction that Moses, my servant ordered you to; do not turn aside from it to the right hand or left, but purpose to be prudent, in all places you walk."¹⁷

In the second, double imperative, God reminds Joshua to be strong and courageous once again. The additional mention of strength and courage likely speak to the emphasis God placed on them. They are important! It also may indicate that God wanted Joshua to remember them when it mattered most. Expert teachers know that repetition leads to memorization. God could have wanted Joshua to recall strength and courage in difficult times. In a sense, it was a form of preparation. As Joshua would move from theory to praxis, the ideas of strength and courage would have to become internal realities.

The days and nights Joshua spent sitting under the strength and courage of Moses were designed to prepare him for his time as leader. To sit back and watch Moses lead was his mandate for a season, but now he was to stand up and press forward as leader of Israel. The time for contemplation and consideration had ended. The time had come for

¹⁷ Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 469.

Joshua to proceed with boldness into his destiny. As God mentioned a mere verse before, he too, would have to be a man of great courage and conviction. If he fell victim to xenophobia, he would not be able to walk into his destiny. His ability to manage this newfound power and promotion was a result of God's preparation. Joshua's participation as a strong and courageous follower of God secures his victory as a leader.

The opposite of courage is discouragement. God may have taught Joshua to be courageous because of the danger of becoming discouraged. Throughout the Bible, God never indicates major achievement through the vehicle of a discouraged person. It is possible that Joshua could only accomplish his purpose by refusing to be discouraged. It would take courage for the work God charges Joshua with, in verse seven. God wants Joshua to take an act of faith before he sees or feels anything tangible. In a real sense, if Joshua does not act immediately, it is not faith anyway, if he does, power beyond himself becomes available. He could not be moved by his feelings, but by his faith. There may have been times when he did not feel like acting, doing, or moving forward, but his faith would prompt him to do so anyway.

He would be reminded of the need to act in faith at the Jordan River. When the Israelites arrived at the river it was at flood stage. When the priests put their feet into the water, the Jordan stopped flowing just as promised. The flow did not stop before the priests dipped their feet in the water. The miracle and power came only after they took the literal step of faith. In order for Joshua to arrive at a place called Canaan, he had to do things God's way. No turning to the left or right off of his straight pathway. His confidence would have to be in God, not his own resources or military strategy, in order to be successful.

God ensures the success of God's new chosen leader by giving him all the direction he needed in a few words. This points to how simple it can be to be successful in God's kingdom. The Hebrew word in the text is "towrah," defined as precept, statute, or law.¹⁸ The end of verse seven can really be broken down into a five-word equation from the lips of God. Obey my law equates to being successful.

This is not to be confused with the popular, contemporary concept of obeying the law. Laws that are manmade can be morally wrong and promote injustice. In America, it was once legal to not only own slaves but to consider African Americans as three-fifths a person for the purposes of census data and legislative representation. Instead, God is instructing Joshua to obey God's law, delivered directly from Heaven to Moses. To obey God's law is to find ultimate success. While not always easy, it is always rewarding.

Shortly thereafter, Joshua and the people of Israel come to realize, in a real sense, just how rewarding it can be to obey God's law. They and their leader Joshua find their promised success in the conquest of Canaan land. Theologian and Bible scholar, David Firth speaks of the virtues of strength and courage in this way, "But courage here takes on a specific form; it is not a matter of Joshua screwing up his nerve to an act of daring in battle, even though that is the more typical use of such language. Rather, it means living a life that is shaped by Yahweh's instruction. For Joshua, the act of daring is to live wholly by all that Yahweh has revealed in his Torah."¹⁹

In verse seven, God promises Joshua ultimate success. However, the fulfillment of the conditional promise is contingent upon Joshua's obedience. Joshua is commanded

¹⁸ Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 453.

¹⁹ Firth, *The Message of Joshua*, 37.

to obey the entirety of the precepts and principles of God's law. His faithfulness to this directive has an impact on the whole of Israel. Joshua's courage and strength had a direct effect on those around him. Since Joshua was strong and courageous, the people of Israel became victors and land owners. His character, faith, and responsibility translated into a blessing for countless others around him. In other words, Joshua's success was not just about him, but was also about success in the lives of others. Joshua's obedience determined the livelihood of an entire people. This verse points to the fact that leadership is a high responsibility. The mantle of authority is not to be taken lightly.

A "how to guide" for the mantle of leadership is one of the messages of the Joshua 1:5-9 text, highlighted in verse seven. The lifestyle of the effective leader is simplified in verse seven (and eight). However, the macro-concept of leading is evident in a glance at the entire pericope. God is enabling the transition of Israelite leadership. Similar to churches, there is the exit of one pastor and the entry of another. Israel's pastor and spiritual leader, Moses, has departed and Joshua, the new pastor and spiritual leader is being installed by God, God's self. How a pastor and spiritual leader is to live is outlined in the words of verse seven, be strong and very courageous and obey all of the law. Additional, vital instructions for the spiritual leader appear in the following verse (v. 8).

In verse eight, God's words can be paraphrased from the Hebrew Lexicon in this way, "This document is not to be removed from your lips, but you must utter it by day and by night, purposing to watch out and do all that is written; at that time you will

advance along your journey and prosper; at that time you will be prudent and successful.”²⁰

The Hebrew word for meditate is “hagah” which means to murmur, mutter, ponder, speak, study, talk, and utter.²¹ God teaches Joshua in verse eight the value of speaking the Word of God aloud, of studying and meditating on it, both of which result in success and prosperity. It has been written that the key to building faith is to hear and speak God’s Word. Indeed, Joshua will need more faith for the journey and battles ahead.

God gives him the secret to faith, i.e. speaking the Word of God aloud and meditating on it. Armed with that faith, Joshua is prepared for anything in his way. Even moreso, armed with the further instruction that the Torah provides, instruction he received in time of meditation, Joshua would be able to make the right choices as leader of the Israelite people in days ahead. Written in one commentary of verse eight are the words, “... it is the whole of Yahweh’s instruction that is required for success, not just those passages which are seemingly most appropriate for the coming battles... where Joshua would need courage was in the often-challenging tasks of understanding exactly how it was that he was to apply the Torah... indeed possession of the land would only continue to be legitimate when shaped by obedience to the Torah.”²²

Bible commentator, Kenneth Matthews has written about this concept of meditation found in Joshua, “meditate” (hagah) does not refer to a repetition of mystic

²⁰ Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 475.

²¹ Boling, *The Anchor Bible Joshua*, 9.

²² Firth, *The Message of Joshua*, 37.

words (mantra) or to reaching a heightened level of spiritual awareness. It describes contemplation for the purpose of understanding and obedience. The merism “day and night” means “continually.” “Vigilant study of God’s instructions must characterize the king and the wise person.”²³ In verse eight, we find these words, “...you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful” (Jos. 1:8). Meditating on the law includes speaking it aloud, talking about it as opposed to the negative opinions and ideas of people. It also entails thinking deeply on the law instead of thinking most often about things that are less important and potentially harmful. One prerequisite to experiencing deeper blessings of God is to meditate on the book of the law. To be anchored in the timeless and priceless principles of scripture ultimately leads to a blessed life.

In verse eight, Joshua is also reminded not to just be a hearer of God’s Word, but a doer of God’s Word. He is told to “do” all that is written therein. This is a second reminder in the passage about the importance of obeying the precepts of God. It leads to success and prudence. The Hebrew word for success “sagal” also is indicative of wisdom and intellect. In other words, God gives not just blessings for obedience, but unlocked the door for Joshua’s mental ability to further bless himself.²⁴ Herein we find God, our main character, indicating the infinite depth of God’s wisdom, purposes, and blessings.

Joshua, again, is not merely a military leader, but a spiritual leader for the Hebrew people. There is not one verse in the passage about training to wield and swing a sword.

²³ Kenneth Matthews, *Joshua: Teach the Text Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 14.

²⁴ Boling, *The Anchor Bible Joshua*, 15.

Instead, Joshua is told to meditate on the law, continually. He receives more instruction about the work of his soul, than the work of his limbs. Joshua is directed to make it a priority to be a pastor over a warrior. Success will not be determined by the number of push-ups and sit-ups he completes, but by the amount of time Joshua spends in prayer, worship, devotion, study, and meditation.

Our main character, in a verse eight message to Joshua also instructs the people of Israel that following the mandates of God leads to success in positive endeavors. In their case, it was the possession of land that was sworn to their fathers and mothers. Again, and again, the Israelites obtained success by simply being children of God who obeyed God. Due to God's faithfulness to his children, all that was required for the Hebrews was to be child-like, to follow the guidelines of their spiritual parents. The Hebrew people role model for readers that the greatest access to success comes from living by the law. By following the law, Joshua and his people also found success overtaking new lands.

Joshua can find success by obeying the law, but by the grace of God, he also receives God's presence and God's help to adhere to the law. As Richard Hess' commentary on Joshua suggests, "... the text affirms that Joshua will not be alone in striving for obedience to the law. Rather, the obedience and the success will be enjoyed in the presence of the LORD God who gave both the law and the promises. Joshua will not succeed because he obeys God's instruction; he will succeed because God is with him to enable him to obey his instruction."²⁵

God's promise to Joshua is issued with conditional and unconditional dimensions. God's presence is an unconditional promise, no matter what Joshua does, God will be

²⁵ Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary* (London, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 73.

there. However, Joshua's success and prosperity come with a condition. This reward is contingent upon Joshua's adherence to the guidelines that God gives him. There are promises that God gives that are conditional and others that are unconditional.

Unconditional promises are God's grace that is guaranteed regardless of our faithfulness. Whether some people pray or not, they are given life and health. There is no required behavior or following of God's law. However, to obtain deeper riches of grace sometimes mandates that people obey God's rules. Joshua is issued such a challenge and possibility.

One translation of the Hebrew Lexicon renders the translation 'good success' as the final two words of verse eight. This is intended to further clarify the concept of the expected success for Joshua. Good success and success are not synonyms. One can be successful a variety of useless activities. Good success, on the other hand, signifies being successful at good things, and more importantly achieving the will of God.

Good success is tied to obedience to God's Word. Nothing in life works as well as following the will and way of God. Once one chooses God, success is no longer about if, it is only a matter of when. Joshua's obedience meant that in time, he would lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land. For Joshua, good success is not a gamble, hypothesis or hopeful outcome, instead it is a guaranteed, appointed time of victory, conquest, and good success.

God's verse eight promise of victory also serves as a confirmation of the divinity of Joshua's leadership as well as the necessity of leadership and mentorship for a people. The task Joshua undertook was miraculous. The coming down of the walls of Jericho via shouting voices has not been duplicated since. However, Joshua's leadership was God's method of bringing about the victory. This is indicative more of the person of God than

the ability of his servant, Joshua. Verse eight also describes the benefits of learning from leaders and the ease of success when one has a mentor. Joshua was a teacher and leader who exemplified faith, strength, and courage for his people. Joshua learned from Moses and Joshua's people learned from Joshua. All three parties learned everything they knew from the voice and heart of God.

The final verse of the passage (v. 9) is God's closing sentiment in this great charge to Joshua. The first sentence is an interrogative, "Did I not lay the order on you?"²⁶ The Hebrew translation resembles the urban vernacular of seventies Black men and women; and resounds with even greater smoothness. It can be interpreted as God asking a rhetorical question. One that not only makes obvious the next course of action, but also points to the source of the command, God. If the Creator of the sun, moon, stars, birds, oceans, man and woman has issued the charge, is there much more to be said or deliberated? God gives Joshua a reminder of the significance of the Source of his instruction. This is not a suggestion from a friend, or a good idea from a scroll, this is the Word of the almighty God.

It is again clarified in Joshua, chapter one, verse nine, that the character of supreme interest is Yahweh. The verse is a monologue, featuring and starring God. The instructions indicate what is important enough to God to communicate to Joshua, repeatedly. Strength. Courage. There are other virtues that could have been mentioned such as: integrity, kindness, forgiveness, self-control and or patience. None were uttered. Instead, God's primary concern for Joshua is to exemplify the similar virtues of strength and courage. The heart of God is presented to readers as encouraging, thoughtful, and

²⁶ Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 381.

inspiring. These simple two words in verse nine give sensitive exegetes a glance at a loving God, not at a needy Joshua.

Of note, is the fact that in recent times, Joshua has been advised to be strong and courageous on four occasions. The first was by Moses a few verses before the opening of the book of Joshua, prior to his passing away, the second was in verse six, the third in verse seven. Here in verse nine, God gives Joshua a third direct instruction, Joshua's fourth in totality, to be strong and courageous.

The end of verse nine entails God directing Joshua not to tremble or be nervous, for God has promised his presence everywhere Joshua walks, the Hebrew word for which is *yalak*.²⁷ Could it have been that Joshua was fearful of his new leadership role? He may have grown accustomed to second fiddle, Moses leading the way shielded him from greater responsibility. As a result, he could hide behind his leader in the most difficult times. If the Israelite nation struggled, no one would blame him. If a question arose about the course of action, Joshua was not responsible for having the right answer, Moses was. However, that was about to change. It is possible, that Joshua was in dire need of strength and courage, so much so that it was required that he be reminded time and time again. The repetitiveness of this divine imperative statement indicates both that Joshua will need strength and courage for success, but also implicitly indicates that he may have struggled with both prior to his charge from God.

The language used in verse nine is “the LORD your God is with you wherever you go;” this is the use of possessive noun, ‘your’ (Jos 1:9). In one sentence, God begins, grammatically, in first person, “I hereby command you...” and transitions to third person,

²⁷ Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 395.

“for the LORD your God” (Jos. 1:9). It seems this literary or oratorical device is designed to add weight to the charge being issued. It also allows Joshua to begin to think in first person as he begins his new habit of meditation. It is possible he now perceives things this way, “the LORD my GOD is with me” as opposed to merely “GOD commanded me.” It could be that God’s formal tone is meant to remind Joshua that though he has a Friend for the journey, he must take his work seriously. Joshua, the soldier, is given a subtle reminder to give supreme respect to the General who is sending him into battle.

In verse nine, this third and final time, God gives Joshua instruction to be strong and courageous and to remember that God will be with him at all times. This encouragement is all he would need to accomplish the task ahead. Joshua was inspired by God’s words and his response to God’s words inspired those around him. Those who witnessed Joshua, just as Joshua had witnessed Moses, were strengthened by his courage. To paraphrase late itinerant preacher Billy Graham, “When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are stiffened.” Having courage encourages others.

It is through this lens that the reader is able to see in the passage, the God of a bronze skinned people provide them with a leadership transition that ultimately leads them to dominion in Canaan. One Bible commentary summarizes verses nine in this way:

[There is a] bracket around admonitions to obey the whole torah of Moses. In this way, Yahweh declares that the resolve and concentration required for taking the land ought also to characterize obedience to the commandments of Moses. The connection is reinforced through two similar declarations: admonitions to carefully obey the torah of Moses and promises that success will follow obedience. At the center of the construction is an exhortation to keep God’s words constantly at the center of one’s vision, stated first as a negative command (“do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth,” and then as a positive one (“meditate on it day and night”), Yahweh thus concludes with a series of exhortations that express the appropriate human response to divine promises:

resolve and zeal, active obedience, and complete devotion to the words of Moses.²⁸

In verse nine, God presents Joshua with closing words of encouragement and instruction to enable him to take on the mantle of Israelite leader at his appointed time. In a real sense, God is Joshua's mentor in ways that Moses was not. Moses could only serve with Joshua for a portion of the journey, God was with Joshua from the beginning to the end. The Hebrew people have wandered in the wilderness long enough, the season for walking into their Promised Land has finally arrived, and God would be there every step of the way.

In consideration of the main focus of the passage, several questions could be lobbed at the text. Who is the Source of guidance and protection for the Hebrews' leader, Joshua? Who is the Promiser of the Promised Land called Canaan? Who is the Author of the book of the law? Who is the Guarantor of a prosperous way and success? The answer to each question is the main character and protagonist of the pericope. It is not Moses or Joshua who alone are the leading men of the story. It is not a land called Canaan that is the blessing received by the Israelite people as promised in Joshua 1:5-9. The blessing and the point of the entire passage, is a loving and gracious being who would exhaust time and language to be written about, yet can also be mentioned in a single syllable, God.

Joshua 1:5-9 is foundational to the Doctor of Ministry project, furthermore, it serves as an instructive benchmark for mentorship. The passage provides context for mentorship from God to Moses, from Moses to Joshua, from Moses to Israel, from

²⁸ L. Daniel Hawk, *Joshua in 3-D: A Commentary on Biblical Conquest and Manifest Destiny* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Publishing, 2010), 8.

Joshua to Israel and explicates specifically, mentorship from God to Joshua. The doctoral project is a mentorship program centered around the Joshua 1:5-9 principles of strength, courage, and success through following God's will.

Specifically, The Young Kings Mentorship Program is a parachurch ministry launched in November of 2017 at the KIPP STRIVE Academy in West End, Atlanta, Georgia. The program paradigm is patterned after the relationships between God, Moses, and Joshua as well as the clarion call to courage and faithful leadership issued by God to Joshua in the first chapter of the Book of Joshua. The program is designed to serve the needs of Black boys in grades three, four, and five. There are twelve (eleven male and one female) mentors who have committed to attending one of the weekly, two-hour, Saturday sessions held at KIPP STRIVE Academy.

The scholars in most cases have been perceived by school faculty and staff to have behavioral challenges including lack of respect for authority. The Young Kings Mentorship Program (TYK) has been strategically cultivated to provide a source of support, encouragement, and mentoring for the young, modern day Joshua's. The response to the program has been overwhelming. Parents have written notes and expressed verbally at each Saturday session both their appreciation as well as the behavioral and social improvements the boys have made since the inception of the program. One such example: "awesome glad we're a part of the same village right now the young Kings means so much....thank you and your team for the vision."²⁹

The program sustainability is founded upon the level of unity and cooperation exemplified by its leadership. The problem of missing mentorship in the West End

²⁹ Aleta Paschal, "Re: Thank You," text message to Daryl Westfield Edwards, March 9, 2018.

community of Atlanta resembles the challenge faced by the Israelite people upon the death of Moses, leading to the necessity of God's commission of Joshua in the exegetical passage. This issue can be addressed and resolved as a result of The Young Kings Mentorship Program.

Upon reviewing the spiritual autobiography of the writer and contextual analysis of West End, Atlanta, a mentorship program is a suitable match for the writer and the demographic. The consistent thread of mentorship is woven into the fabric of the ability of the writer and the need of the target location. Answering a call to leadership following the passing of his father, pastor, and mentor as did Joshua in the passage, has been the experience of the researcher. In addition, the writer has devoted nearly seventy-five percent of his life serving as mentor to Black children in Boston, New York, Charlotte, and Atlanta and has learned to create mentoring solutions over three decades of experience and success.

The doctoral project is purposed to create and systematize a Christian based mentorship program for young boys in Atlanta, with accompanying curriculum and filmography, aligns with Joshua 1:5-9. The text is a charge from God to a mentee and understudy of Moses. Joshua's call to action is the same charge issued to the young boys in the mentorship program. The Young Kings are taught to be strong and courageous, to meditate on God's Word, to follow God's laws and therein find good success and conquering of territory promised to their ancestors. It is the writer's hope that they will one day become conquistadors of their own personal Jordan Rivers and Jericho's as was Joshua, but most of all to honor and live for the Source of their Promised Land blessings and freedoms, God!

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Beyond the biblical foundation, rooted in liberation, there is another historical context that is actually more contemporary, that gives credence to the project and its theme of freedom, the Reconstruction Period. The Young Kings Mentorship Program's duplicatable paradigm is in direct alignment with the efforts of the scriptural figure, Joshua but also of the Black leaders of the Reconstruction. As Joshua led the people of Israel to freedom and the Black leaders of the Reconstruction period led Black people to freedom, it is the writer's goal to lead Black young men in Atlanta, Georgia to a real spiritual, emotional, physical, financial, and social sense of freedom in America. The Young Kings, students in third, fourth, and fifth grades are being taught to be strong and courageous as was Joshua, to follow God's laws, to know their history, and to reject racism. The history of the Reconstruction period is full of Black men and women who with strength and courage, assumed leadership roles as ministers and politicians in the face of discrimination, danger, and death. Those successful efforts, which in part made the writer's doctoral project, as well as this essay possible, are revealed below.

The twelve years, 1865-1877, termed the Reconstruction, brought about one of the most pivotal transitions in American History. African Americans, following the Civil War, shifted from the seeming hopelessness of chattel slavery to the promise of freedom, citizenship, and for men, voting rights as well. Similar to the experience of the Israelites

under the leadership of Joshua, following enslavement in Egypt, African Americans would have leaders who would point them toward the Promised Land. Those symbolic mentors would lift their voices, make unspeakable sacrifices, and fight for a goal not of freedom in a land called Canaan, but a freedom that was, at that time, foremost, an inner sense of resilience, power, and dignity. Some of those Black Reconstruction leaders included John Lynch, Fredrick Douglass, Joseph Rainey, Robert Elliot, Richard Harvey Cain, Hiram Revels, and Henry McNeal Turner.¹

The Reconstruction movement meant a redefinition of life for African Americans who would learn to come to grips with the realities of the principles America was founded on as opposed to what was proclaimed from political podiums, written on parchment, and termed law. Those informing moments occurred during the substrata of the Presidential Reconstruction and the Congressional Reconstruction. New legislation in the form of the Thirteen, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, Civil Rights Acts of 1866 and 1875 as well as the Freedman's Bureau were constant reminders of the illusion of good will from the American government toward African Americans. As did Joshua in the Bible, they would have to be strong and courageous, to meditate not merely on new American laws, but on divine law, ever aware of God's presence in their realization of freedom.

African American life after the Civil War was full of new dreams, expanded visions, heartbreaking circumstances, and the culmination of hard-fought accomplishments. One could imagine what it would be like to have to demand access to

¹ W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1935), 67.

education for one's children, a place to call home, the right to vote, and the ability to use public services. Formerly enslaved Black people seemed trapped in a world where freedom was promised but not delivered, where slavery was repackaged, with a rotting ribbon and bow. However, some Black people chose to take their freedom, instead of asking for it. They rose to positions of political power, built self-sustaining communities, and refused to fear the new, cowardly Ku Klux Klan or the shameful, fork-tongued American government. As legendary scholar William Edward Burghardt Du Bois wrote, "Reconstruction was a revolutionary moment, a crucible of change, for America's people of color."²

The few scholars who have written candidly about the Reconstruction period from the Black perspective point to a return to slavery. Indeed, the initial excitement and hope of the Emancipation Proclamation only three years before the Reconstruction had transformed into overt racism, unpoliced violence, systemic poverty, and unbridled discrimination against Black people. However, Black people miraculously wrestled toward a Canaan that was not only physical land, but was a moral, spiritual, psychological, communal freedom. As Jesus in the New Testament lifted the Old Testament arrival into the Promised Land to a deeper realization, Black leaders and people of the Reconstruction attempted to do the same. The Reconstruction was not, as some scholars term it, an "unfinished revolution."³ The start of the Reconstruction period followed the successful enduring of and fight with humanity's greatest onslaught of evil and marked the beginning of a new phase in the ascension of Black people toward their

² Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 178.

³ John David Smith, *We Ask Only for Even-Handed Justice: Black Voices from Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), XI.

traditional greatness; in essence, the completion of one revolution, and the beginning of another.

In the 1800's, Southern states were populated with over four-million enslaved African American women, children, and men. Their transition began when newly released criminals from Europe came to the Americas seeking prosperity by any immoral means possible. They arrived, by accident, in the Americas and sought to take over the land from the natives by force, dishonesty, and manipulation. They ultimately wanted to disconnect completely from Europe and their British sponsors to create a new country. The American Revolution, where interestingly, the first to die was a Black man, was the access point for this new reality. A new country was birthed and a Declaration of Independence was signed on July 4, 1776 in the North (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) to protect rich whites and maintain order. Its second sentence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."⁴

For Black people, the journey from Africa to the Caribbean and then to present-day United States was on prison-like ships, often named after biblical heroes, including Jesus. Similar to the Midianites and Canaanites of the Bible, the white sailors and businessmen used the name of God in vain and with evil intention. The ships had varying deck levels where enslaved women and men were packed together exactly like sardine cans with no place to use the bathroom and literally, barely room to breathe. Countless Africans died, others survived and became enslaved in the Americas. They

⁴ *US Declaration of Independence*, 1776, 1.

worked in fields or as servants, were raped, used for breeding, mutilated, castrated, killed, unpaid, abused, sold, and of course were forbidden from maintaining their own language, religions, from reading, writing, or marrying. Those who ran away were hunted down and either shot, lynched, beaten, or fed to dogs. This violence and murder of Black men, women, and children was done in the name of the American way.

In the North, slavery was not a means that was as readily available. The land and weather did not permit adequate harvest and the settlers were less ruthless. So, to trade with other countries, the South had an economic advantage. America, built upon capitalism, could not be united under such circumstances. If left unchecked, the uneducated and barbaric slavery proponents of the South would eventually be all-powerful and the more refined, educated Northerners would end up lagging behind. The Constitution was written in the North, and the founding fathers wrote it with one idea in mind, to maintain prosperity for white land owners. Only white land owners could write the laws, and America was founded on protecting those white land owners.

Author and Marxist philosopher Peter Camejo wrote:

Just as chattel slavery was originally established because it was profitable and produced racist ideology as its justification, the racial oppression of our epoch owes its strength to the profit motive and it, in turn, has promoted racism for ideological support... From the end of the Civil War into the 1880s it was demonstrated again and again that the most successful tactic for winning votes among plebian whites in the North was an appeal against the mistreatment of Blacks in the South.⁵

White Northerners were initially unaffected by slavery and washed their hands of it as did Pontius Pilate with Jesus. However, when their profits could be affected by it, some whites soon became abolitionists, anti-slavery advocates and sought ways to divert its

⁵ Peter Camelo, *Racism, Revolution, Reaction 1861-1877: The Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction* (New York, NY: Pathfinder Press, 1976), 10.

course. These and other factors contributed to the beginning of the Civil War on April 12, 1861.

The Civil War was a four-year, one-month, bloody affair that led to the deaths of over 750,000 Americans.⁶ Over 200,000 Black men fought with honor, courage, and dignity on behalf of the Northern army. The abilities of Black soldiers were doubted by whites, but ultimately even the most skeptical whites had to admit with left-handed compliments, as Dudley Taylor Cornish did, “As a soldier in the Union Army, the American Negro proved his manhood and established a strong claim to equality of treatment and opportunity.”⁷

President Abraham Lincoln, on July 22, 1862, seeking to unite the North and the South set about the task of discussing the Emancipation Proclamation. His motives were to have more control, to protect the profits of his Northern allies, and to stifle the negative impact slavery could have if the South gained more power by profiting from it. In time, with unlimited access to free labor, the South could take over the entire continent. The educated, elite, land-owning whites who created the Constitution would have to move to another country, and chaos would ensue as their democratic institution would crumble and be replaced with a lawless jungle, led by animalistic pro-slavery activists.

Meanwhile, enslaved Black people gradually were becoming aware that slavery was over. On January 1, 1863 the Emancipation Proclamation was issued and over the next few years, though many whites tried to hide the information, African Americans in bondage became legally free. Some assumed that Lincoln was on their side, or that white

⁶ Smith, *We Ask Only for Even-Handed Justice*, 2.

⁷ Smith, *We Ask Only for Even-Handed Justice*, 2.

people were finally on the side of moral right. Others realized that the end of slavery was not as a result of good will, but it was a means to an end that was selfish and based upon economic gain for greedy whites. Not only did they have to adjust to freedom, but to become painfully aware, through the lack of governmental support that their freedom was not a gift, but a last result and ultimately a manipulation. The Confederacy had crumbled, but such failure would not be the lot of the fellow African-American. For the Black man, woman, and child who built America, the first steps into Promised Land had come. Much like the Israelites in the thirteenth century, African Americans and their leaders were the central theme in the developing story of divine redemption in the nineteenth century.

After the Emancipation Proclamation, Black people began to live with more freedom. They had survived a white supremacist culture by finding faith and hope in the “invisible institutions” known as the rural Black church during slavery.⁸ The Black church during slavery was praying, preaching, singing, and moaning where treetops served as steeples and grass functioned as the pew. In spite of virtually impossible circumstances, Black men and women kept trusting God and joining for worship. During the Reconstruction, the most important aspect of Black life outside of family was the church. Black faith grew, Black people took over and created churches that were tall, physical buildings. These now “visible institutions” served as sanctuaries of faith, peace, joy, education, and a sense of belonging. Black churches during the Reconstruction

⁸ L. H. Welchel, *Hell without Fire* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 78.

housed schools for Black children, served as places for political gatherings, weddings, funerals, and celebrations of Black life.⁹

These independent churches were the first institutions completely controlled by Black men in the United States. Black Preachers were the “most respected individuals, esteemed for their speaking ability, organizational talents, and good judgment on matters both public and private.”¹⁰ Ministers joined hands with other clubs and groups to raise money to purchase land, pay teachers, provide scholarships, and giving to those facing poverty. As one Black missionary, Jonathan Gibbs said of the effect of the work of Black ministers during the Reconstruction, “we have progressed a century in a year.”¹¹

Freedom had come. Black people dressed in new garments, expressing themselves with fashion, style, smiles, a new walk and fresh attitudes. Echoing this sentiment, a Black family cook at the Bradford plantation in Florida said to the white plantation owner’s wife, “if she want any dinner she kin cook it herself.” The nineteen-year-old daughter of that plantation later stated, “Never before had I a word of impudence from any of our black folk... but they are not ours any longer.”¹² Other Black people moved further north where freedom was in many ways even more free. Violence was more prominent in the South as the losers of the war were still upset and feeling war-like, while in the North, the winners of the Civil War were much more welcoming of the newly free African American migrant.

⁹ Dwight Hopkins, *Shoes that Fit Our Feet* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 18.

¹⁰ Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1988), 41.

¹¹ Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 45.

¹² Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, 37.

Black leaders serving as mentors during this transitory nineteenth century period guided Black people toward the establishment of their newly found freedoms. Similar to Joshua and the Israelites silently walking round Jericho seven times and bringing it down with a shout, the voices of Black leaders were lifted in effort to bring down the antiquated and toxic American policies of the day. During the Reconstruction, over two thousand Black people rose to political office from the local level to the U.S. Senate, to fight against the Black Codes and other restrictive and discriminatory laws set up by state legislatures. Thirty-five Black politicians were murdered by the Ku Klux Klan during the Reconstruction, but their legacies never died and their sacrifices propelled an entire race of people.¹³ These nineteenth century “Joshua’s” serve as an example to today’s young leaders-in-training as well as their mentors.

John Roy Lynch, was an African American writer, attorney, and military officer who was born into slavery in Louisiana. He was freed as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation. Lynch was elected the first African-American Speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives, serving from 1873 to 1877 and later in the 1880s. Lynch spoke against the racial divisions of the government, quoted as saying:

Mr. Speaker, if this unjust discrimination is to be longer tolerated by the American people, which I do not, cannot, and will not believe until I am forced to do so, then I can only say with sorrow and regret that our boasted civilization is a fraud; our republican institutions a failure; our social system a disgrace; and our religion a complete hypocrisy. But I have an abiding confidence...in the patriotism of this people, in their devotion to the cause of human rights, and in the stability of our republican institutions. I hope that I will not be deceived. I love the land that gave me birth; I love the Stars and Stripes. This country is where I intend to live, where I expect to die. To preserve the honor of the national flag and maintain perpetually the Union of the States hundreds, and I may say thousands of noble, brave, and true-hearted colored men have fought, bled, and died. And now Mr. Speaker, I ask can it be possible that that flag under which

¹³ Smith, *We Ask Only for Even-Handed Justice*, 53.

they fought is to be a shield and a protection to all races and classes of persons except the colored race? God forbid!”¹⁴

Hiram Rhodes Revels was the first African American to serve in the U.S. Congress when he represented Mississippi as a U.S. Senator. He was also a college administrator, and minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He was born Fayetteville, North Carolina and was an organizer of regiments for the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War. Rhodes was the first president of historically Black, Alcorn State University. Revels is revered by Black historians around the world for his work in politics, ministry, and education. In his later years, he served as an elder and taught theology at historically Black, Rust College. Leading his people toward freedom included his efforts to fight for the reinstatement of illegally ousted Black legislators and championing the cause of disenfranchised Black workers.¹⁵

Blanche K. Bruce was an African American elected official in Mississippi from 1875 to 1881. He was born in Farmville, Virginia, enslaved until he was freed by the owner of his plantation, who was also his father. Bruce learned to teach and worked as a steamboat porter on the Mississippi River until eventually establishing a school for Black children in Missouri. Before long he was a rich landowner and editor of a local newspaper. On February 14, 1879, Bruce presided over the Senate, the only former enslaved African to ever do so.¹⁶

Robert Brown Elliott was the twenty-eighth Speaker of the South Carolina House of Representatives, serving from 1871 to 1874. He was said to have been born in Boston

¹⁴ Brooks D. Simpson, ed., *Reconstruction: Voices from America's First Great Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York, NY: Library of America, 2018), 555-556.

¹⁵ Simpson, *Reconstruction*, 555-556.

¹⁶ Simpson, *Reconstruction*, 502.

to West Indian parents, though some historians claim he was from England. He was an attorney and the first African American commanding general of the South Carolina National Guard. He helped to form a state militia to fight the Ku Klux Klan. He was a successful politician who left a legacy of impeccable civil service. Elliott was an attorney and pioneer in breaking down racial barriers. He fought for universal manhood suffrage and for education without discrimination. Elliott, responding to a debate on the merits of state-funded schools, remarked:

The only question is whether children shall become educated and enlightened, or remain in ignorance. The question is not white or black, united or divided, but whether children shall be sent to school or kept at home. If they are compelled to be educated, there will be no danger of the Union, or a second secession of South Carolina from the Union. The masses will be intelligent, and will become the great strength and bulwark of republicanism. If they remain uneducated, they will inevitable remain ignorant... and ignorance is the parent of vice and crime, and was the sustainer of the late gigantic slaveholder's rebellion... It is not a question of color, but simply... whether white or black shall keep their children at home uneducated, bringing them up in ignorance, useless to society, or be compelled to send them to school, where they can be made intelligent and useful in the community where they reside.¹⁷

Richard Harvey Cain was a minister, abolitionist, and United States Representative in South Carolina. He was a missionary of the African Methodist Episcopal Church born to an African American father and Native American mother, raised in Ohio, where he began reading and writing as a child. Cain attended Wilberforce University and divinity school in Missouri. He served as a barber and on steamboats along the Ohio River. After being licensed to preach, he ended up serving as a pastor in Brooklyn, New York. He became active in the political machine after moving to South Carolina, was elected to the United States Congress, and focused on the Civil Rights Bill passed absent of many of his original ideas in 1875. Later in life, he served as an African Methodist Episcopal bishop

¹⁷ Smith, *We Ask Only for Even-Handed Justice*, 103.

over the Mid-Atlantic and New England States. He also helped found and served as president of historically Black, Paul Quinn College in Texas.¹⁸

Joseph Hayne Rainey, member of the U.S. House of Representatives in South Carolina's First District, was born in Georgetown, South Carolina. He was freed in the 1840s when his father purchased the freedom of his entire family. A Republican, when the political party stood for democratic ideals, unlike the realigned present-day Republican party, Rainey spoke out in support of the Civil Rights Act of 1875, saying,

But we do want a law enacted that we may be recognized like other men in the country. Why is it that colored members of Congress cannot enjoy the same immunities that are accorded to white members? Why cannot we stop at hotels here without meeting objection? Why cannot we go into restaurants without being insulted? We are here enacting laws for the country and casting votes upon important questions; we have been sent here by the suffrages of the people, and why cannot we enjoy the same benefits that are accorded to our white colleagues on this floor?¹⁹

Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, better known as Frederick Douglass was born on February 20, 1818 in Cordova, Maryland. One day, he was to become a legendary social reformer, abolitionist, orator, author, and statesman. At the age of sixteen, he was sent to a farmer who was a "slave-breaker," who beat him regularly and nearly caused him to have a mental breakdown. However, when Douglass won a physical confrontation with the farmer, he was never beaten again. After two failed escapes from slavery, he met and fell in love with Anna Murray, a free Black woman in Baltimore who inspired him to become free. He escaped slavery as a young man and ended up in New York City. About this experience, he wrote:

¹⁸ Simpson, *Reconstruction*, 82.

¹⁹ "Joseph Rainey," Wikipedia, last modified February 27, 2018, accessed March 30, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Rainey.

I have often been asked, how I felt when first I found myself on free soil. And my readers may share the same curiosity. There is scarcely anything in my experience about which I could not give a more satisfactory answer. A new world had opened upon me. If life is more than breath, and the 'quick round of blood,' I lived more in one day than in a year of my slave life. It was a time of joyous excitement which words can but tamely describe. In a letter written to a friend soon after reaching New York, I said: 'I felt as one might feel upon escape from a den of hungry lions.' Anguish and grief, like darkness and rain, may be depicted; but gladness and joy, like the rainbow, defy the skill of pen or pencil.²⁰

Instead of basking in freedom alone, he spent his life working toward the ending of slavery for other Black people. He wrote several autobiographies, one a bestseller, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Countless anti-slavery speeches, books, and articles have been written by Douglass and about his work in the abolitionist movement. He was known worldwide, delivering the keynote speech at the unveiling of the Emancipation Memorial in Washington's Lincoln Park. In that speech, he spoke honestly about President Abraham Lincoln, critical of his tardiness in joining the side of emancipation, admitting that Lincoln somewhat opposed the expansion of slavery but did not care to abolish it, calling him "the white man's president." Douglass later in life continued his activism in practical terms constructing rental housing for Black people, known as the Douglass Place in Baltimore, a complex that still stands to the time of this writing (2018).

George Teamoh was a Black shipyard carpenter from Virginia who was a public servant in the state senate and in the Virginia constitutional convention. He was a proponent of state penal reform and fought against the public whipping of Blacks as

²⁰ Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and His Complete History to the Present Time* (Hartford, CT: Park Publishing Company, 1881), 170.

penalty for criminal acts and for fair and just punishments for all races and classes.

Addressing the Virginia senate, he shared these words,

Sir, one may be sent to the penitentiary for a number of years, and from thence return to a peaceful society with his person unscarred; but the whipping post and cowhide, mingling man's heart's blood with the outer covering of the beast, doom him, or her, black or white, poor, but not the rich, to a life of shame written in red colors on the back. Why sir, we whip one for stealing a chicken, and then turn him loose on society like Samson's foxes, with firebrands, ten-fold more the child of devilish incendiarism than ever he was before, if formerly so inclined. He dives deep into his hell of revenge, and from cool calculation will have it, if it costs him his head. And judging from the past, *whipping settles nothing*, but only harrows up and brings out what was really in the man---the evil of his heart---the evil of his heart.²¹

Pinckney B. S. Pinchback was the first Black acting governor of Virginia until Douglas Wilder held the position in 1990. His brief term lasted for just over one month when Governor Henry Clay was impeached. At the time, Pinchback was lieutenant governor and filled the seat temporarily in Clay's absence. Pinchback was then elected to the U.S. House of Representatives as well as the U.S. Senate. He was often treated unfairly and was often accused of political corruption because of his giftedness. He spoke out against white Republicans who opposed Blacks "with intelligence, cultivation, and sagacity."²² However, as Pinckney also said, "the colored people have begun to understand this trick."²³

Benjamin F. Randolph was a free Black man from Kentucky who attended Oberlin College and served as a chaplain during the Civil War for colored troops. He once remarked when applying for work with the Freedmen's Bureau, "I don't ask for

²¹ Smith, *We Ask Only for Even-Handed Justice*, 76.

²² Smith, *We Ask Only for Even-Handed Justice*, 78.

²³ Smith, *We Ask Only for Even-Handed Justice*, 78.

position or money. But I ask a place where I can be most useful to my race.”²⁴ In South Carolina, Randolph was assistant superintendent of schools for the Freedmen’s Bureau and also served as a journalist. As a Republican delegate, he wrote laws and advocated for bills that guaranteed equal political rights. He once said, “all of my radicalism consists in believing one thing, namely, that all men are created of one blood; that ‘God created all nations to dwell upon the earth.’”²⁵

James D. Lynch was born in Baltimore, Maryland, son of a merchant, both free. He became a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, preaching to Black troops in the Civil War and planting churches during the Reconstruction period. In Mississippi, Lynch worked as a missionary, establishing Black schools and churches and aiding the Freedmen’s Bureau. As a member of the secret Union League, he organized Black Republicans to become involved in politics and the voting process. Known for his oratory gifts, Lynch was a master speaker often speaking to thousands at a time, lifting their spirits and encouraging them to continue the fight for justice. Once, in Augusta Georgia, he spoke out about the wrath of God on America over the issue of slavery, “All that my race asks of the white man is justice... The white man may refuse us justice. God forbid! But it cannot be withheld long; for there will be an army marshalled in the Heavens for our protection, and events will transpire by which the hand of Divine Providence will wring from you in wrath, that which should have been given in love.”²⁶

²⁴ Smith, *We Ask Only for Even-Handed Justice*, 81.

²⁵ Smith, *We Ask Only for Even-Handed Justice*, 82.

²⁶ Smith, *We Ask Only for Even-Handed Justice*, 79.

Henry McNeal Turner, was a born a free Black man in South Carolina. He was ordained in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He served as a chaplain for colored soldiers in the Civil War. He spent most of the Reconstruction as a minister and politician. He was elected to the Georgia constitutional convention and state legislature. However, he was expelled from the Georgia House of Representatives as were many other black delegates at the time. He faced slander, libel, false criminal accusations, was arrested and tried on trumped up charges. Still, he persisted and wrote campaign documents, made speeches, organized clubs, political associations, and Union Leagues. He was also a proponent in his later years for what Marcus Garvey later popularized, Black people returning to Africa. He spoke out in 1868 saying with perfect articulation of authentic Blackness, “I shall neither fawn nor cringe before any party, not stoop to beg for my rights... I am here to demand my rights, and to hurl thunderbolts at the men who dare to cross the threshold of my manhood.”²⁷

In conclusion, there were countless Black men and women who in the Reconstruction period, served as Joshua’s of their time. Based upon the circumstances they were in, their leadership efforts were more than necessary. The peculiar institution of slavery, motivated by American capitalism, perpetuated by the nation’s original sin of racism, nearly tore the country asunder. Following the Emancipation Proclamation, America was given another chance at justice. Black people largely obtain freedom and good success by faith, God’s presence and Word, as well as their own strength and courage. There were however those who provided brief support such as the Freedman’s Bureau, an organization designed to provide food, hospitals, orphan homes, and churches

²⁷ Smith, *We Ask Only for Even-Handed Justice*, 80.

for newly free Black people. They gave basic relief for a few thousand Black people, but soon would disband.

As did Joshua in the Bible, Black people would have to be strong and courageous, to meditate not merely on a new American order, but on divine order, grateful for the companionship of God in their journey toward freedom. They did. Against unspeakable odds, Black leaders emerged, such as John Lynch, Frederick Douglass, Hiram Revels, Blanche Bruce, Benjamin F. Randolph, and Henry McNeal Turner who were determined to make it to their Canaan land. That Promised Land might have been more immaterial than physical, but, as is their Guide to freedom, arguably far more real. The Promised Land that Black people realized was their self-evident, unalienable rights to dignity, persistence, hope, community, growth, and Black power.

The writer's doctoral project is in direct alignment with the efforts of Joshua and the Black leaders of the Reconstruction. It is the writer's project goal to lead Black young men and women in Atlanta, Georgia to a new sense of freedom. That project is a mentorship program called The Young Kings. The Young Kings, students in third, fourth, and fifth grades are being taught to be strong and courageous, to follow God's laws, to know their history, and to reject racism. The history of the Reconstruction period is full of Black men and women who were strong and courageous in the face of unjust laws and unwarranted violence, who followed God's laws as ministers and missionaries, and who used political office to fight against racism. Their examples, as leaders of a nation, are models that youth in the mentorship program will follow.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. often deemed the Moses of the present age, spoke his final public words out of Julia Ward Howe's Battle Hymn of the Republic. Those of this

age who seek to carry on the tradition of Joshua in the thirteenth century and the Black Reconstruction leaders of the nineteenth century would do well to sing the song and lift the battle cry of the final words Dr. King left us with, continuing where his words end:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord; He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword: His truth is marching on. Glory, Glory, hallelujah! Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah! His truth is marching on...Our God is marching on. In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea, With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me. As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free, While God is marching on. Glory, glory, hallelujah! Glory, glory, hallelujah! Glory, glory, hallelujah! While God is marching on.²⁸

²⁸ Julia Howe, "Battle Hymn of the Republic," 1862.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

A theological framework that gives evidence of the credence of The Young Kings Mentorship Program is Black Theology. The tenets of Black Liberation Theology are a fitting consciousness to connect with the foundational biblical text of the project, Joshua 1:5-9 as well as the historical foundation, the Reconstruction period. In all three cases, the theme of freedom from bondage is clear... or in a word, liberation.

The theological foundation of the project will focus on the systematic theory of Black Liberation Theology (Black Theology). The project is a para-church ministry mission designed to reach Black youth who, in many cases, have not yet found the desire to attend church or have not been consistently exposed to Christianity, and the best of Black culture. The fundamental aspects of the doctrine of missiology are apparent in the operation of the organization; however, the theological leanings are toward liberation, specifically, for Black boys. The conceptuality of Jesus' overwhelming concern for people facing oppression as well as His own overcoming of oppression is evident in scripture from any theological perspective.

Unfortunately, there is a necessity for a theology that addresses the contemporary tragedies of slavery and racism, primarily due to the misrepresentation of Christian theology in present-day America. In his recent book, *An Uncommon Faith*, Eddie Glaude defines a particular requirement of Black religion as, "An unyielding faith in our

capacities to be otherwise as we acknowledge how broken we actually are.”¹ Black Theology is a scholarly presentation of the inner frustrations of Black Christians and their unwillingness to relinquish the pursuit of freedom. Late pioneer of Black Theology, James Hal Cone wrote:

White theologians’ attitude toward black people in particular and the oppressed generally is hardly different from that of oppressors in any society. It is particularly similar to the religious leaders’ attitude towards Jesus in first-century Palestine when he freely associated with the poor and outcasts and declared that the Kingdom of God is for those called “sinners” and not for priests and theologians or any of the self-designated righteous people.²

Cone’s strain of Black Theology, is one of several liberation theologies, each leaving ample space for critique. In Black Theology, this central figure in the Christian faith is presented as champion of the victim as well as victor over victimization, Himself.³ While Cone’s bibliology is supported by the Exodus and his Christology is bolstered by Jesus’ consistent identification with the oppressed, there are questions that his work leaves unanswered. An example of a significant area of resistance to Cone’s theology is the challenge of celestial discrimination. “If the claims, God is a racist and God is a “soul” brother, are on equal footing, can consideration of the former claim, we ask, be avoided? ... black theology methodologically contradicts itself if it both adopts a de novo approach and emphasizes black suffering, but fails to ask the troublesome question of divine racism.”⁴ Critiques from authors such as Deotis Roberts, William R. Jones, Joseph

¹ Eddie Glaude, *An Uncommon Faith: A Pragmatic Approach to the Study of African American Religion* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2018), 2.

² James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 123.

³ James Cone, *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 24.

⁴ William Jones, “Theodicy and Methodology in Black Theology: A Critique of Washington, Cone, and Cleage,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 64, no. 4 (1971): 544.

Washington, Alistair Kee, and Michael Battle will be discussed in subsequent pages of this chapter.

The state of Georgia, where the doctoral project will be executed, has the tenth highest rate of incarceration in the United States of America.⁵ Black men are overrepresented in Georgia and in American penal systems. “More African American adults are under correctional control today – in prison or jail, on probation or parole – than were enslaved in 1850.”⁶ The absence of freedom for the inmates does not begin upon their arrival behind the tall steel gates. It was spiritual and mental freedom that, had they received it, could have prevented the impending physical freedom. In addition, socio-economic freedoms Black young men have been deprived of are a result of unjust legislation in local and national governments and often leads to crime as the only means of survival.

The methodology of the project, located at the intersection of theology and praxis, is informed by Black Theology. Black Theology is an interpretation of divinity and humanity from the hermeneutical lens of the Black experience, the central figure of which is God, the “Liberator of the oppressed from bondage.”⁷ It was the “Black Power Statement” created by the National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC), in 1966, that launched the strain of thought that presented America with a Christianity unlike what had been preached in white churches. For the first time in American history, the facts of biblical history were on public display. Jesus was not white and rich, as was the

⁵ Deb Belt, “Georgia Incarceration Rate: See How It Stacks Up to Other States,” *Atlanta Patch*, accessed January 23, 2018, <https://patch.com/georgia/atlanta/georgia-incarceration-rate-see-how-it-stacks-other-states>.

⁶ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2012), 180.

⁷ Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, ix.

supposed benchmark of Christianity. As Howard Thurman wrote, “Of course it may be argued that the fact that Jesus was a Jew is merely coincidental, that God could have expressed himself as easily and effectively in a Roman. True, but the fact is he did not. And it is with that fact that we must deal. The second important fact for our consideration is that Jesus was a poor Jew.”⁸

This new consciousness originated in the 1960’s and developed in the 1970’s as a result of the Civil Rights Movement. The premise of Black Liberation Theology was that the values of Black people were not the same as the values of white people. The prayers of the Egyptian pharaohs and the people of Israel during the Exodus were two completely different prayers. The struggle for liberation from Egyptian hegemony in 1450 B.C.E. that was the lot of the Israelites, mirrors the struggle of Black people against white hegemony, today. James Cone perceived, “in the history of the black struggle for liberation, the working of the will of God - the God revealed to Abraham, Sarah, Issac, and Jacob, the God who sent Jesus Christ into the world for its redemption. It is the same God whose presence became known in the history that recalls the names of Paul of Tarsus, Augustine of Hippo, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and, closer to our time Bishop Richard Allen, Sojourner Truth, and Martin Luther King, Jr.”⁹

Black theology was founded by Black ministers who were actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement. These ministers served as demonstrators, protesters, and public voices. The concept of Black theology did not emerge from Ivy League halls, seminaries, or universities. Black theology was birthed in Black churches and

⁸ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1976), 16.

⁹ James Cone, *For My People* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 2.

organizations designed to promote justice such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC), and the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO).¹⁰

The message and speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave rise and popularity to the connection between the gospel of Jesus Christ and racial justice in America. While an overwhelming number of white ministers either saw no connection between the Christian faith and justice for all or refused to speak out publicly, Black ministers investigated scripture and their roots in America finding support for the association between the two. Scriptures such as Luke 4:18-19 provided evidence for their perspective, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Lk. 4:18-19).

James Cone’s personal experiences with the gospel message of Luke the fourth chapter and his life as a Black man in America required further analysis. He nearly left the Christian faith when he heard Malcolm X and the concept of Black power. According to Malcolm X, Christianity was for white people. What then, was a Black Christian to do? Would Cone, a scholar, respond with anger and frustration and give up on his faith or develop a serious theological framework that would marry Black Power and Christianity? Cone chose the latter and began to publish books that theology professor Dwight Hopkins called works, “that said the heart of Jesus Christ... is

¹⁰ Cone, *For My People*, 6.

liberation of the economically poor.”¹¹ One of Cone’s monumental works that compares the theologies and personhoods of Martin King and Malcolm X is entitled, *Martin and Malcolm and America*.

Metaphorical Black street-signs in America that have pointed Black people toward the intersection of the gospel and freedom included, “Richard Allen (founder of the African Methodist Episcopal [AME] Church in 1816)...Nat Turner (a slave Baptist preacher who led an insurrection that killed sixty whites), Henry McNeal Turner (an AME bishop who claimed in 1898 that “God is a Negro”), and many others.”¹² Black Theology was a necessary response to the spiritually demonic and demeaning religion that was connivingly served to Black people as poison in a golden chalice. Today, the patterns remain the same. The need for a program with a Black theological perspective on transforming Black boys to Black men, is as great now, as it was decades ago.

The formal origins of Black Theology can be traced to July 31, 1966, when the National Conference of Black Churchmen (formerly the National Committee of Negro Churchmen) issued the “Black Power Statement,” featured that summer in the New York Times. An excerpt from the opening of the Statement reads,

We, an informal group of Negro churchmen in America, are deeply disturbed about the crisis brought upon our country by historic distortions of important human realities in the controversy about “black power.” What we see shining through the variety of rhetoric is not anything new but the same old problem of power and race which has faced our beloved country since 1619. We realize that neither the term “power” nor the term “Christian conscience” is an easy matter to talk about, especially in the context of race relations in America. The fundamental distortion facing us in the controversy about “black power” is rooted in a gross imbalance of power and conscience between Negroes and white Americans.”¹³

¹¹ Dwight Hopkins, *Black Theology: Essays on Global Perspectives* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 57.

¹² William Jones, *Is God a White Racist?* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1998), viii.

The ministers who collaborated to write the statement, chose courageously to address the issue of race in Christianity as well as the misuse of power by some and the lack of access to power by others. Their words set the course for the creation of Black Theology as well as a new journey toward liberation for Black people. The doctoral project will be an organization that is designed to liberate Black boys as an initial step in charting a new course toward the liberation of Black people.

The following paragraphs will center around: the dominant themes present in the project, the theological issues present in the ministry context, the intersection between Black Theology (as well as classical and modern theologies) and the doctoral project, and will conclude with insights about alterations to the project based upon this new research of Black Theology. The three prominent themes for the doctoral project are a redefinition of “blackness,” justice for the disinherited, and liberation for the oppressed. These themes run concurrent to Black Theology as described by James Cone. Marvin McMickle, one of Cone’s students, later president of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, wrote, “Cone made the case that, while one can be black and Christian, one cannot be a racist or a white supremacist and a Christian. God is working for the liberation of the oppressed, and God’s people must assume that same position.”¹⁴ The Black Theology hermeneutic is rooted in an appreciation for the Black experience (and its similarities to the ancient Jewish Exodus experience), advocating for unjustly treated Black people (a parallel of Jesus service to those in need), and freedom from oppression (Jesus’ mission statement, proclaimed in Luke 4:18, at the start of His final three years of

¹³ James Cone, *Black Theology*, 23.

¹⁴ Marvin McMickle, *A Look at James Cone and Black Theology* (King of Prussia, PA: The Christian Citizen, 2018), 2.

earthly ministry). The doctoral project is centered around the same themes: educating boys about Black life post-Black exodus, advocating for their rights and opportunities as American citizens, and liberating them spiritually, mentally, socially, emotionally, and physically.

Cone defined Black Theology as a “systematic and comprehensive exposition of the Christian faith using the black experience of struggle as the chief source.”¹⁵ This statement requires the clarification of blackness. For Cone, black is identification with oppression. Jesus was Black. “He *is* black because he *was* a Jew. The affirmation of the Black Christ can be understood when the significance of his past Jewishness is related dialectically to the significance of his present blackness.”¹⁶ This definition of black was an ontological affirmation; for other theologians, it was a literal and anthropological one as well. In either case, a definition of black that was less widely known and accepted, had begun to take shape.

James Cones’ definition of Black Liberation Theology was birthed out of a perception of the experiences of Black people during the Civil Rights Era. An awareness of Black life in America is foundational to this expression of Black Theology. The struggle and fight against enslavement, racism, and discrimination that is the daily essence of Black life since its inception in America, is the undergirding force behind the need for Black Theology. Perhaps, if racism had never endured in government legislation, educational opportunity, and socio-economic reality, Black Theology would

¹⁵ Cone, *For My People*, 53.

¹⁶ Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 123.

never have been created.¹⁷ The same could be argued for Christology and soteriology; if not for human sin, the divine sacrifice of Jesus would not have been a necessity.

Unfortunately, a redemptive perspective on Black and White relations as it pertains to scripture, became a vital aspect of religion in America. When a race of people was chained to planks at the bottom of ships, covered in one another's blood, feces, and vomit for months, Black Theology became an eventuality. When enslaved women were raped and taught the fallacy that Jesus' skin was White and that God wanted them to remain slaves, obedient to their masters, Black Theology became necessary. When children, of families too impoverished to afford automobile transportation, found themselves thirsty from a long walk, approached a water fountain and were unable to drink because it read, "Whites Only," Black Theology was born.

The ministry of mentoring Black boys is incomplete without the retelling of such stories that redefine what it means to be Black. In addition, the far more plentiful stories of African kingdoms that have been extracted from history books must be shared. The doctoral project will ensure a precise definition of "black" for Black boys. One practical means to achieve this aim is by sharing a broader context of Black history. Black history begins with world history, as the ancestors of Black people (indigenous Africans) were the first civilized people on earth. Slavery and racism are present-day and recent realities, but the kingdoms of Africa existed far longer and are more important aspects of history.

Black boys must be provided with accurate definitions of what "black" and the black experience are; that slavery and the Civil Rights era were snapshots in time. Black

¹⁷ J. Deotis Roberts, *Black Religion, Black Theology* (New York, NY: Trinity Press, 2003), 45.

heritage has far more examples of conquering kingdoms and medical, scientific, and theological advancement in Africa than it does slavery and discrimination in America. The truth and successes of the Black journey must inform mentorship and identity, as well as theology. James Cone's hermeneutic places the Black experience at the cornerstone of scriptural exegesis. Cone's Black Theology also defines "black" as connecting with the experience of African Americans. This too, is the essence of the doctoral project. Defining the word "black" is the title of a film short to be developed as a part of the doctoral project, and it is grounded in an interpretation of the African American experience.

Cone's Black Theological perspective, as is the case for the second thematic to be used by the doctoral project, is centered around the obtaining of justice for Black people. Cone once raised the poignant question, "How long is it going to take for black people to get justice in America?"¹⁸ The Black theologian takes a step beyond being appalled at the silence of White theologians on racism, and focuses energy instead on the development of Black Christian boys and girls who will recognize injustice in the world and stand up against it. The doctoral project will involve Black boys with the life and thought of W.E.B. DuBois, Malcolm X, Thomas Sankara, and Jesus, each of which modeled resolute resistance to injustice. The mentees in the program are provided tools such as an understanding of police brutality and how to avoid it, the value of voting, and a belief that they can be great attorneys, judges, commissioners, and politicians.

Black people have experienced injustice in America in ways that no other race has. The Jewish holocaust has been publicly acknowledged as one of the greatest

¹⁸ James H. Cone, "God and Black Suffering: Calling the Oppressors to Account," *Anglican Theological Review* 90, no. 4 (2008): 710.

tragedies in recent history. However, statisticians have pointed to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade as having far greater casualties. Basil Davidson estimates that “slavery before and after embarkation,” cost Africa fifty-million people.¹⁹ As a result, a God, as did Jesus, who advocates for the unjustly treated, would likely prioritize the present-day reality of Black people. Such a deity then, would grant power to ministers and leaders of today to bring about the justice of Black people. The doctoral project has the potential to be one of the many sources of this kingdom come.

For Cone, injustice was also prevalent in the church, hence the need for Black Theology. After the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he reached, “a turning point in my life... it was too much of an emotional burden to explain racism to racists, and I had nothing to say to them.”²⁰ James Cone found himself grappling with the tension between his faith and the need to address racism in his community and parish. He stated in *For My People*, “Indeed it was the presence of racism in white churches that forced black theologians to stand up and say, loud and clear: “The white church is not the Christian church!” The defense of this claim gave birth to black theology.”²¹ Black Theology submits that Black power and the gospel are mutually inclusive. In other words, Christianity for Black people must also advocate for Black power.

The third guiding theme of the project is liberation from oppression, also a chief component of Black Theology according to James Cone. The discourse of Black Theology likens the predicament of the Hebrew slaves in ancient Egypt to the condition

¹⁹ Basil Davidson, *Black Mother* (Boston, MA: Atlantic-Little Brown Co., 1961), 80.

²⁰ James Cone, *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018), 34.

²¹ Cone, *For My People*, 52.

of Black people facing slavery and racism in contemporary America. Cone argues that God's protection and vindication of the Israelites as they faced slavery is what God intended to duplicate for Black people, millennia later.

Cone does not explicitly name a present-day Joshua who leads Black people into the Promised Land, as was the case in scripture. However, he does mention Black leaders such as Harriet Tubman and Martin King as potential Moses' for Black people and White slaveholders and supremacists as the Pharaohs of today. Cone points out the similarities between the Israelite liberation and the liberation of Black people in quoting the Exodus story in speeches and published works, as well as songs like "Go Down, Moses."

Go down, Moses, Way down in Egyptland, Tell old Pharaoh To let my people go. When Israel was in Egyptland, Let my people go, Oppressed so hard they could not stand, Let my people go. Go down, Moses, Way down in Egyptland, Tell old Pharaoh, "Let my people go." "Thus saith the Lord," bold Moses said, "Let my people go; If not, I'll smite your first-born dead. Let my people go." Go down, Moses, Way down in Egyptland, Tell old Pharaoh, "Let my people go!"²²

Cone views Jesus as Liberator of the oppressed and sees the work of Jesus to bring about freedom as the dominant theme in scripture. Cone points to the miracles of Jesus such as giving sight to the blind, healing the sick, and serving in impoverished places as examples of biblical liberation of the "least of these" (Matt. 25:45). This theology turns to "the Jesus of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul and of the Spirituals and Gospel Music, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Martin Luther King Jr. This Jesus of the biblical and Black traditions is not a theological concept but a liberating presence in the lives of the poor in their fight for dignity and worth."²³

²² Harriet Tubman, *Go Down Moses* (Hartford, CT: Park Publishing Company, 1850).

²³ Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, xiii.

Black Theology is a theology for Black people, designed to liberate them. The experience of Black people is a pivotal aspect of the theological perspective. To an extent, one might use one eye for the Bible and the other on the stories and history of Black people. On one hand, the Black theologian must be aware of Martin Luther's belief in Jesus being present at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and on the other hand, be aware of Marvin Gaye's words in "What's Goin On?," "Brother, brother, brother. There's far too many of you dying. You know we've got to find a way to bring some lovin' here today, eheh." In a real sense, people are often liberated through the telling of their stories and the stories of their ancestors. As such, Black Theology requiring the Black experience as a foundational topic, is in effect, a pursuit of liberation wherein the pursuit is liberating also.

The challenges for the doctoral project as a dissertation project are to define liberation, develop a program that successfully develops liberation, and to create a model for the measuring and quantification of liberation in Black boys. If liberation of a person or of a race of people is never explicitly defined and agreed upon publicly, can it ever be determined when the goal of liberation is achieved? Once defined, can a process or system be designed to duplicate liberation in the lives of people who desire it? Finally, can liberation be quantified such that progress can be measured, evaluated, and improved upon?

The theological issues located in the doctoral project in large part can be highlighted through a dialogue with Black Theology. The theological implications of mentoring Black boys must begin, as does Black Theology with a God-centered look into the experiences of Black boys. The lens through which ministry to Black boys is done,

requires an understanding of the context of Black boys in order to be effective. What does God have to say about the experience of Black boys in Atlanta? In addition, what are the spiritual and natural needs of Black boys in the context of the mentorship program?

One logical launching pad for theological discussion is the life of Jesus Christ as presented in the Bible. An analysis of the doctoral project and its relation to Black Theology would begin with questions around what Jesus said and did as recorded in the four Gospels. At first glance, Jesus' love for humankind supports the existence of the doctoral project as well as Black Theology; in both cases, a love for Black people was the purposed intention and design. At second glance, Jesus' overwhelming time and energy spent on the oppressed and hurting people of his day and location reveals His priorities, God's priorities. Black Theology and the doctoral mentoring project both advocate for the liberation and empowerment of those who have been left behind and mistreated.

James Cone's definition of Black Theology is not synonymous with all strands of Black Theology. According to the National Committee of Black Churchmen at a 1969 meeting at the Interdenominational Theological Center,

Black Theology is a theology of black liberation. It seeks to plumb the black condition in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, so that the black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the achievement of black humanity. Black Theology is a theology of "blackness." It is the affirmation of black humanity that emancipates black people from white racism, thus providing authentic freedom for both white and black people. It affirms the humanity of white people in that it says No to the encroachment of white oppression. The message of liberation is the revelation of God as revealed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Freedom IS the gospel. Jesus is the Liberator! He... hath sent me to preach deliverance to the captives (Luke 4:18). Thus the black patriarchs and we ourselves know this reality despite all attempts of the white church to obscure it and to utilize Christianity as a means of enslaving blacks. The demand that Christ the Liberator imposes on all men requires all blacks to affirm

their full dignity as persons and all whites to surrender their presumptions of superiority and abuses of power.²⁴

James Cone presented the theological community and the Black community with a more specific explication of Black Theology. Cone's Black Theology, as nobly intentioned and spiritually helpful as it is, however, is not a perfect theological perspective, as scholars including even the founding researcher, James Cone himself, has admitted. In his stream of Black theological consciousness, there are disconnects, contradictions, and illogical lines of reasoning. Authors who have critiqued Black Theology include Joseph Washington, Michael Battle, William Jones, Alistair Kee, J. Deotis Roberts, and George Yancey. The more popular challenges to Cone's brand of Black Theology are his use of the word "black" as synonymous with oppression, the narrowness of Black and White conflict when defined as an entire theological perspective, Cone's advocacy of segregation, the requirement of a liberating event in order to define God as liberator of Black people, and Cone's missing focus on Black women, arguably the most oppressed people on the planet.

James Cone defines Black people as "the Oppressed," even in the title of his 1975 release, *God of the Oppressed*. To define oneself as oppressed can be self-deprecating and mentally defeating. Michael Battle asserted that James Cone "has a weak ecclesiology because in many ways his necessary Black Church continues to promulgate profane structures of racism."²⁵ While Battle's argument was targeting an assumed anti-white perspective in Black Theology, racism can also be targeted internally. It is possible for a Black person to be subconsciously anti-black and as a result, be unconsciously

²⁴ Cone, *Black Theology*, 101.

²⁵ Michael Battle, *The Black Church in America* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 107.

harmful toward oneself. In the way that the bondage of Black people began with the extraction of native language, the insertion of new language creates the beginning of liberation for Black people.

Black is a term, counter to Cone's definition, that cannot be synonymous with powerlessness and oppression. A saying known in Black culture is, "It ain't what they call you. It's what you answer to." To call oneself a derogatory name such as "the Oppressed" is to affirm negativity and failure. Black people have faced oppression, yet should not call themselves "the Oppressed." Black folk should call themselves a more fitting name for children of the Creator and descendants of the founders of human civilization, such as Royalty. Battle continues this argument by saying, "The difference between Tutu and Cone's theological approaches is that for Cone, blackness simultaneously symbolizes oppression and liberation in the Black Church, whereas for Tutu black identity represents the *imago Dei* in which God redeems white identity."²⁶

A second challenge to Black Liberation Theology is the limitation of a perspective of the gospel strictly emerging from Black and white confrontations and conflicts in recent history. Therein, millennia of history around the world is discounted as irrelevant, and instead the few centuries of Black history in America become the foundation for theological understanding. While, it can become a primary hermeneutic for Black preaching, to use it as an entire theological perspective can lead to a narrow consciousness of life, history, and the world. It also denies access to Christianity for those who are neither Black nor White. As Cone critic, George Yancey posits: What of

²⁶ Battle, *The Black Church in America*, 109.

the non-Black minority of Christians? What of the Black Christian who is in a position of power, with oppressive tendencies toward White (or other Black) people?²⁷

Certain aspects of Cone's theology border on the promotion of segregation which is counter to Christian theology. In *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Cone writes, "Even some black people will find this view of God hard to handle. Having been enslaved by the God of white racism so long, they will have difficulty believing that God is identified with their struggle for freedom. Becoming one of his disciples means rejecting whiteness and accepting themselves as they are in all their physical blackness. This is what the Christian view of God means for black people."²⁸

Cone's rejection of whiteness allows little possibility for racial harmony, even at the point which blackness is fully embraced by Black people. One could argue that blackness should be immensely celebrated by Black people and the God of White racism supremely rejected. However, to ignore whiteness completely reduces Black people to the level of White racists. The objective of Black Liberation Theology in its brightest hour might be to be supremely pro-Black without becoming ultimately anti-white.

William Jones writes in *Is God a White Racist?* "When comes the suffering of the oppressed in the first place if God is for the oppressed? How is the origin of black oppression to be accounted for? How is black slavery now to be squared with the claim that God has been and is on the side of blacks?"²⁹ Jones' critique from the foundational concept of theodicy, points to Cone making a potentially subconscious judgment

²⁷ George Yancey, *Beyond Racial Gridlock* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 77.

²⁸ James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 125.

²⁹ Jones, *Is God a White Racist?* 119.

regarding the character of God. Jones argues from the standpoint, is God a murderer or racist, if God allows the murder of and racism toward Black people without equal redemption, thus far? However, the time sensitivity of current-day leaves room for error. It could be argued that the appointed time for complete, earthly liberation for Black people has not yet come. It could be argued that, in chronological comparison to the story of the Hebrews emerging from Egypt, Black people are still in the wilderness.

The absence of a liberating event that would resemble the Israelite exodus or the resurrection of Jesus leaves Cone's theology incomplete. Without a liberating event, can Black Theology truly be a theology of liberation? Joseph Washington raises the points: if the eschaton is to be the liberating event, Black Theology is more likely farce. Should Black people be seen as "suffering-servants" or as useless creations? God's potential disdain or preference for Black people is equally probable. Without the apocalyptic moment, there is no way to prove whether God desires for Black people to be in bondage or will one day liberate Black people.³⁰ If Black people one day became totally liberated (which appears to be the objective), what follows? The Kingdom of God would be at hand? Furthermore, when some Black people are saved from oppression, do they then no longer have the protection of a God who is on the side of the oppressed? Do they become oppressors? One could assume that the formerly oppressed would then become more powerful agents for liberation, but Cone does not clarify this.

Cone also does not highlight the liberation of Black women (or other colored women, "mujeristas") sufficiently. The valid argument of womanism is that Black women are the most oppressed of the oppressed. The informed Black woman can have a

³⁰ Joseph Washington, *The Politics of God* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1969).

conceptuality of theology that all men, and even white women are unable to grasp. The first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, Jacquelyn Grant, teaches her students of the “triple jeopardy” that Black women experience.³¹ Black women constantly struggle against the double challenges of racism and classism as do Black men. However, the third battle is against gender discrimination. Black women are the most oppressed of Black people, how can their oppression as a subset of Black culture not be more prominently addressed? Black theology is only viable when it addresses the most valuable asset of Black humanity, the Black woman.

James Cone’s book, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, juxtaposes the cross of Jesus Christ two thousand years ago and the trees from which hung a ‘strange fruit’ in the form of Black men and women as recently as a few years from the time of this writing. The similarities between the two public executions include color of skin, innocence, and demonic inspiration on the part of the murderers. Jesus crucifixion forever exists as a singular moment in human history that changed religion, faith, the lives of Christians, and the world. However, to place the lynching tree at the side of the Cross can illustrate the commonality of the Black experience and the ministry and life of Jesus Christ.

Black Theology has served the great purpose of giving voice to the voiceless, allowing the unspoken stories and unpublicized truths of Black men and women to finally be heard. The tragedies of lynching, rape, murder, and humiliation can be redeemed through the hearing of the stories and through the power of the Cross. The value of a Black theological perspective is in giving deserved attention to the pains and joys of the

³¹ Jacquelyn Grant, “Womanism,” lecture, Interdenominational Theological Center, October 4, 2013.

Black experience. Without it, theology would be incomplete for the world and dangerous for Black people.

Cone's Black Theology has served as an intellectual resource and gift of courage with which to attack White hegemony. All Black theologians and Black Christians were naturally Black before they were spiritually Christian, most also believe they will one day no longer have brown skin, but be spiritual citizens of Heaven. Black Theology allows a race of people to be both, "unashamedly Black and unapologetically Christian."³² In the way that Black Liberation Theology recognizes that Jesus was fully God and fully man, Black believers are better able to be fully Christian and fully Black. When stained-glass windows at churches across America have the sinister and manipulative images of a White Jesus, Black Theology says, "No." When white evangelicals promote the idea that racism ended with slavery or during the Civil Rights Era, Black Theology says, "No." When police brutality persists and the response of Black preachers is to ignore it and not fight back or not shoot first, Black Theology says, "No."

The doctoral mentoring project will advocate for the Black community, and is in fact an organization specifically tailored for that pursuit. However, latitude must be made available for the reconciliation of races, if the potential for it were to emerge, a clear adherence to the message of Jesus. Scripture articulates the most significant concept for Christian believers is to love God, and love others as one loves oneself. The key principle is love for others that measures up to self-love. D. Westfield, author of *The Proposal* writes,

The golden rule reminds us to, "Love others as you love yourself." Notice the final four words of this classic life prescription, "...as you love yourself."

³² Lee Hall-Perkins, *Unashamedly Black, Unapologetically Christian* (Nashville, TN: FaithFirst Press, 2016), 10.

Legendary wisdom appears to indicate that loving yourself is something of a no-brainer, possibly an expectation, as if to say, “Of course you love yourself, so focus on loving others in the same way.” It implies that loving others is only possible with the prerequisite of loving self.³³

As such, “self” can be loosely translated as one’s own community. To develop a love for the Black community should be a priority for Black people. At the point at which that love is solidified, love for others’ communities, as one’s own, can flourish. In fact, practically, it is impossible to give what one does not have. In order to love another race fully, it is required to love one’s own race, initially.

The doctoral project, rooted in many of the strains of Black Theology, can be described as too revolutionary or too black. Some critics may argue that slavery is history, racism no longer exists, Black people need to get over it. Alistair Kee, writes in *Rise and Demise of Black Theology*, issuing a “call on Black theologians to move on for the sake of the black poor. First of all for the sake of poor blacks in the USA. They are not interested in Black theology, nor are the Black churches.”³⁴ Jewish Holocaust victims are seldom admonished to forget about their perspectives or historic tragedies. Black theologians, too, will continue to lift the veil over racism by remembering stories such as:

When a mob in Valdosta Georgia, in 1918 failed to find Sidney Johnson accused of murdering his boss, Hampton Smith, they decided to lynch another black man, Haynes Turner, who was known to dislike Smith. Turner’s wife, Mary, who was eight months pregnant, protested vehemently and vowed to seek justice for her husband’s lynching. The sheriff, in turn, arrested her and then gave her up to the mob. In the presence of a crowd that included women and children, Mary Turner was “stripped, hung upside down by the ankles, soaked with gasoline, and roasted to death. In the midst of this torment, a white man opened her swollen belly with a hunting knife and her infant fell to the ground and was stomped to death.”³⁵

³³ D. Westfield, *The Proposal* (Columbia, SC: Createspace, 2014), 1.

³⁴ Alistair Kee, *Rise and Demise of Black Theology* (London, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 45.

In 2015, Sandra Bland, a twenty-eight-year-old Black woman was arrested during a traffic stop in Waller County, Texas. The exchange between her and the State Trooper was related to a traffic violation and escalated when Sandra felt her rights were being violated. After three days in county jail, Sandra Bland was found hanged in her jail cell. The officer was later fired for perjury in court when the case was investigated.³⁶

In the cases of Mary Turner and Sandra Bland, both Black women were innocent, brutalized, and killed mercilessly in ways that White women are not. To deny the fact that race is involved, would be absurd. To pretend that a voice and fist are not the minimal answers Black people must respond with, is equally as confused. Mary and Sandra are inspirations for the doctoral, mentoring project. It is an expectation that the young men of tomorrow will be better prepared than those of this generation and generations before to ensure that the Mary and Sandra of tomorrow are protected from such brutal racism.

Claude McKay, Caribbean poet, speaking to the lynching and murder of Black people in 1919 wrote:

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
 Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
 While around us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
 Making their mock at our accursed lot.
 If we must die, O let us nobly die,
 So that our precious blood may not be shed
 In vain; then even the monsters we defy
 Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
 O kinsmen! We must meet the common foe!
 Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
 And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!
 What though before us lies the open grave?

³⁵ James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 120.

³⁶ Kate Davis, "Say Her Name: The Life and Death of Sandra Bland," video, 2018.

Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!³⁷

The curriculum for the doctoral project echoes the sentiments of McKay, with a brighter hope for victory, living, and fighting back, no longer pressed to the wall, but winning the war against racism. Black Theology demands the vindication of the downtrodden and liberation from oppression for Black people. Black Child Liberation Theology is a paradigmatic shift from a focus on the traumas of the Black experience to a spotlight on the triumphs. Black Child Liberation Theology is the affirmation of a present, real Black liberation that is quantifiable, recalling an ancient conquering history and founding of human civilization in Africa, highlighting a greatness that has always and always will exist around the world, by the grace of God, seen most incredibly in the life of Jesus Christ. Such a mantra is gospel for Black people. It serves as a banner for The Young Kings Mentorship Program. This journey in freedom must continue until the day when Black people and all races see, as Black theologians often quote, “justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24).

³⁷ Jean Wagner, *Black Poets of the United States: From Paul Laurence Dunbar to Langston Hughes* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 229-30.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

To deepen the academic appeal for The Young Kings Mentorship Program, in addition to the theological precept, an interdisciplinary foundation can be added. An appropriate interdisciplinary foundation for the doctoral project is the field of sociology, specifically, the sociology of race and ethnic relations. Sociology is a fascinating discipline focalized on the scientific study of society. The way in which people interact in groups, when analyzed through the lens of empirical data, can be understood and developed. Without sociological insight, social inequality in the form of racism, residential segregation, and legalized discrimination can dangerously, be ignored, undetected, or inaccurately addressed. Not only for scholarly evidence but merely in order to effectively execute a youth mentorship program for Black boys in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia such as The Young Kings Mentorship Program, a dive into the sociology of race and ethnic relations will prove beneficial.

The forecast of the project is that a liberating curriculum and strategic mentorship are a means to ensuring spiritual, mental, emotional, social, and physical freedom for Black boys. Black boys exemplify behaviors in the contexts of school, home, and outside of home and school that can be more deeply understood with sociological research. Using research related to an appropriate sociology of race and ethnic relations theory, a curriculum and mentorship combination can be created that can quantify spiritual,

mental, emotional, social, and physical freedom, accurately assess Black boys' developmental levels, and further their progress and growth. Sociology is a method of science that seeks to comprehend how and why humans behave the way they do in a group context.¹

The interdisciplinary theory that contributes to the project is a concept popularized by sociological theorist, thinker, and Renaissance man, Dr. William Edward Burghardt DuBois, namely, that race is the pivotal issue in American culture. DuBois writes in the forethought of his classic work, *Souls of Black Folks*, “for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line.”² Gentle readers of this work, written in the twenty first century, can find that the race and ethnicity problem DuBois spoke of persisted one-hundred years after DuBois' writings. It is a bright hope that the twenty second century locates American culture in general having made strides toward racial equity and equality, and Black folks, in specificity, atop whatever racial stratifications that yet exist.

The “color-line” problem, better known as the issues resulting from racial misidentifications, have an overwhelming, malignant affect that is uniquely experienced by Black people. W.E.B. DuBois clarified this reality with these words,

A world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history

¹ Stuart Hall, *Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance* (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996), 5.

² W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1903), iv.

of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self.³

The task of The Young Kings Mentorship Program is to reconcile the two strivings that exist inside Black boys and to realize a deeper consciousness and truer self that is the essence of spiritual, mental, emotional, social, and physical freedom. It is important to distinguish the terms related to DuBois' race and ethnicity theory: race, ethnicity, phenotype, racism, and prejudice at the outset of this essay. Unconsciously, in many cases, there are social designations made between groups of people based upon the three terms. Each term can define a grouping used to facilitate a particular means of discrimination in biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary.

Phenotype relates, specifically, to skin tone and color. The color of skin serves as a means to place a person in a particular group (race or ethnicity), but is often inaccurate. For example, there are people who appear to be White, but have one Black parent, or people who appear to be Black, but have two Dominican (Hispanic) or Panamanian (Hispanic) parents. Ethnicity is a designation that relates to cultural lineage, biological ancestry, and geographical heritage of a person or group of people, having to do with DNA, not labels. Race is a personality-driven label defined differently by different social sects, used to form groups by ethnicity, phenotype, and or self-interest. Some groups use race to define themselves as supreme and to demean other social groups, often in order to maintain psychological and economic advantage (race also meaning a literal contest).

Racism and prejudice are terms often used interchangeably, though each word has a specific definition. Racism is the use of power to discriminate against a group of people, simply because of their race, ethnicity, or phenotype. Prejudice is merely to pre-

³ Du Bois. *The Souls of Black Folk*, 19.

judge someone based upon their appearance, behavior, or assumed cultural background. Prejudice does not require power, only a judgement of someone else. Racism exists when power is used to discriminate or negatively affect a person because of a label placed on them. A White woman holding her purse on an elevator because a Black man enters is prejudice. A White female police officer shooting an unarmed Black man, as in the case of Botham Shem Jean in Dallas, Texas (yet another illegal police shooting, merely a few days prior to the writing of this essay) is racism. The power of the police badge being used to discriminate is what creates a racist act, as opposed to a powerless judgement of a person because of their appearance, behavior, or assumed cultural background.

Why the sociology of race and ethnicity? This discipline focuses in on the societal ill of racism, America's original sin. W.E.B. DuBois' race theory popularized in the 1890's is naturally married to the biblical subject of the B.C.E. Israelites written about in Joshua 1:5-9, the historical subject of oppressed Black people during the Reconstruction in 1870, and the theological subject of the formation of Black Theology in the 1960's, as well as the methodology behind mentoring Black boys in present-day. Across the four connectives, the theme of freedom and liberation prevails.

This chapter will be presented in three correlative sections, W.E.B. DuBois' race theory being juxtaposed with the three different foundational concepts of the doctoral project. In the first section, DuBois' race theory is connected to the project themes of fighting racism, racial pride, and earning a formal education. The second section relates DuBois concept to the biblical foundation of Joshua 1:5-9, wherein the people of Israel are lead into freedom after facing bondage in Egypt, primarily because of their ethnicity.

The third section conjoins DuBois' theory with the historical foundation of the Reconstruction Period, a time when Black people first became legally emancipated in America. The fourth section interfaces with the theological foundation of Black theology, a theological framework that focuses on the liberation of oppressed Black people. The significant commonality in the leadership of Joshua, the Reconstruction Period, and Black theology is that the foci is not emerging from slavery and bondage, but the realization of power, the liberating event and deepening of freedom.

W.E.B. DuBois was a pioneering Black doctoral graduate of Harvard University, architect of the concept of urban sociology, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and Pan-Africanism. This polymath of American history was also a historian, author, activist, editor, educator, and even a candidate for the U.S. Senate in New York. His more popular legacy includes theories such as the "Talented Tenth" and his opposition to Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Compromise.⁴

The premise of DuBois' "Talented Tenth," was that among the entire population of Black people, ten percent should be termed the elite. For him, a glance into the Black community across America made obvious the fact that only one of every ten Black people was of high repute, character, and ability. DuBois argued that his statistical concept was due in large part to the remnants of an enslavement experience. In order for Black people to rise to a position of prominence as a race, a select few good men and women would be called upon to lead the charge. Theoretically, this group was to be the leading Blacks who would carry the torch of educational supremacy, political

⁴ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Conservation of Races* (New York, NY: American Negro Academy, 1897), 4.

involvement, and guidance for as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. challengingly defined it, “the untalented 90 per cent.” The “Luke Theorem” would serve as a reference point for DuBois’ expectations of educated Black people.⁵ In Luke 12:48, the following words can be found, “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded” (Lk.12:48).

DuBois’ concept was received as bourgeoisie and counter to Black unity and solidarity. In essence, DuBois was engaging in a form of inter-community segregation against his own people. His intentions appeared solid, however, his methods seemed questionable to some Black leaders of his day. While an elitist mentality undoubtedly does more harm than good, it holds true that all movements are led by a few people who mobilize many.

Booker T. Washington, advisor to Theodore Roosevelt, author of *Up From Slavery*, and president of Tuskegee Institute, delivered a speech, later known as the Atlanta Compromise as an unspoken agreement between Black and White people in America. The agreement was that Black people would not be able to vote, fight against discriminatory behavior, would accept segregation, and be limited to industrial training and education as a means to pacify the onslaught of racism. DuBois strongly disagreed with this line of thought and suggested three concepts, instead: that Black people fight racism, have a high sense of racial pride, and be formally educated. DuBois’ three race theory concepts shape the doctoral project and have provided deeper insight for the way in which the project can be operated.

⁵ M. Dennis, “Du Bois and the Role of the Educated Elite,” *Journal of Negro Education* (1977): 388-402.

The first of the aforementioned DuBois concepts, fighting racism, has become a significant aspect of the program. According to W.E.B. Dubois, the fight against racism can be waged by the creation of organizations (such as the NAACP and Negro Academy) that are designed to empower Black people to use collective resources to protest injustice and protect citizenship rights. The project, The Young Kings Mentorship Program, is an organization designed for that very purpose. The organizational structure includes combining the resources of Black men to empower Black boys. Their presence, mentorship, and encouragement are a means of providing young men with the tools necessary to stand up for justice and equitable American citizenship.

One tool that Black boys in The Young Kings Mentorship Program are given is an understanding of how to handle encounters with the police. Increasingly in present-day, police stops have become homicides, unarmed Black men and women becoming victims of illegal police work. The Black boys are taught that they are citizens of a country wherein they have unalienable rights and are deserving of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. They are educated that they will encounter police officers who do not comprehend their rights and seek to deny them. The strategic response to this form of racism is presented in two simple steps.

The first step is to take all identification photos while wearing business attire: a grey or navy-blue suit, white shirt, and dark colored necktie. Some of the first judgements a police officer makes on a citizen during a traffic stop are based upon the driver's license. A suit and necktie are professional attire that are non-threatening to fearful, trigger happy officers. Business attire also points to the likelihood that a prosecuting attorney who will advocate for the citizen, is affordable.

The second step is to strategically, temporarily suspend anger and ego. If the police officer's behavior warrants chastisement, the power pendulum will swing in the citizen's favor in a courtroom, not in the street. To paraphrase ancient, legendary, Asian military strategist Sun Tzu, "Never enter into battle until victory is sure."⁶ The Young Kings Mentorship Program mentees are taught to be emotionally mature, letting pride and frustration emerge at the appropriate time. An engagement with police, who have the advantage of a badge, a gun, and the letter of the law, is unfair if confrontation would surface. Instead, the boys are taught to respond respectfully, follow instructions and attack with a social media campaign, legal counsel, and other subversive activity when the officer is off-duty; when victory is sure.

The second DuBoisian concept that has been wedded to as well as brought new insight to The Young Kings Mentorship Program is the value of racial pride. Boys in the mentorship program are called Young Kings, to give honor to who they are and from whence they come. The mentees are instructed about the fact that they are descendants of African kings and queens, founders of human civilization. In order to have racial pride, to be proud of one's heritage and people, one must become aware of where they are from. The mentees find a great source of pride in learning words from an indigenous African language, Swahili. As they learn new words and the achievements of those who created the words, they realize that they are part of a rich legacy, one to be immensely proud of.

The boys involved in the doctoral project are creating a short video wherein they redefine the word Black. In English dictionaries across the globe, a false definition appears, as is found in Merriam-Webster, the self-proclaimed, "America's most-trusted

⁶ Sun-Tzu and Samuel B. Griffith, *The Art of War* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1964), 77.

online dictionary:” “dirty, soiled... thoroughly sinister or evil... very sad, gloomy... marked by occurrence of disaster... characterized by hostility or angry discontent, characterized by grim, distorted, or grotesque humor...”⁷

The short video features the Black boys each having the opportunity to share an adjective that defines the word Black. One by one they vocalize adjectives in alphabetical order from A to Z and then from Z to A. Words that emerge in the video include, powerful, love, great, beautiful, strong, and faithful. In this way, the boys find themselves not only identifying with being Black, but being proud to be Black.

A third concept popularized by W.E.B. DuBois is the significance of formal education. The Young Kings Mentorship Program meets at a school, by design. The objective is for the boys to become comfortable in a scholarly environment, even outside of regular school hours. The program also provides tutoring services for boys that are struggling in certain subject areas. Each young man is reminded that the secrets of the world are often found on the written page. For the mentees, reading is not only fundamental, it is also, pure fun. Their textual lineage predominately includes the Black authorship of Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, Jawanza Kunjufu, John Henrick Clarke, Malcolm X, Frances Cress Welsing, and Zora Neale Hurston.

The doctoral project was birthed at the KIPP STRIVE school in Atlanta, one of several KIPP charter schools that focus on matriculation through college. Throughout the halls of the school, banners from colleges are attached to the walls and doors. Upon entering the school each day, the boys are exposed to the concept of college and the numerous choices for higher education that are available. Each year a trip to the Atlanta

⁷ Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary, “black,” accessed September 10, 2018, <https://www.google.com/search?q=webster%27s+dictionary>.

University Center is an optional field trip for the young boys. A greater emphasis is placed on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), such as Florida A&M University, Hampton University, Morehouse College, Howard University, or the Interdenominational Theological Center. While college in and of itself is not a priority, as education can be obtained without a degree, the Black College experience is one that every Black person with the opportunity, should take.

The dominant race theories of W.E.B. DuBois, excluding the “Talented Tenth” theory, directly coincide with The Young Kings Mentorship Program. DuBois’ theories and the biblical foundations of the project also overlap in similar fashion. Joshua 1:5-9 is the biblical text that undergirds the project. The book of Joshua opens with a people who, similar to those spoken for by W.E.B. DuBois, have obtained freedom. This ethnic group was bound by their ancestral connection to Abraham and their expected devotion to Jehovah. Their newly found freedom, following captivity in Egypt would require a new way of thinking.

This resembled the sociological leanings of DuBois who advocated for sound thought, opposing the teachings of his chronological colleague, Marcus Garvey. Garvey did not hold a doctorate from Harvard University, nor did he serve as professor at Atlanta University, as did DuBois, and DuBois chastised him for it. The argument DuBois waged, was that Garvey’s line of thinking was not sufficient for the salvation of a race of people. Though the Universal Negro Improvement Association was a Pan-African concept that DuBois strongly held, the failure of Garvey’s ‘Back to Africa’ steamships and the Black Star Line added weight to his opinion that Garvey was not up for the task. DuBois could have realized that his and Garvey’s work was not mutually exclusive, but

complementary, necessary, and could have accomplished far more from acceptance and appreciation of each other.⁸

DuBois reshaped my understanding of Joshua, who, unlike DuBois, had no alternate theories or leadership styles to contend with. He was the sole guide, pastor, and authority for the Israelite people. While, he was second-in-command to God and the successor of Moses, he was given exclusive charge of an entire people. Joshua, like DuBois, recognized the significance of racial pride, solidarity, and working toward the uplifting of his people. Joshua read the book of the law, day and night, DuBois read books of wide variety with similar consistency.

DuBois was well read in order to address an all-encompassing subject such as sociology. For Joshua, there was a singular pivotal issue, taking the land that God promised his Jewish brothers and sisters. Joshua's goal was to ensure the success and dominion of one race, namely the Hebrew people. However, in both cases, there was still the same central and foundational issue, race.

DuBois writes in his essay *The Conservation of Races*:

The history of the world is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races, and he who ignores or seeks to override the race idea in human history ignores and overrides the central thought of all history. What, then, is race? It is a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life.⁹

For DuBois, race was central to his worldview. God's message to Joshua in verse six of the first chapter of Joshua specifies a group of people, also, "Be strong and

⁸ David Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Reader* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1995), 5.

⁹ Du Bois, *The Conservation of Races*, 2.

courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them” (Jos. 1:6).

Joshua is admonished by God to be strong, “chazaq” in order to be a conduit for the provision of a race of people, the Israelites.¹⁰ Clearly, God has a chosen race of people who are meant to conquer a land and carry out the will of God. The Hebrew people would have to face other races, from Egyptians to Midianites, but their victory was assured, and Joshua’s confidence did not waver. W.E.B. DuBois appears to have a similar confidence about the Black race when he writes in *The Negro Problems*,

There is slowly arising not only a curiously strong brotherhood of Negro blood throughout the world, but the common cause of the darker races against the intolerable assumptions and insults of Europeans has already found expression. Most men in this world are colored. A believe in humanity means a belief in colored men. The future world will, in all reasonable probability, be what colored men make it. In order for this colored world to come into its heritage, must the earth again be drenched in the blood of fighting, snarling human beasts, or will Reason and Good Will prevail? That such may be true, the character of the Negro race is the best and greatest hope; it in its normal condition it is at once the strongest and gentlest of the races of men: “Semper novi quid ex Africa!”¹¹

DuBois closing sentence is a Latin expression for “Out of Africa something new comes forth!” This expression held true for Joshua and the Israelite people embarking on “something new” in the Bronze Age II, and the same can be said for The Young Kings Program in Atlanta.

Upon researching DuBois’ sociology of race and ethnicity theories, further illumination regarding the historical foundation for the project appeared. Interestingly, DuBois’ was the single most influential historian for the Reconstruction Period. His

¹⁰ Francis Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 452.

¹¹ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Negro* (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1915), 6.

monumental text, *Black Reconstruction in America*, likely altered the global perspective on the Black experience, post-Emancipation Proclamation. The Reconstruction period, the twelve years between 1865 and 1877, was a time when Black people transitioned from the position of chattel slavery to holding positions in U.S. government. DuBois, a socialist, maintained the theory slavery and racism, were and are fueled by capitalism.

Freedom for Black people during the Reconstruction Period was only the result of a capitalistic endgame, not the hand of justice or the changed heart of immoral people. For DuBois, the end of slavery, just as the beginning of slavery, was ultimately about money. Slavery was instituted by lazy, barbaric men and women greedy to become wealthy. The objective behind slavery was primarily capitalistic; racism served as the vehicle through which to arrive at wealth.¹²

Some enslaved Africans assumed that Abraham Lincoln found the integrity and character to end slavery out of the kindness of his heart. Instead, his goal was to maintain the Union, the unity and development of a capitalistic country. Slavery was beneficial for a time to produce that outcome. Eventually, it became a hindrance, and had to be eliminated. The racist institution of slavery was vicious, and evil, but it was not the priority, money was and is. Profit was to be obtained by any means necessary. If slavery contributed to the financial bottom line, it was legal, if not, it became illegal.

W.E.B. DuBois argued that capitalism was an ill that led to racism, and advocated for socialism and the equal sharing of all resources amongst all people. One of DuBois' contemporaries, Prussia born sociologist Karl Marx, developed a translation of capitalism wherein there are two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. DuBois agreed that the

¹² Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 54.

bourgeoisie controlled the means of production and the working class, the proletariat labored to build the profit-driven industries. For Marx and DuBois, the objective of socialism was for the working class to revolt and fight for socio-economic equality.

DuBois suggested that socio-economic inequality was a central issue of the Reconstruction, not only from this two-class perspective, but because it fanned the flames of racial hatred. He wrote in a 1910 article in the *American Historical Review*: “Property in slaves to the extent of perhaps two thousand million dollars had suddenly disappeared. One thousand five hundred more millions, representing the Confederate war debt, had largely disappeared. Large amounts of real estate and other property had been destroyed, industry had been disorganized.”¹³

The effect of such an economic catastrophe on Southern whites created an intense hatred for Black people in this new American civilization. The “Black Codes” were written and unspoken racist rules designed to provide Whites with economic advantages. This proved a difficult time for the newly freed African people. Temporarily, the Freedmen’s Bureau assisted, and Black schools also became a safe haven for Black people. However, the most significant source of help was the Black church. Perhaps unbeknownst to them, Black pastors became proponents of an uncertified Black Liberation Theology by the actions they took.

The work of Black Theology as a discipline is a fitting reference for the sociology of race and ethnicity, as both subjects directly address the issue of race in America. The subject of race has, unfortunately, remained a premier issue due to personal hatred, fear, and insecurity among White citizens. It has also reared its ugly head in the public square,

¹³ W. E. B. Du Bois, *American Historical Review: Reconstruction and Its Benefits* (New York, NY: American Historical Association, 1909), 1.

even being justified by scientific models such as German naturalist, Johann Blumenbach's who revised *On the Natural Variety of Man*, agreeing with Carolus Linneaus' *Systema Naturae*, that there are four subdivisions of humankind. The four categories are, Americanus, Europaeus, Asiaticus, and Afer, or African. Blumenbach elaborated on this scheme, identifying five "races," the first and most perfect being, in his coinage, "Caucasian."¹⁴

In an environment where legal systems, educational systems, and even scientific theories are discriminatory vehicles against Black people, there is a need for a theology that uplifts them. This necessity existed as W.E.B. DuBois wrote about the sociology of race and ethnicity, and it exists today, as The Young Kings Mentorship Program continues to operate. However, a time in human history when such a theology was developed was in the 1960s and 1970s, and the primary public researcher was Dr. James Cone.

Black Theology is the child of Black Consciousness.¹⁵ Black Theology is a theological response to the Black Power Movement. The church has a responsibility to not only participate but lead in radical social change. As Steve Biko put it in *Black Consciousness and the Quest for True Humanity*, the crisis in which blacks find themselves also includes that of a theological language.¹⁶ German theologian, Theo Wivliet writes, with a hint of sarcasm, "But why must black people continue to carry the traumas of their past around with them? Does this not stand in the way of... their working

¹⁴ G. Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1968), 24.

¹⁵ Mosala Itumeleng and Buti Tlhagale, *The Unquestionable Right to be Free: Black Consciousness Movement: Its Impact on Black Theology* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 57.

¹⁶ Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like* (London, UK: Bowerdean, 1978), 22, 23.

towards a better future?”¹⁷ Black Theology is not about holding fast to historical trauma, but about ultimate success over historical trauma. Remembering the Good Friday Cross and subsequent weekend in Jesus Christ’s life is not about carrying trauma of the past, it is about celebrating sacrifice and resurrection. The definition of the Akan, Ghanaian word, Sankofa, provides wisdom for German theologians to consider, “It is not wrong to go back and get what you forgot.”

Black theology has often been attributed to the leanings of James Hal Cone. Other scholars attribute it to W.E.B. Dubois. Joseph Evans writes, “I believe that DuBois is the father of black liberation theology.”¹⁸ In addition, there are numerous streams of thought that are substrata of Black Theology. Cone’s contemporaries in Black Theology include Joseph Washington, Jacquelyn Grant, Albert Cleage, Cecil Cone, Gayraud Wilmore, J. Deotis Roberts, and William Jones. In addition, Black Theology is inclusive of more than the theories of Cone and his Black contemporaries in America, but of Black theologians around the world, especially in Africa, such as Itumeleng Mosala. Black Theology must include the Black experiences of praying together in the hush harbors of the South in the 1700s and the celebratory shouting in the streets of Soweto at the end of apartheid. For Black Theology to be truly Black, it must connect the colorful dashikis worn in downtown Accra with the Air Jordan sneakers worn in the inner-city neighborhoods of America.

The sociology of race and ethnicity, in its varying streams of perspective, connects to Black Theology in ways that, in comparison, it does not align with any other

¹⁷ Theo Witvliet, *The Way of the Black Messiah* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1987), 181.

¹⁸ Joseph Evans, *Lifting the Veil Over Eurocentrism* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2014), 56.

theology. Black Theology directly addresses social issues and societal change, specifically as they relate to race, ethnicity, and phenotype. A legendary sociologist, educator pastor, and inspiration for this project, Dr. Ozzie L. Edwards wrote in a 1972 article in the *Journal of Black Studies*,

Of the several criteria by which Americans are stratified, none bears greater significance than skin color. The rigidity of norms separating blacks and whites still approaches that of a caste system. One obvious reason for the significance of skin color as a basis of social stratification is the ease with which it may be applied. Where color has been used extensively as a basis of discrimination, it becomes an appropriate surrogate for other, more functional criteria of stratification such as education, occupation, and income.¹⁹

It is at the intersection of race and injustice where the need for the doctoral project, The Young Kings Mentorship Program becomes deeply apparent. Race, ethnicity, and phenotype have been pivotal subjects in American discourse. Skin color matters. The objective is not to be color blind, but to be color appreciative, not to deny the creativity of God, but to be grateful for it. While it is hopeful that one day the world will view its inhabitants as one race, the human race; White phenotype supremacy must be eradicated in any form, stemming from White people or from Black people. As Zora Neale Hurston once said, “All my skin folk ain’t my kin folk.” The Black Boys in The Young Kings Mentorship Program are taught the sociology of race and ethnicity perspective that Black is not merely about skin color or heritage, it is also a state of mind and being. To be Black means being holy, righteous, kind, powerful, great, loving, brilliant, self-aware, liberating, and free.

It is the objective of The Young Kings Mentorship Program to use the insights of W.E.B. DuBois’ sociology of race and ethnicity to create a model of mentorship that

¹⁹ Ozzie L. Edwards, “Skin Color as a Variable in Racial Attitudes of Black Urbanites,” *Journal of Black Studies* (1973): 473-483.

empowers an entire generation of boys to be strong, courageous and liberated. I side with DuBois' *Negro Academy* creed, lacking in title, but substantive in theory; to paraphrase it:

We believe that Black people, as a race, have a contribution to make to civilization and humanity, which no other race can make... we, as Black folks, are resolved to strive in every honorable way for the realization of the best and highest aims, for the development of strong manhood and pure womanhood, and for the rearing of a race ideal in America and Africa, to the glory of God and the uplifting of all Black people.²⁰

²⁰ Du Bois, *The Conservation of Races*, 1.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundations indicated a precedence for the concept Black Child Liberation Theology: A Contemporary Christian Model for Mentoring Black Boys. The project, The Young Kings Mentorship Program, sought to address this problem of despondency among Black boys who are faced with lack of positive reinforcement from godly Black men and women. The authentic desire of men, and one certainly could add, women, to encourage, role model for, and teach boys (as well as girls) alone, can serve as a powerful source of motivation and determination to achieve. The crestfallenness experienced by Black boys across America surfaces in the form of poor educational test scores, pursuit of financial gain in criminal enterprises as the only means available, lack of respect for and protection of Black girls and women, as well as a tendency to avoid Christian church and organized religion. Fortunately, the pattern is currently reversing.

The historical, biblical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundations that undergird the doctoral project have greatest intersection in the word, concept, and reality of freedom. The concept of freedom that runs through each of the four foundations, is a Christian theme, a Black theme, an American theme, and a gift that has been the deepest experience for the writer. The project, The Young Kings Mentorship Program, was one of many ministries that are to be created to empower Black young men, and all people,

with a tangible and intangible liberation. The interconnectivity highlighted in the significance of freedom; a freedom obtained through mentoring, is much like the disciples mentored by Christ, or doctoral candidates mentored by seminary professors.

The biblical foundation for the project is birthed out of the culminating book of the Hexateuch, Joshua, chapter one, verses five through nine. The five initial verses of Joshua, a Hebrew territory vanquishing narrative, recount a monologue between God and Joshua. Joshua listens, while God teaches. In essence, God gives a series of promises, guidance, and encouragement concerning Joshua's next steps and destiny as leader of Israel. His new role as warrior, pastor, servant, commander, and mentor to his people would be an integral aspect of their success in overtaking Palestinian lands during the thirteenth century B.C.

The Hebrew people, forty years freed from Egyptian bondage under the direction of legendary lawgiver, Moses, would need direction, faith, and a formidable sense of heroism. That inner strength could only be given by God. Moses received it and shared it with the people of Israel, resulting in their release from captivity. Joshua found himself next in line as Israel would take charge of their own land, transitioning from a transient, nomadic people, to a conquering people, a liberated people. This theme permeates The Young Kings Mentorship Program. In a real sense, the counsel of God and God's chosen leadership liberated the lives of thousands and altered the course of history. The task of the mentors in the program is to remain guided by God and to bestow that divine instruction on those who need and desire it. The liberation of Black boys and girls and the occupation of new territories, spiritual and physical is the ultimate goal.

The biblical precept points to significant distinctions seldom made in the rendering of exegesis of the Joshua text. The first, is that the protagonist of the story is not Joshua but is God. In other words, the triumph of the Israelite people begins and ends not with Joshua, but with God. The book begins, climaxes, and ends on the routing of evil, by God. The second, is that the Hebrew people were already free from slavery at the opening verses of Joshua. They had not annexed their own territory yet, but they possessed the ability to subdue their enemies. Israel needed mostly, a leader and voice to enable them to attain authentic liberation.

The experience of the Hebrew people parallels that of modern-day Black children. Physical slavery in America, though still expressed in the prison industrial complex via the thirteenth amendment as well as in human sex trafficking in the underbelly of urban cities, is not nearly as destructive as it was two centuries ago. We have emerged from the quicksand of Egyptian bondage and now stand on the solid embankment of freedom. However, many Black children do not have a figure like Joshua to mentor them through the invasion of American territory. In order to overthrow racial injustice, underdeveloped educational environments, and systemic financial disenfranchisement, Black children need modern day promises from God and championing of the servant of God. The development of a strategically designed curriculum that promotes the liberating laws of God and the guidance of men and women of God is a solution for the challenges faced by the nomadic, transient Black child in America.

The historical foundation for the project, the Reconstruction Period, occurred during 1865-1877, and was a climactic experience for African Americans of the nineteenth century. On the heels of the Civil War, Africans in America embarked on

freedom from slavery and legal U.S. citizenship. As did the Israelites in thirteenth century Palestine, they sought to establish themselves as landowners and conquerors of new territories. Leaders served as community and national mentors in the way Joshua did, lifting their voices from ecclesiastical and political podiums to declare God's new plan for God's people.

Women and men such as Fredrick Douglass, Henry McNeal Turner, and Sojourner Truth provided tangible models of strength, courage, and liberated minds that empowered countless African Americans. Sojourner Truth delivered a speech in Boston on what was popularly termed the Eighth Anniversary of Negro Freedom, January 1, 1871 and was paraphrased in local newspapers. "Sojourner admitted to once hating white people, but once she met her final master, Jesus, she was filled with love for everyone. That once enslaved folks were emancipated, her prayers were answered. She was in support of Black people being given their own land out west to build homes and prosper on."¹

The Young Kings Mentorship Program was designed to encourage young boys in the way Ms. Truth did her people in the 1880s. In addition, the curriculum instructs them to enter to learn and depart to serve. Their responsibility is to not only be mentored, but to become mentors as well. Specifically, sessions around financial literacy and investments as well as leadership give them direction about becoming land owners and giving back to their communities, as Sojourner Truth advocated over a century and a half ago; this is the theme of a march toward deeper liberation found in Joshua 1:5-9, again the notion of freedom appears.

¹ "Sojourner Truth," Wikipedia, accessed September 10, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sojourner_Truth.

The theological framework for the project is Black Liberation Theology. In this framework of the study of God, Jesus, the revolutionary champion of the oppressed is highlighted as the supreme role model. Spiritual, emotional, and social discrimination served as a target for the onslaught of Jesus' work and ministry. Jesus is written about in the Holy Bible and other sacred literature as not only a friend of the poor and outcast, but one who joined them in their struggle. He did not spend his earthly life and times seated in palaces, thrones or on beds of roses. Jesus, God in human flesh, was born in a manger, buried in a borrowed tomb, and bestowed miracles on people in need. This benchmark of modern-day Christianity expressed himself as a poor Jew who liberated his people, empowered his people, and lifted them from their inner frustrations and hopelessness.

The Young Kings Mentorship Program was informed by the life of this Son of Nazareth and Heaven. The consistent identification with those who were free, but not yet free indeed, was the life mantra of Jesus Christ. This self-designation is also the mantra of the mentors and the mentees of the program. The intellectual discourse and scholarly presentation of this faith perspective has been termed Black Theology. For the late Dr. James Hal Cone, the foci are Black people fighting bondage. Here, a new term has been coined, Black Child Liberation Theology, spotlighting Black children enjoying freedom.

It can be argued that lasting transformation for a people can only occur through the development of children. Psychologists often trace personality traits, character flaws, senses of identity, and the root of habits and behaviors to childhood. This point of view highlights the value of childhood development as a source of adulthood success or failure. When a child is adequately advanced, their emergence into extraordinary adulthood often holds greater promise. This line of thought gives evidence that if all

children, or a number of children are flowered, then an entire generation of adults becomes advantaged. It is on this very foundation that The Young Kings Mentorship stands, namely that a liberating curriculum for Black boys and mentors who model greatness and teach divinity in the way that Jesus did, can positively, holistically transform Black people.

The theological foundation of the project, Black Liberation Theology is supported by Joshua's liberating work for an oppressed people, and notions of Henry McNeal Turner who wisely said over a century ago, "Every race of people since time began who attempted to describe God by words or painting, or by carvings, have conveyed their idea that the God who made them and shaped their destinies was symbolized in themselves."² Such a quote speaks directly to the interdisciplinary foundation, the sociology of race and ethnicity, which at its apex is about freedom, as is the doctoral project.

The interdisciplinary foundation of the project, sociology of race and ethnic relations, was coined in the early 1900's by the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University, Dr. William Edward Burghardt DuBois. This branch of sociology is focalized on the scientific study of the effects of racial discrimination, primarily as it relates to Black people in America. The research seeks to comprehend how and why Black men and women behave, survive, and thrive in their racist context as well as how to further the development of their holistic liberation. The hypothesis for The Young Kings Mentorship Program, is that a liberating curriculum and strategic mentorship are a means to ensuring spiritual, mental, emotional, social, and physical freedom for Black boys.

² "Henry McNeal Turner," AZ Quotes, accessed November 15, 2018, https://www.azquotes.com/author/24451-Henry_McNeal_Turner.

Black boys exemplify behaviors in the contexts of school, home, and outside of home and school that can be more deeply understood with sociological research. It is upon this precept that the methodology for the program was developed. W.E.B. DuBois posited that race would be the most important challenge of his day. A century later, his words still ring true. He identified through sociological research and evidence, the sense of duality that is experienced deeply by African Americans, who even in their name have a duplicitous definition. To what extent did this DuBoisian double-consciousness damage or present the possibility of preeminence for Black people in America? Further, in what ways can a strategically designed curriculum for young boys bring about a real sense of liberation and sociological behavior that is undeniably high achieving? Lastly, can such liberation and greatness be formatted for qualitative or quantitative research? The Young Kings Mentorship methodology was developed to address such questions.

An academic exploration of the four foundations and the results of the spiritual autobiography and contextual analysis, are each equidistant from the doctoral project. The project sought to prove that being Black in America can be seen as not a confused, damaging identity crisis, but instead as God's supreme blessing and plan for liberation. The challenges faced by Black people are not a curse, but a sacred responsibility much like Calvary was for Jesus. To be African in America is similar to the experience of Jesus from the Christian perspective; Jesus was fully God, yet fully human. The embodiment of Jesus is the conceptualization of two warring ideals married into a perfect actualization. This is the Black experience.

The Young Kings Mentorship Program curriculum brings to bare an emphasis on liberation and the forming of habits in mentees that lead to character and subsequently

high achievement. The results were astounding. What was most interesting, was creating a framework that proved that liberation and greatness could, in fact, not only be researched but quantified. Surveys presented to families pre and post program included queries that assigned numerical values to sociological behaviors. Those behavioral patterns point to the evidence of liberation or lack thereof. These Black boys in Atlanta, grappling with race and ethnic discrimination, presented responses before and after the program that were astounding.

Nine weeks prior to the orientation of the program, an anonymous survey was administered via the online polling resource, www.surveymonkey.com. The survey was made of ten multiple choice questions, weighted by frequency and amount. The survey average completion time was one minute and fifty-one seconds. The survey was administered a second time six weeks following the completion of the program, average completion time was one minute and forty-five seconds. The objective was to give evidence for the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of The Young Kings Mentorship Program. The ten questions were as follows:

1. How many times (ever) has the student made an investment in the financial market (includes: stocks, bonds, forex, options, cryptocurrency)?
Scale: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 +
2. How many books by Black authors (not as a requisite for school) has the student read during the past year?
Scale: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 +
3. How many times (ever) has the student correctly tied a necktie without assistance from an adult?
Scale: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 +
4. How many positive images does the student have on his personal Vision Board (if no vision board has been created, please indicate by choosing 0):
Scale: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 +

5. How many vocabulary words does the student know in an African language (all African languages are included)?
Scale: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 +
6. How many times did the student pray before school during the past month?
Scale: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 +
7. How often, during the past month, did the student address you with the words, “Yes Ma’am” or “Yes Sir?”
Scale: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 +
8. How many times, this month, did the student exercise/train or engage in an organized sport (outside of school curriculum)?
Scale: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 +
9. How often, this week, did the student read scripture, without being reminded or asked to?
Scale: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 +
10. How many times, this month, did the student receive a positive behavioral report from a teacher at school?
Scale: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 +

In October of 2017, in Atlanta Georgia, Daryl Westfield Edwards invited a group of five Black men from varying backgrounds and careers to dialogue about the state of the Black family. During this brain-trust collective, several concepts surfaced regarding the uplift of the Black community. One was the affirmation and development of young Black men. The opportunity to serve third, fourth, and fifth graders at KIPP STRIVE Primary school was presented. The men, each an answered prayer, committed to serve as mentors. The mission to reaffirm and develop young Black men who are confident, culturally conscious, courageous, caring, contributing members of the Black community and of the world had begun.

The first step was to write letters to potential families with Black boys and to men who would be willing as well as able to effectively mentor Black boys. The letters were as follows:

Dear *The Young Kings Mentorship Program* Parent/Guardian,

We are grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the life of your son. As you know best, he is full of boundless potential and bright possibility. Some in the world around him may hold preconceived notions about who he is and what his abilities are. Together, we will shatter the negative ideologies. Not because the opinions of nay-sayers matter, but because it is a natural consequence of our sustained collaboration as parents and mentors to encourage him.

This communal effort is designed to ensure that your child is even more deeply aware of his inner greatness and can sense the genuine care and support that we are committed to providing him. It has been said that the future belongs to those who prepare for it. Each Saturday that we meet is strategically designed to empower your son with the preparation he needs to become a successful contributing member of our community.

Thank you again for entrusting him to us. We will use positively and wisely the moments that we spend mentoring your child. We are also available to dialogue about any specific challenges you may want to share with us. We are at your service. We are proud of the Young King your son is, and the King he is to become.

~Daryl Westfield Edwards

Dear Potential *The Young Kings Mentorship Program* Mentor,

Greetings King! Thank you for taking the time to serve our youth on Saturdays at KIPP STRIVE. I am excited about the opportunity to pour into the lives of tomorrow's leaders. The young men, 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders, are privileged to have mentors like you and I who care enough to spend time with them. An adage says, "Chinese children often speak Chinese." With no intention to cast racial aspersion, I find it to ring true. As a child, I spoke the language I grew up hearing my parents speak. As maybe you can relate, I also became a man exemplifying many traits I picked up from those I looked up to as a child. Using wisdom, I opted to choose the better behaviors and eliminate lesser ones. The key however, was that I had countless good behaviors to choose from that I could emulate. This is the benefit of the Young Kings program. Children don't always obey what they are told, but they do copy what they see. Our role as mentors is to be present and be examples for them to choose from. They are watching the way we treat each other, stand, sit, speak, encourage, even laugh.

I am personally reaching out to you because I know that you are a sterling example of what Black manhood is and can be. An example I know that our Young Kings need to see. If they can see it... they can be it! Let's give them great things to shoot for. They will aim for great things, the more we hold high

expectations of them. That's why we call them young kings... not boys, kids, or children... Young Kings.

I admire you and appreciate your willingness to make a difference. We are living in a time where Black people are in need of solidarity, self-love, love for each other, and development of power. The game of Chess is about thinking several moves ahead. Empowering Black children ensures that the next generation can avoid the mistakes that have been made in generations past. It is my sincere hope that Black people will one day, in the face of police brutality, subtle prejudice, and overt racism, be able to say to the chessboard of American culture... CHECKMATE. We are the Kings that can make moves in a small school in Atlanta on Saturdays that get us closer to that reality. I am grateful we are on the same side of the chess clock.

~Daryl Westfield Edwards

The next step, was to develop an orientation event for parents and mentors to meet. The details of event planning were implemented. Camera and photographer, food was ordered, a PowerPoint presentation and video aired, copies of the Parent Handbook and Mentor Handbook were designed and printed and business cards were created. Parents and mentors signed the documents listed in the "New Participant Inception Flow" checklist.

New Young King / Scholar:

1. Complete Parent Registration Sheet.docx
2. Complete Parent Permission and Waiver Form.docx
3. Complete Parent Consultation.docx
4. Present them with the Parent's Handbook.docx
5. Add name to Contact Database.xlsx (in 3 places – contact list...email blast...phone)
6. Add name and BDay to Calendar – Young Kings BDays.xlsx
7. Add name to Attendance Records.xlsx

New King / Mentor:

1. Complete Mentor Inception Sheet.docx
2. Complete CORI Form.pdf
3. Present them with the Mentor's Handbook.docx
4. Add name to Contact Database.xlsx (in 3 places – contact list...email blast...phone)
5. Add name to Calendar – Mentors BDays.xlsx
6. Mentor Training Session

Daryl created the following flyer for promotional purposes also:

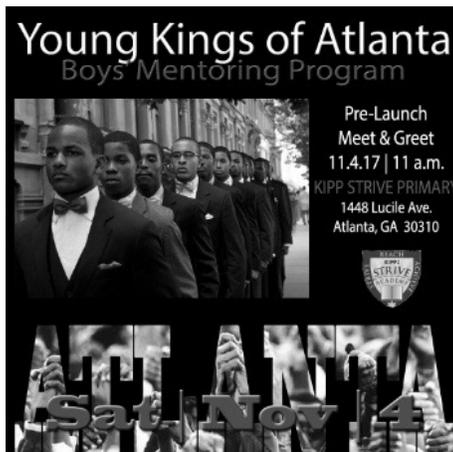


Figure 1. Promotional flyer for The Young Kings Mentorship Program

A significant aspect of the orientation was the parent consultation. The opportunity to get to know the parents one-on-one and to listen to them gave great insight into the children. The experience was insightful because it provided the opportunity to meet the person or people most influential in their lives and to listen to what their concerns were, was invaluable. It illuminated trouble areas, and other potential solutions or additional support that each child could benefit from. Armed with such intel, mentors were first trained, then assigned to be responsible for providing guidance and assistance for each mentee. At this point, we were ready for our first session together.

At session one, as well as at every subsequent session, a recurring component was instituted, entitled Harambee, the Kenyan official motto, a Swahili word meaning all pull together:

10:45 a.m. – Harambee (Welcome...Roll Call...Young Kings Affirmation...Announcements...Introduce Lesson)

Welcome:
Harambee! (Call & Response)
Salute Mentors and Scholars

Roll Call:
Everyone stand and share their names and that they are a Young King or King

Young Kings Affirmation:

Call: *

Response: *same

I am a Young King.

I stand for justice, peace, and the building of my community.

I achieve my goals and live in excellence.

I love my God, myself and my people.

I am intelligent, strong, and courageous.

I am a proud young Black Man!

I aspire to be a proud Black Man!

My heritage is centuries of reigning over the earth from kingdoms in Africa, not just a few years of enslavement in America.

I know who I am and whose I am.

I pray, study, and make wise choices.

I believe in myself and the gifts God has given me.

I love, respect, and protect the Black woman.

I honor my parents. I value my ancestors. I love my brothers.

I am a Young King! I am a Young King! I am a Young King!

We are Young Kings!

Announcements:

Birthday shout outs

Introduce Lesson:

Overview of the Lesson Plan topic

The overall schedule of the Saturday sessions went as follows:

10:00 – Mentors arrive for Set-Up

10:30 – Mentees arrive in KSA Gym (Attendance Taken)

*Football, Basketball, Dodge Ball Stations

10:40 – Transition (Young Kings Line)

10:45 – Harambee (Welcome...Roll Call...Young Kings

Affirmation...Announcements...Introduce Lesson)

11:00 – Transition

11:05 – Break-Out Session (See Lesson Plan)

11:25 – Activity (See Lesson Plan) – Allow Older Young Kings to be leaders

11:45 – Transition

11:50 – Snack Time

12:00 – Transition

12:05 – Audacity to Love Circle (Debrief/Sharing/Recite Mantra)

12:15 – Transition

12:20 – Board Games in Gym

12:30 – Parent Pick-Up

Each session with the young men was unique. A topic of focus was addressed that was designed to develop the young king, even the title of the session was a positive affirmation. Below are three examples of curricula:

The Young Kings Mentoring Program “We are Good Sons” KIPP STRIVE & KIPP STRIVE Primary 3 rd , 4 th , and 5 th Graders			
Date	Friday, January 25, 2019	Title	“We are Good Sons”
Preparation • Bring paper and pens	Theories to Grasp: Elders are to be treated with respect.	Materials	- <i>Two sets of paper and pens for each student</i>

	No parent (or person) is perfect, but they are always deserving of honor.		
Ice Breaker	What bothers you most about parents / teachers?		
Quote for the Day	Handsome is... as handsome does...		
Break Out Session	<p>➤ Saying, ‘Yes Sir’ and ‘Yes Ma’am’ is a sign of respect. Make it a habit at school, home, and here at the Young Kings program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family requires forgiveness. Forgiving is more for you than for the other person. They move on and you’re still angry. Unless you let it go. • Do things to show your appreciation for parents. Make up your bed. Keep your room clean. <p><i>“Thank You Mom / Dad” Letter</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a brief thank you card/letter to parent/guardian to take home that says: 1-I apologize for anything I’ve done wrong (past, present, future), 2-I appreciate all you have done for me, 3-I aspire to emulate the positive things you have taught me • Give the letter to parents after today’s Saturday Session 		
Activity	<p><i>“Personal I Forgive You” Letter</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write (and destroy) a forgiveness letter to an absentee parental figure. All letters are private, not to be read aloud or to anyone else... then shredded or burned. The destruction of the letters can be done in dramatic and symbolic fashion. Take a few moments to process and to congratulate boys for moving forward with their lives. • Sign a “Fatherhood Contract,” a pact to (if choosing to or able to) have children after marriage. As well, to always take care of, defend, and raise well any child you have. 		
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each student should be even more respectful at school and at home, using language like “Yes Sir and Yes Ma’am” at all times to address elders 		

<p>The Young Kings Mentorship Program “We are Limitless” KIPP STRIVE & KIPP STRIVE Primary 3rd, 4th, and 5th Graders</p>			
Date	Saturday, February 2, 2019	Title	“We are Limitless”
Preparation	Theories to Grasp: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have twenty Mentality shapes reality. Thoughts become things.	Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voice recorder - Stereo speaker

<p>poster boards for students to use as a Vision Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have magazines full of affirmations visuals – cars, houses, positive things (have doubles, etc. so no disagreements) 	<p>Dreams come true. Think bigger.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Magazines and print outs of affirming visuals Jean-Michel Basquiat artwork book Poster board for each student Scotch tape rolls
Ice Breaker	Who/what do you want to be <i>today</i> ?		
Quote for the Day	The sky is not the limit... the sky is the minimum.		
Break Out Session	<p>➤ Understanding Declarations/Affirmations: Always be positive (not “I do not, I cannot, or It Is not”... instead “It is, etc.”) Always use present tense (not “I will”... instead “I am,” “I do”, “I have”) Always focus on what you want, ignore what you don’t want</p> <p><i>“Basquiat Vision Board Party”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow young kings to see the Basquiat artwork... be creative as you create your own board, it does not have to be symmetrical Use poster board to create a collage of images of things that the Young Kings hope for and should hope for... (better prayer lives, a mansion, a school, a doctorate degree, a best-selling book, a happy family, etc.) 		
Activity	<p>“Rap Stars” – Affirmation Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let the Young Kings hear a specific portion of the song “Young Kings” by Meek Mill – 1:02 – 1:07 (so they know the part they will sing) Have Meek Mill’s Young Kings instrumental playing in background and have the group sing the hook “Young Kings” 		

	using the voice recorder (and afterward, mix it in GarageBand to the “Young Kings” instrumental by Meek Mill)
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a group song that each student can listen to individually if they have phones and we can hear as a group on Saturdays • Have a vision board for Young Kings to post up in bedroom to get them closer to their dreams in life

The Young Kings Mentoring Program “We are Investors” KIPP STRIVE & KIPP STRIVE Primary 3 rd , 4 th , and 5 th Graders			
Date	Saturday	Title	“We are Investors”
Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get Secret Lives of the Super Rich (even record with iPhone if you have to) • Wall Street Journal (copies for groups) • Laptop • List of stocks and their symbols and prices 	Theories to Grasp: There are four ways to make money. Investing for the future is wise. Necessary.	Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Secret Lives of the Super Rich clips</i> - <i>Wall Street Journal (copies for groups)</i> - <i>Laptop to document all the stocks chosen by the students</i> - <i>A list of stocks and their symbols and prices (Ferrari, Walmart, Apple, etc.)</i>
Focus Question	Who wants to be a millionaire?		
Break Out Session	<p>“Spend Big, Spend Right”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There are Four Ways to generate income: Self-Employment – Running your own company. Employee – Working for someone else. Business Owner – Building a business system that doesn’t require your efforts. Investor – Putting up money and receiving it back later with interest. ➤ The richest people on earth are investors. ➤ Stocks go up and down. ➤ A share is a portion of a company that you can own. ➤ Buying stocks and holding them for generations will ensure wealth in your family. ➤ Counting shares of stock involves multiplication 		

Activity	<p><i>“Young Kings Investment Club, Class of 2020”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using the Wall Street Journal and your own personal preference... what products do you like? Evaluate a company and make a buy recommendation for 3 stocks (nobody can have the exact same 3, same 1 or 2 is ok, but not the same 3) and based on closing prices yesterday (Friday). The winning portfolio gets financial prize & pizza. With parental permission... establish a Stockpile account for each student with \$50.00...Parents can contribute... Leader (and any Mentors willing to help) will personally cover the remaining balances
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spark the investor/trader spirit in each Young King

The objective was also for the mentees to have a take home each session. The take home item ensured that parents were aware of what was happening, for the mentees to be reminded beyond the sessions, and for them to have a lasting memory of our work together. An example of a ‘take-home’ from the “We are Investors” session is below:

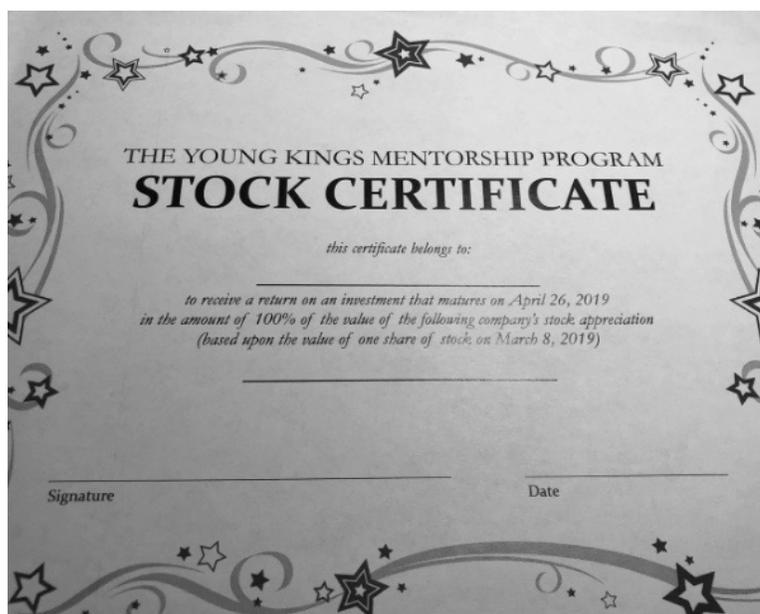


Figure 2. Take-home example from “We Are Investors” session

Summary of Learning

In order to quantify the success or failure of the program and the viability of the claim that liberation can be assessed and developed in young boys via The Young Kings Mentorship program, a pre-program and post-program assessment was presented to parents, to take online with the help of their children. Such questions were posed in scalable format before Orientation and following the Rites of Passage Celebration, serving to quantify behavioral improvements.

Upon administering the post-survey, a singular theme appeared, that of success! One hundred percent of the young kings exhibited growth, development, and what can be termed, a deeper dimension of liberation in one hundred percent of the areas addressed. Specifically, each of the queries in the survey were responded to indicate a significant positive transformation following participation in the program. The ratios of improvement are as follows:

Questions with Highest Ratio of Improvement in Frequency/Amount

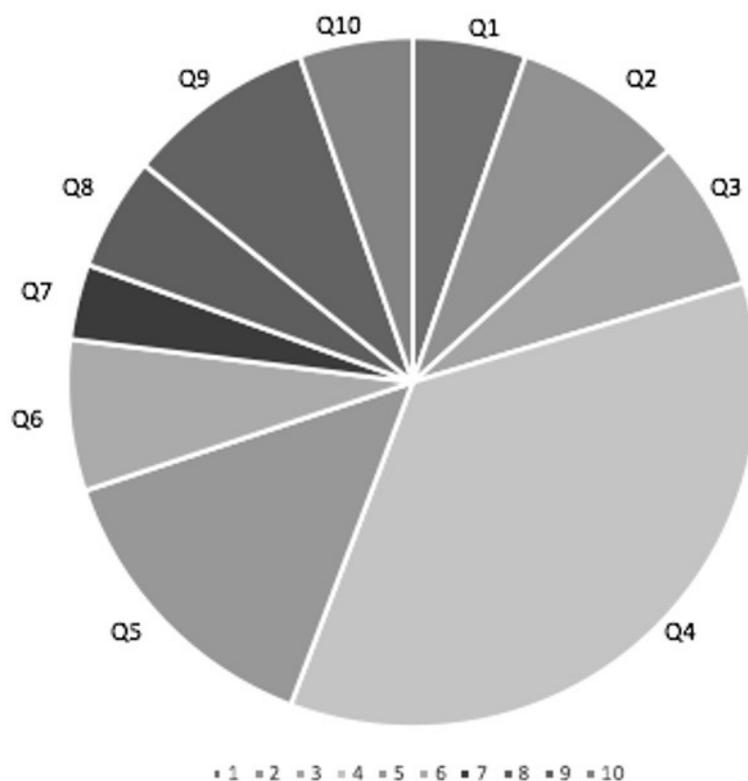


Figure 3. Questions with highest ratio of improvement in frequency/amount

Of note, the questions, by design encompassed a holistic view of liberation. Question one addresses financial freedom, question two speaks to mental freedom, question three is about political freedom, question four builds personal freedom, question five is about cultural freedom, question six deals with spiritual freedom, question seven touches on social freedom, question eight focuses on physical freedom, question nine targets spiritual freedom again (it is the most important of them all), and question ten informs emotional freedom. In essence, a sense of liberation that permeates the soul and human experience can be seen in what The Young Kings Mentorship Program achieved. See the following chart:

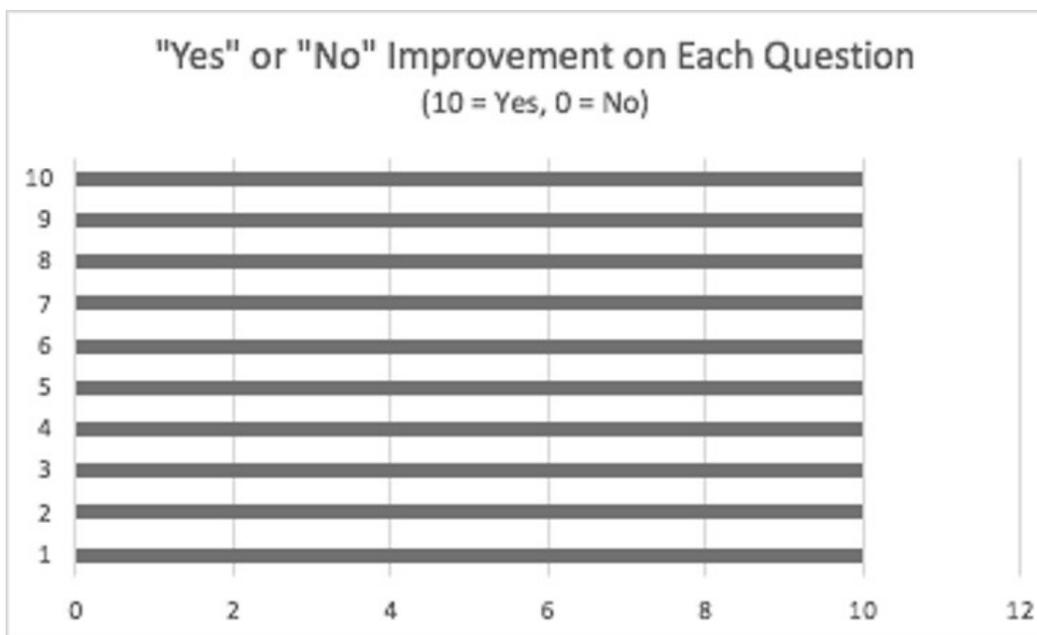


Figure 4. Improvement on each question between pre- and post-program assessments

One significant lesson I learned about building The Young Kings Mentorship Program can be found in the African proverb that reminds, if you want to go fast, go alone if you want to go far, travel together. As we embark on another year of mentorship, the inclusion of more positive “Kings” and “Queens” will occur. The program will have a weekly speaker, which will allow students to hear fresh voices, see what career and life journeys they can choose and learn from, and it connects the program to greater outside support.

Another lesson learned, is that while I may not be most suitable for single-handedly developing The Young Queens Mentorship Program, it too is necessary. I hope it can be created and will work toward it. I have a particular woman leader in mind, and am aiming to support her, if needed, in building programming for young girls in Atlanta.

The most significant lesson I learned, however, is that I am the project. To an extent, my personal journey has completed one full cycle. The spiritual autobiography about a young man whose father and hero passed is now a grown man who gives

fatherhood support to other young men, and in writing about it, even was able to quote his father's scholarly work, discovered as a result of doing this project. I must march on and leave a legacy of greatness and giving, as did he.

There are three prominent sources of inspiration for the project. The first, is the Paul Robeson Institute Rites of Passage Program housed in the Northeastern University African American Institute, directed by Dean Lula Petty-Edwards. The program was an operation of the Concerned Black Men of Massachusetts that provided food, tutoring, activities, and mentorship to local Black boys on Saturday mornings. Mentors were Black men serving in careers as professors, doctors, lawyers, ministers, each modeling Black manhood by sacrificing their weekends for the benefit of young men in their community.

The second inspiration for the project is the Eliot Church of Roxbury's multi-programmatic: Saturday Church School, Summer Camp, Elementary School, and After-School Program. The programs, developed by Dr. Ozzie Lee Edwards, provided jobs for teenage and adult mentors and counselors, Christian education for children, cultural awareness, a sense of self-identity and heritage, and a nurturing environment. Local Black youth enjoyed field trips, tutelage, and an invaluable sense of community.

The third inspiration for the project is the Black Panther Party Free Breakfast for School Children Program. The Oakland based program was a mission of Huey Percy Newton and Bobby Seale, who noticed inadequate lunch programs at public schools. Recognizing that hungry children are less able to focus in school, Black Panthers set up kitchens in cities across America, feeding over 10,000 children every day before school.

The three inspirations for the project and the project itself, interestingly, resemble the historical, biblical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundations of the program. The Paul Robeson Institute is reminiscent of the work of ministers and politicians during the Reconstruction. The Eliot Church of Roxbury programs teach children to be a modern-day Joshua, by following the mandates of God. The Black Panther Free Breakfast Program exemplifies the main theme of Black Theology (and was partially developed from the ideas of the same leaders and during chronological time-frame), in the advocacy for the oppressed and in need. The doctoral project, a combination of all three, also has a specific leaning toward the interdisciplinary foundation, the sociology of race and ethnicity; there is an obvious priority, Black boys.

The success of the program did not entirely come as a surprise. I have personally benefitted from the counsel, advice, and mentorship of Black men and women, from my father and mother, at various programs, churches, various educational academies, especially during my studies at United Theological Seminary. The entire liberating undertaking of study for the Doctor of Ministry degree at United Theological Seminary is managed, specifically, by mentors. How fitting, that this project engages the process of mentoring to bring about liberation.

My mentor, Dr. Lucius Dalton, served as an ultimate spiritual and educational mentor. His guidance and support, encouragement, and role modeling as my official Dr. Harold Hudson Scholars consortium mentor enabled me to build a program that changed the lives of young Black men in the way he did for me. Dr. Lisa Weah, who joined our academic group during my second year, was also of supreme value as mentor. Her words of inspiration and guidance as the project developed actually prove another pivotal point

regarding the project: A Black woman can teach a Black young man just as well as a Black man can (in some cases, even better).

The doctoral project was centered around the creation of a duplicatable, Christian mentorship program for inner-city Black boys. The program was designed to be translatable across United States' regions, a systemic format that can be managed by any mentor with a sixth-grade education, sincere heart for Black people, and desire to protect and nurture Black children. The program obtains maximum value when it can be recreated without chronological or geographical limitation, under varying levels of leadership capability.

The spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, and social freedom that can be accomplished for the young mentees is potentially more significant, merely because the mentees are youthful. Youth are least resistant to change, retain information with relative ease, and often act on learning with greater consistency than adults. A similar project for Black adults would be equally important, but as has been noted across educational platforms, “they can learn practically anything by sheer will and effort... Children, thus, exhibit capacities that are shaped by environmental experiences and the individuals who care for them.”³

The new theology this research and project connect can be termed, “Black Child Liberation Theology,” in essence, an academic approach to the liberation of the minds, bodies, and souls of Black children. The necessity for theological discourse and scholarship provided by James Cone and others supports the need for Black Theology. However, children demand a praxis that super-cedes dialogue. Action must be taken,

³ John D. Bransford, *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2000), 113.

now, today. The framework outlined in The Young Kings Mentorship Program was Black Child Liberation Theology raised from the inked page into human activity, wherein children know, as Kanye West's 2019 album title proclaims, "Jesus is King," and they live as that brown-skinned, divine being lived.⁴ Indeed, the Black legacy of God-given greatness and power ascends with the mentoring and uplifting of Black children. The revolt against sin, evil, discrimination, and negative images misrepresenting Black people must endure. Children, as in the Civil Rights era, remain the secret weapon (major revolutions have historically been led by the young).

In order to be worthy of the shoulders of Black liberation theologians and Black ancestors, we must stand tall and lend our shoulders to the next generation, who must do the same. This new model of liberation can, should, and must be adopted in every Black church, school, and community. We are not nomads, emerging from Egyptian bondage, we are liberated conquerors of Canaan. The sentiments of Curtis Mayfield continuing the spirited psalm that inaugurated the soundtrack to this writing and screenplay are instructive for the young Black boy and girl, and for the Black Child Liberation theologian:

And I don't care where you come from
 We're just gon' move on up (movin' on up)
 Lord have mercy
 We're movin' on up (movin' on up)
 We just keep on pushin'
 We're a winner!
 Lord, baby
 Everybody
 Hey, you know we're movin' on up, ooo ooo
 We're a winner, yeah yeah just keep on pushin'!⁵

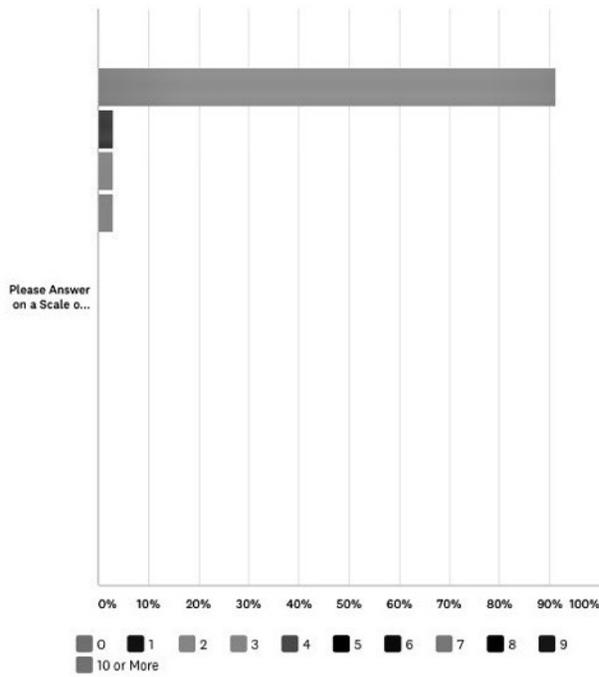
⁴ Kanye West, "Jesus is King," 2019.

⁵ Curtis Mayfield and The Impressions, "We're a Winner," 1967.

APPENDIX A
PRE- AND POST-PROGRAM ASSESSMENT RESULTS

How many times (ever) has the student made an investment in the financial market (includes: stocks, bonds, forex, options, cryptocurrency)?

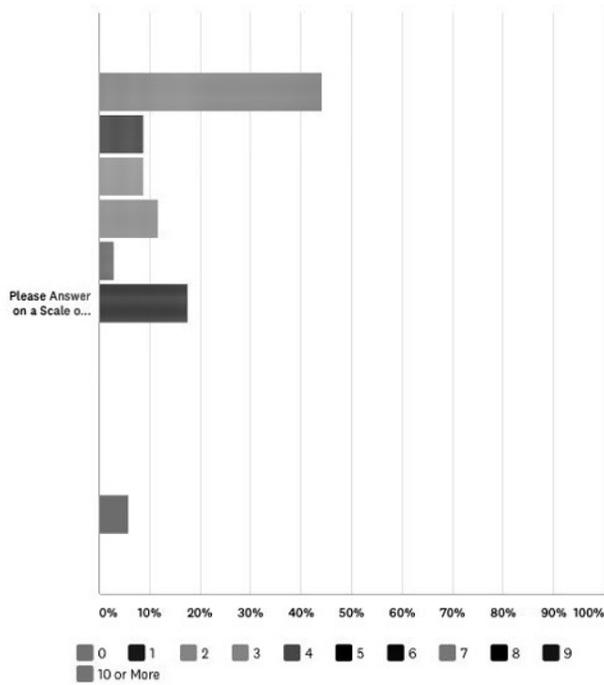
Answered: 34 Skipped: 0



	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 OR MORE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Please Answer on a Scale of 0 to 10 or More.	91.18% 31	2.94% 1	2.94% 1	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	34	118						

How many books by Black authors (not as a requisite for school) has the student read during the past year?

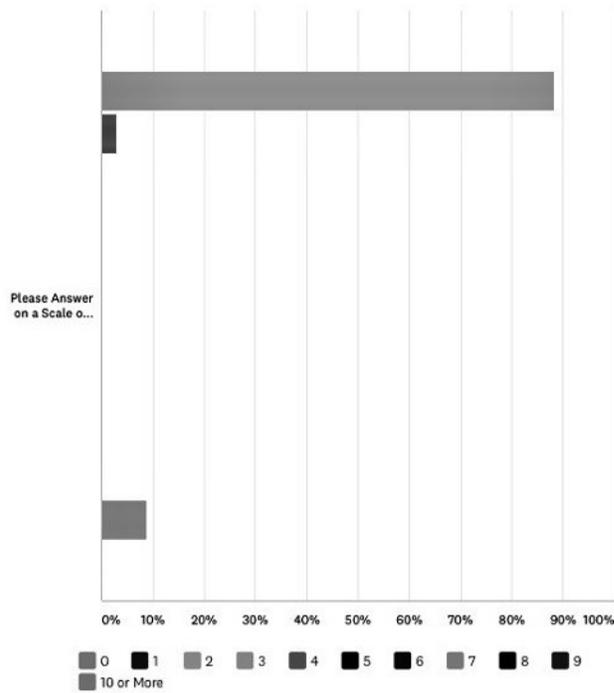
Answered: 34 Skipped: 0



	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 OR MORE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Please Answer on a Scale of 0 to 10 or More.	44.12% 15	8.82% 3	8.82% 3	11.76% 4	2.94% 1	17.65% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5.88% 2	34	3.21

How many times has the student correctly tied a neck-tie without assistance from an adult?

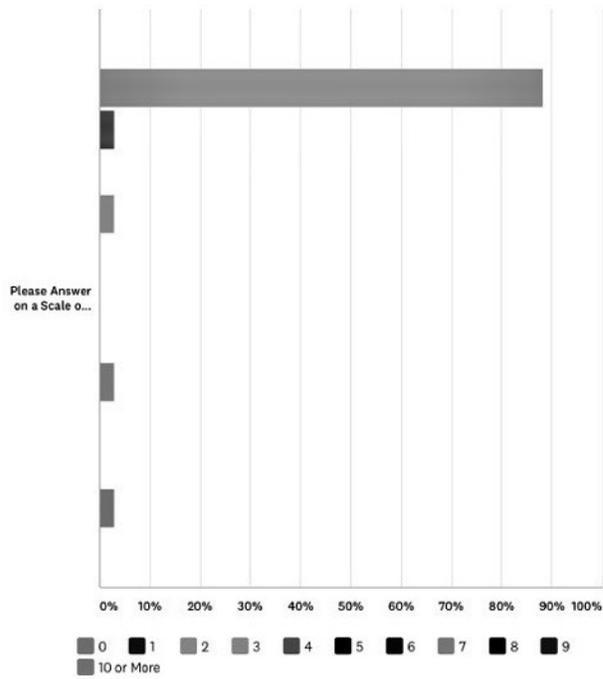
Answered: 34 Skipped: 0



	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 OR MORE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Please Answer on a Scale of 0 to 10 or More.	88.24% 30	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	8.82% 3	34	1.91							

How many positive images does the student have on his personal Vision Board (if no vision board has been created, please indicate by choosing 0):

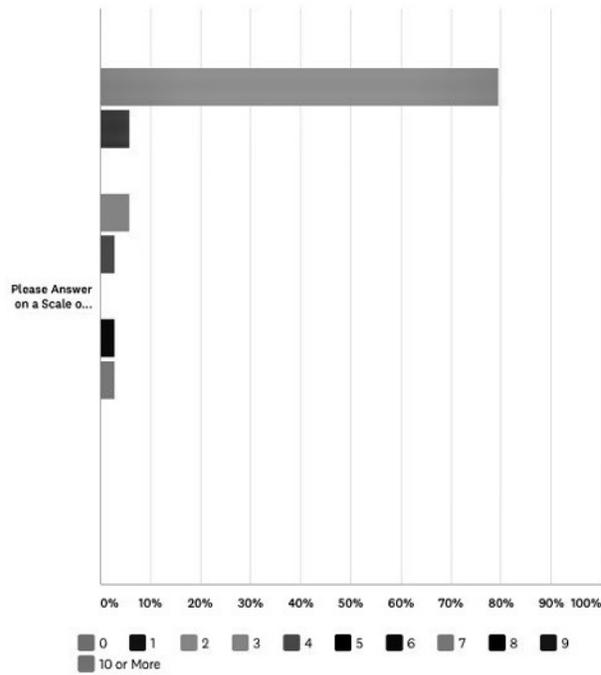
Answered: 34 Skipped: 0



	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 OR MORE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
▼ Please Answer on a Scale of 0 to 10 or More.	88.24% 30	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.94% 1	34	1.62

How many vocabulary words does the student know in an African language (all African languages are included)?

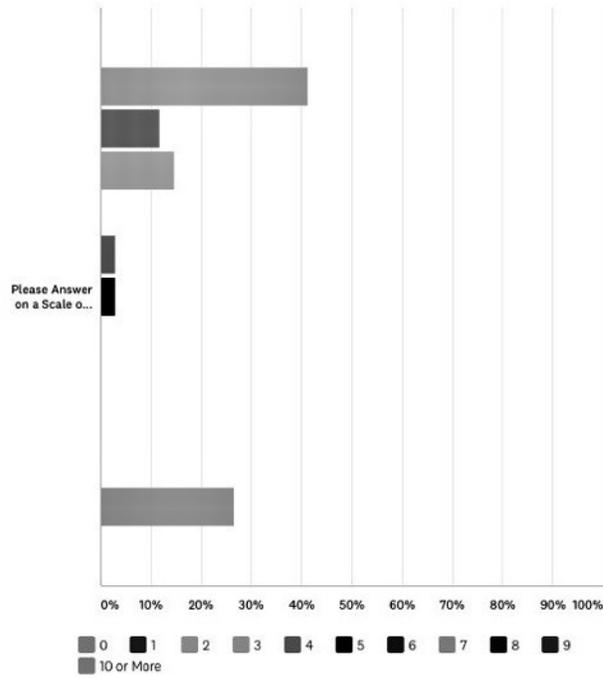
Answered: 34 Skipped: 0



	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 OR MORE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Please Answer on a Scale of 0 to 10 or More.	79.41% 27	5.88% 2	0.00% 0	5.88% 2	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	2.94% 1	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	34	1.74

How many times did the student pray before school during the past month?

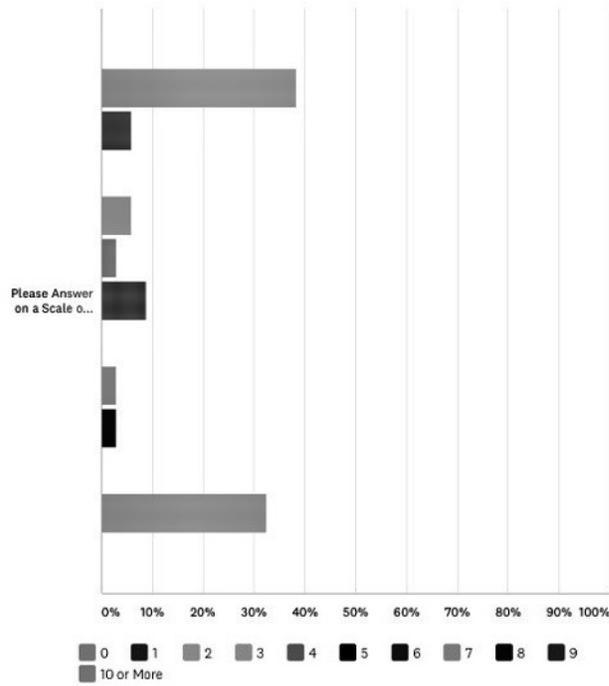
Answered: 34 Skipped: 0



	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 OR MORE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Please Answer on a Scale of 0 to 10 or More.	41.18% 14	11.76% 4	14.71% 5	0.00% 0	2.94% 1	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	26.47% 9	34	4.32

How often, during the past month, did the student address you with the words, "Yes Ma'am" or "Yes Sir?"

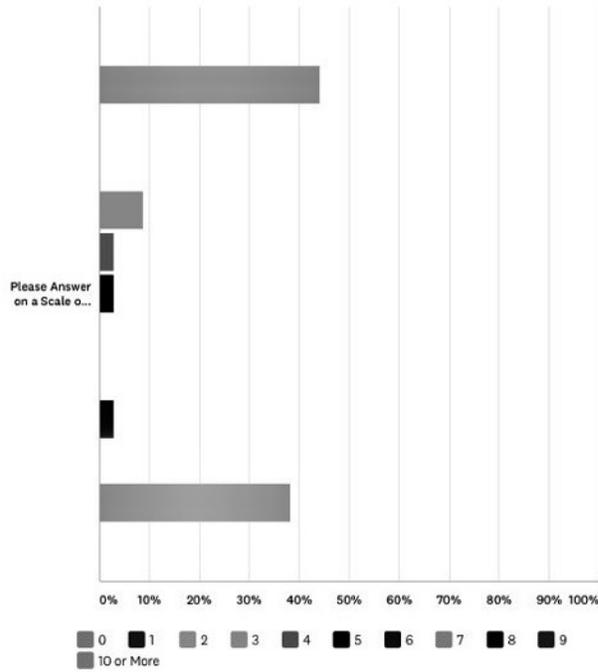
Answered: 34 Skipped: 0



	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 OR MORE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Please Answer on a Scale of 0 to 10 or More.	38.24% 13	5.88% 2	0.00% 0	5.88% 2	2.94% 1	8.82% 3	0.00% 0	2.94% 1	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	32.35% 11	34	5.47

How many times, this month, did the student exercise/train or engage in an organized sport (outside of school curriculum)?

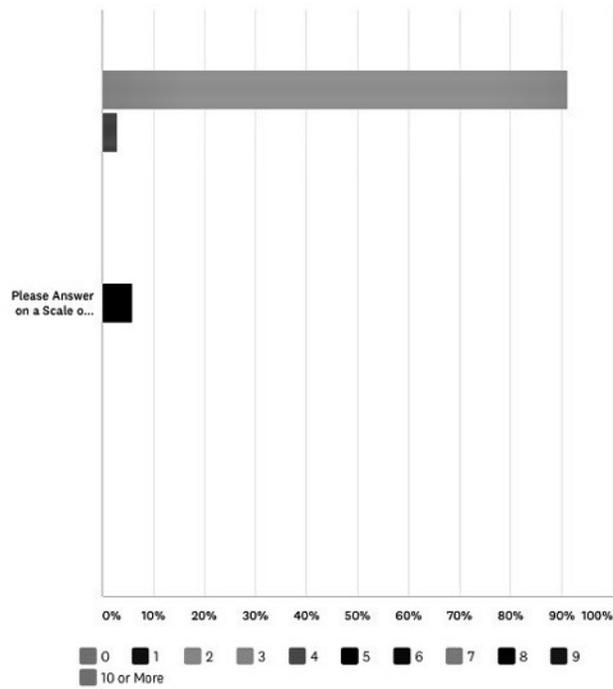
Answered: 34 Skipped: 0



	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 OR MORE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Please Answer on a Scale of 0 to 10 or More.	44.12% 15	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.82% 3	2.94% 1	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	38.24% 13	34	5.59

How often, this week, did the student read Scripture, without being reminded or asked to?

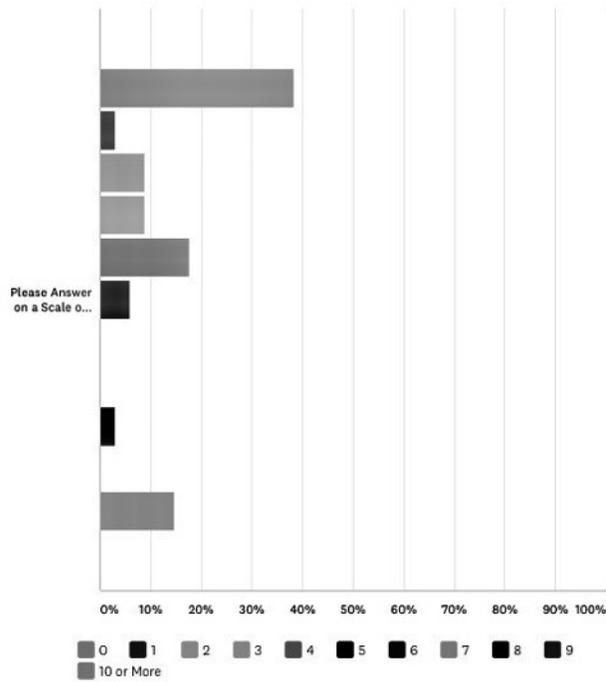
Answered: 34 Skipped: 0



	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 OR MORE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Please Answer on a Scale of 0 to 10 or More.	91.18% 31	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5.88% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	34	1.32

How many times, this month, did the student receive a positive behavioral report from a teacher at school?

Answered: 34 Skipped: 0



	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 OR MORE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Please Answer on a Scale of 0 to 10 or More.	38.24% 13	2.94% 1	8.82% 3	8.82% 3	17.65% 6	5.88% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	14.71% 5	34	4.18

APPENDIX B
PHOTOS OF YOUNG KINGS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



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