

“A powerful, prophetic masterpiece that will bring our Master’s peace into the hearts of fathers and children around the world! This desperately needed book divinely bridges the gap between the generations and allows spiritual transfer for lasting spiritual legacy!”

—*Bishop Dale C. Bronner, D. Min.*

Senior pastor, Word of Faith Family Worship Cathedral

Author, *Change Your Trajectory*

“Doug Stringer clearly paints a picture of the role of a father in a child or teen’s life and the effects that the absence of fathers are having on this generation. May the following pages inspire you to aggressively pursue and win your own children’s hearts for God.”

—*Ron Luce*

Founder, Teen Mania Ministries

“Sacrifice is never about death; it is always about life. The sacrifice at the cross was about life and redemption for the entire world. Seldom does one see in their own circle of friends sacrifice made that could shift the future of nations. One of my closest friends has made that sacrifice for decades...Doug Stringer. From the day he met Jesus as a successful entrepreneur Doug started caring for people. In his passionate love for Christ he started taking in addicts from the streets—seventeen of them at one point—and housed them in his little apartment. Nobody told him to do that. That’s just Doug. And, decades later, it’s still Doug. This book isn’t just words; it’s a lifestyle that will transform your life and change the world around you. It’s the lifestyle of pursuing the Father’s blessing.”

—*Paul Louis Cole, D.Th.*

President, Christian Men’s Network Worldwide

Global Fatherhood Initiative

“This book comes not just from Doug’s life experiences, but from the person whom God has molded Doug to be. He doesn’t just write about investing in people, he lives it. Doug’s communication style has always been ‘straight talk, with huge lashings of love.’ Definitely recommended reading.”

—*Andrew Merry*

National Field Experience Coordinator
Compassion International—Australia

“I had no idea this book would touch a deep chord in my heart. From the stories Doug tells to his amazing biblical insight, I was moved to tears, smiles, and even healing. I believe everyone will gain a closer relationship with the Father through the pages of this book. Thank you, Doug!”

—*Lisa Abbott*

Film producer and entertainment distributor

“Doug Stringer is wonderfully qualified to share tender, sensitive words that can bring healing and transformation to those who desire it. I recommend this book to all who struggle with issues dealing with their fathers—and also for those who do not.”

—*Dr. Paul Cedar*

Chairman, Mission America Coalition

“A handbook for fulfilling the destiny of two generations of fathers and sons: the Elijahs and the Elishas, the Pauls and the Timothys. Doug’s life is a testimony to an entire generation that struggles to fit in with orthodox American Christianity. It is Doug’s passion for God and his authentic love as an apostolic father that has pioneered a path for today’s emerging leaders.”

—*Matt Stevens*

Director, Somebody Cares Baltimore

“Wow! Talk about a book that makes you experience the whole spectrum of emotions! I first had a deep, aching in my heart and sadness for the state of our generation, then found myself wanting to jump up and down and say, ‘Here I am, send me!’ Doug loves us enough to be honest with us about our desperate situation but doesn’t leave us scratching our heads over how to solve it. He provides the answers and the direction, based on God’s Word.”

—*Kimiko Soldati*
US Olympic Diver

“Doug Stringer has come through personal pain into a place of victory, and God has commissioned him as a courageous and insightful instrument of healing for the fatherless—naturally and spiritually. His sensitivity in addressing this difficult subject demonstrates the Lord’s tender compassion toward the abandoned and broken-hearted. This is not just a message Doug preaches and writes about; it is one he lives.”

—*Brenda J. Davis*
Former editor, *SpiritLed Woman*

“*In Search of a Father’s Blessing* will not only heal the relationship gulf between fathers and sons in the body of Christ, but it will be the needle and thread to mend the tear between fathers and sons in the secular world, as well. As fathers, we must pass on a better world to our children. And in order to pass the baton to the next generation, we must be able to run alongside them.”

—*Dr. Ed Montgomery*
Pastor, Abundant Life Cathedral, Houston, Texas

"In Search of a Father's Blessing is so relevant to what is going on now in our world. I started reading it and couldn't put it down. In my ministry, I talk a lot about absent fathers but I was still amazed with some of the statistics I read. I've already been put in situations in which I used this book to minister to people. So many people have relationships with God the Father that are messed up because they don't have a relationship with their earthly father. I pray that people all over the world will read this message and will be convicted but also inspired."

—Melvin Adams

Former Harlem Globetrotter

"In Search of a Father's Blessing is right on mark with what is happening in our culture. Doug Stringer has his finger on the pulse of the current condition of our generation. It's not a message of hopelessness and doom but of hope and restoration. Doug's blend of God's truth and real-life stories makes for compelling reading and introspection."

—Jay Mincks

Executive vice president, Insuperity

"Doug Stringer is changing the world. From helping the poor and needy to reaching leaders at every level to facilitating and leading regional and national prayer gatherings, he is touching the masses and influencing nations. Doug's influence over my life has made my walk with God, my ministry, and my personal life soar to greater heights. No one is more suited to write a book like this than Doug Stringer. Because of his example there are many spiritual orphans who are now finding hope and purpose for their lives."

—Mike Rosas

Chaplain, Houston Rockets

Cofounder with wife, Lidiette, of Love Bought

DOUG
STRINGER

IN
SEARCH
OF

FATHER'S
BLESS
ING

THE CRY
OF A LOST
GENERATION



WHITAKER
HOUSE

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In Search of a Father's Blessing: **The Cry of a Lost Generation**

Originally published as *Who's Your Daddy Now?* Updated and revised.

www.dougstringer.com
www.somebodycares.org

ISBN: 978-1-62911-705-8
Printed in the United States of America
© 2016 by Doug Stringer

Whitaker House
1030 Hunt Valley Circle
New Kensington, PA 15068
www.whitakerhouse.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Stringer, Doug, author.

Title: In search of a father's blessing : the cry of a lost generation / by
Doug Stringer.

Description: New Kensington, PA : Whitaker House, 2016. | Includes
bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016009786 | ISBN 9781629117058 (trade pbk. : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Church work with families. | Families--Religious

aspects--Christianity. | Fatherless families--United States. |

Fathers--Religious aspects--Christianity. | Fatherhood--Religious
aspects--Christianity.

Classification: LCC BV4438 .S77 2016 | DDC 259/.1--dc23 LC record available at <http://lccn.loc.gov/2016009786>

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DEDICATION

To Jeanne and Kenny: my younger sister and brother (always “little” sister and brother to me). At the lowest points of my life, thoughts of you both, and a sense of responsibility I felt to be there for you, are what kept me going. Our family had many challenges, but we were still a family nonetheless. Though Dad was your biological father and my stepfather, he saw no distinction between us. Both Mom and Dad were very proud of each of us. I cherish the memories we share of growing up together. I can still remember being nine and then ten years old, when each of you both were born, and the exuberant joy I felt of having a little sister and brother. Yes, I will always remember the cloth diaper days, before disposables were invented.

To Judy: you were always “Daddy’s girl” to your father—my biological father—and I know you miss him dearly. I pray that you would come to know you have a heavenly Father who loves you even more and desires to hold that same place in your heart that our father held.

To my mom, my stepfather, and my biological father: who, by the grace of God, are now all with the Lord. Though growing up was not always easy, I cherish and honor the lessons I learned and the relationship we had as we grew to love one another even more through our adversities and challenges. In reality, I have so many fond memories, especially from our times together after we found a common place of healing in Christ.

To those who are my spiritual sons and daughters—Randy, JT, Andrew, Monica, John, Debbie, Bob, Scott, Dale, Julius, Melanie, and so many more—and to all of those who have adopted me as a father in the faith: what a pleasure it is, by God's grace, to walk this walk with you.

To those like myself who do not know how to be good spiritual parents: may God's grace be multiplies unto you as you learn to be fathers and mothers to an emerging generation.

And especially to an entire emerging generation in pursuit of spiritual fathers: may you receive a fresh revelation of your heavenly Father and the destiny He has for each of you.

IN MEMORY OF JUDGE TONY GUILLORY

Judge Tony Guillory was a man of faith, a champion of courage, and a mighty man of God. He considered me one of his spiritual fathers, yet he was also an example of the father's heart to those around him—though he never even knew his own father. He always found time for others and was often giving of his own time to speak to troubled youth.

Even though Tony was a man of stature in the community—working in Houston as an administrative judge for the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission)—he was a man of great humility. He had once been assistant attorney general for the state of Texas, but many people didn't even know that because he was always more interested in listening to others than he was in talking himself.

Tony put God first in all things. He took care of his family—his wife Vickie and their son Marquel. He brought wisdom and quiet strength to our board meetings. Even in the courtroom, those he ruled against still respected him because his judgments were just. He was part of our Mighty Men's ministry, a group of men who meet weekly to become better husbands, fathers, and men of God. He was a man who never had an unkind word to say about anyone.

Having walked with a limp for nine years following liver transplant surgery, one of Ton's greatest desires was to run again and to play ball with is Son. Now, he is running once again in his glorified body! He ran ahead of us all, and he taught us how to triumph, even in adversity.

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FOREWORD

The sun shone brightly over the sky, and the smell of newly cut grass filled the air. We all stood at attention as a casket draped in an American flag was led by a military honor guard to the graveside. How befitting for a man who had contributed so much to a movement that called men to a place of decisiveness, strength, consistency, and personal responsibility. He would say, “God has called me to speak with a prophetic voice to the men of this generation that manhood and Christ-likeness are synonymous.”

Family and friends gathered to honor the memory of a man who touched them so deeply through his life and ministry. Teary-eyed, they each stepped to the podium to share a testimony or offer their condolences to the family. There were two families attending the funeral of Edwin Louis Cole that day. One of them was his blood family, the Coles, and the other was a family of men to whom he had become a spiritual father, filling a void in their lives. I was one of them.

It was my turn to say a few words. It was difficult to hold back the tears because I saw him as a father and would sorely miss him, like many of the other men. I took the podium and began sharing my story, making sure to look at the Cole family and thank them for sharing this man with us. But I also looked around at the men he had fathered outside of his family, and a prophetic realization rested upon me: It was time for those who had been fathered to become fathers. I finished my

brief presentation and returned to my seat, feeling that a new season of men's ministry was dawning.

Also, among those spiritual sons fathered by Dr. Cole was Doug Stringer. He took the message to heart. So I am not surprised that, just a few years later, he is releasing this book, titled, appropriately enough, *In Search of a Father's Blessing*. I believe that every man and woman—fathers, mothers, pastors, youth leaders, husbands, wives, sons, daughters—should read this book. Doug not only raises the issue of fatherlessness, which we are all too familiar with, but he also sends out the clarion call to fill this void for others that already has been filled for us. It is a call to take responsibility for another generation looking for fathers to guide, guard, and govern their lives; to direct, protect, and correct; to lead them into true manhood and true womanhood.

These words were written some nineteen hundred years ago, but they still apply today:

For though you may have ten thousand teachers in Christ, you do not have many fathers. (1 Corinthians 4:15 NCV)

Thank you, Doug, for this work, and congratulations!

—Rev. A. R. Bernard Sr.
Founder and senior pastor, Christian Cultural Center,
Brooklyn, New York

INTRODUCTION: THE CRY OF A GENERATION

Late Sunday night, I received an e-mail from L.

There are times when I feel like “Father” is the worst name God could have given Himself. What a stupid idea, for “father” means rejection in my world.

In 1981, I founded a ministry called Somebody Cares as an out-reach effort to battle homelessness and a loss of hope in inner city Houston, Texas. Somebody Cares has implemented several citywide strategies that have been multiplied in cities across the nation, including mentoring programs and anti-gang and at-risk youth intervention training. The ministry has become a model that connects needs with resources during natural and human calamities, such as tornadoes and hurricanes in the US, earthquake and tsunami devastation in Japan, Indonesia, and Haiti, as well as the Asian Economic Collapse of 1998.

I had just spoken one morning at a church we had worked with on relief efforts after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. My message was about God’s love and mercy for the fatherless and His desire to adopt them into His own family.

One of my board members was there, along with his sister. He had become addicted to drugs when he was a young man, and his family had asked me to help locate a full-time recovery regimen for him. So I had helped him get into a Teen Challenge program directed by my friend Roger. Today, he runs the family business and heads up one of our Somebody Cares chapters. He has a beautiful family who all love the Lord.

All these years later, his sister's daughter is going through struggles of her own. It was she who sent the e-mail and gave us permission to share what she had written that night, in hopes of helping others:

I am eighteen years old. I feel God pulling on my heart more than I'm comfortable with, so I'm doing what He has told me to do—write to you. This is my story.

Like my uncle, I'm extremely determined. The last two years of my life have been thorny, to say the least. My dad left when I was sixteen, and ever since, I've had a hard time trusting God. To be honest, there are times when I question His authority and even His existence. I live in a small two-bedroom apartment with my mom and thirteen-year-old brother, so the couch is my best friend.

Almost exactly a year ago, I became pregnant. As you may know, I am adopted, as is my brother, and up until then, I'd always been immovably pro-life. But I knew I had other options, and I had an abortion six weeks later. I knew that I was making a huge mistake. I knew that it would destroy my spirit and tear out my heart, but I did it anyway.

After the impact of what I had done hit me, I drank myself into oblivion every night for about a year. I still struggle with alcohol periodically, but I never really got into drugs, mainly because I didn't like them. I know that if I had, I would most likely be on the street at this point.

I could make excuses as to why I had an abortion, but I still have to live with the choice I made. I hate myself for it, and the sound of the vacuum still haunts my dreams to this day.

However, I've just recently gotten to the point where I'm not ashamed of what I did. I don't try to hide it from people anymore. I want them to know so it doesn't happen to them.

There are times when I feel that I've never really been loved by a person who has touched me. There are times when I feel like "Father" is the worst name God could have given Himself. What a stupid idea, for "father" means rejection in my world.

These last two years, I guess I've been looking for something to justify my pain, to explain why all this has happened and why I am so screwed up. I know that you can find redemption only through God and that no one can do it for you, but I usually stay away from people I'm angry with. Honestly, most days, I want to go "Mike Tyson" on God.

Even though I've never met you, I have an enormous amount of respect for you and for what God did through you in my uncle's life.

I want to be who God wants me to be, and who I am today isn't who God wants me to be. I want God to be proud of me. I want my family to be proud of me. I want to be proud of me.

I really appreciate you for taking the time to read my e-mail. I don't mean to dump all my problems on you or anything; I just felt like writing to you was what God was telling me to do. I'd love to hear back from you.

*With utmost respect,
L*

Divorce, abandonment, rejection, pregnancy, abortion, alcohol, drugs—in one letter, this young woman addressed many of the issues our fatherless generation faces daily, and most can be traced back to a broken connection with a father. L's story echoes the heart-cry of an entire generation that is looking for the affirmation, acceptance, and approval of a father. What too many of them have experienced instead is abandonment and absence.

L said that “father” means rejection in her world, and she speaks for an entire generation. When I replied to the e-mail, I told her that no matter what she was going through or feeling, God the Father was there for her. I praised her for her honesty, because honesty is attractive to God. It’s only in that place of vulnerability that He can begin to bring healing. I could tell she really wanted to help others avoid the pain she had experienced, and I gave her hope that God would use her that way.

A few days later, I met with L in my office, and I listened as she spoke openly from her heart. I let her know that God wanted to take what the enemy intended for evil and use it for her good. I told her that God had a special love for those who are adopted. When she left, she had a hopeful heart and a joyful countenance.

She dreams of ministering someday to other young women who have experienced similar pain. In the meantime, she is receiving Christian counseling and reconciling with her family. Most of all, she is learning to accept God as her Father.

What we have today is a double generation of fatherlessness, consisting of a former generation (mine) and an emerging generation that both grew up, for the most part, without fathers. Even those who have or had good fathers still suffer from the widespread effects of fatherlessness in our culture and our world.

But if God has added grace for the fatherless and for the widow, how much more grace will there be for entire fatherless generations? And if we now have a double generation of fatherlessness, I believe we are going to see a double portion of grace poured out on these two generations, who together will emerge as the “Gen-Edge miracle,” a generation living on the edge of eternity. These generations will journey together to become a prophetic generation—a generation spoken of by the prophets of old (see Acts 2:17–18)—rising up to prepare people for the coming of the Lord!

Already we can see signs of this preparation. The Sentinel Group, producers of the Transformation video series, tracks lasting and sustained transformation in communities and nations throughout the

world. In 1999, only eight cities were experiencing the kind of revival in which every element of culture is touched. As a former Sentinel Group board member, I can report that by 2009, we knew of one thousand cities worldwide—and even some nations—that were at some point on the journey toward transformational revival.

This tells us that God is doing something quickly, and He will not wait on those who sit back and are stagnant in mediocrity and compromise. He's looking for a standard to be raised! We aren't called to be on the defensive; we should be proactively sharing the life of Christ with the next generation. We must be fathers and mothers to those emerging from life's wilderness, leading them to their Abba-Father through the Spirit of adoption found in relationship with His beloved Son Jesus Christ.

In the late 1980s, God began to give me insight into the state of our nation through the problems our ministry encounters daily as they reach out to individuals struggling with drugs, alcohol, abortion, prostitution, apathy, and so forth. He revealed to me the root and source of all these struggles: America is a nation devoid of fathers, both natural fathers and spiritual fathers. We are an orphaned nation with broken and dysfunctional families, a society of individuals in search of their identity. Recognizing this, I began calling the emerging generation the "no-direction generation."

When I published this in my book *The Fatherless Generation: Hope for a Generation in Search of Identity*, I didn't realize it would be even more relevant today than it was in 1995. More than two decades later, as I complete the book you are reading, the church is just now waking up to its need to father and mother an abandoned generation left to its own devices. And this is a worldwide condition, not one limited to our own country.

By the world's view, the emerging generation is merely one scattered in life's barren deserts, but God is calling them into their destinies! He is releasing forerunners to prepare the way for the coming revival.

The prophets of old yearned to see the days in which we live, because the words God spoke through them are being fulfilled now. This time,

it's not about one generation passing a baton to the next. God is a multigenerational God. He is simultaneously the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He wants to release a multigenerational anointing on all who are willing.

As He unites the wisdom and resources of former generations with the passion and zeal of the emerging generation, we will become a synergistic, unstoppable force advancing the kingdom of God!

At one of our meetings for emerging leaders, my friend Mike, a fellow minister of the gospel at Somebody Cares Humble, in Humble, Texas, echoed the passionate cries of our hearts with his closing prayer:

There is a sound within this generation. We've heard its rumblings, but we want to hear its full sound. Breathe on our minds, Lord, in areas where we have been wrestling to release this generation. Breathe on our hearts so that we can see this generation come forth, so that we can see revival come to pass. We are sick and tired of only hearing of the revival; we want to see the revolution. Let the revolution begin!

It is a cry of the heart, a corporate cry for a generation walking through the wilderness of life! We are a prophetic generation, a part of the double generation of the fatherless! It's a multigenerational anointing; we call forth other generations, churches, and even nations to come back to the Father!

The late Leonard Ravenhill once wrote to me, "My dearest brother, Doug, let others live on the raw edge or the cutting edge...you and I should live on the edge of eternity."

On the edge of eternity, bringing in the harvest for the final days—that's the Gen-Edge miracle! I can think of no better place to be!

Are you ready and willing to be part of the journey?

PART 1

A DOUBLE GENERATION OF FATHERLESSNESS

1

“WHO’S YOUR DADDY?”

You might recall this phrase from *Remember the Titans*, in which Denzel Washington plays a high-school football coach. In the movie, Coach Boone is approached by one of his players as the team boards a bus to training camp. The disrespectful young man demeans the coach’s authority, to which he responds, “Where’s your folks, Gary? Your parents—are they here? Where are they?”

Gary points at his mother, standing across the parking lot.

Boone looks at the mother, then back at her son, and says, “Take a good look at her, cause once you get on that bus, you ain’t got no mama no more. You got your brothers on the team, and you got your daddy. Now you know who your daddy is, don’t you?”

The young man is silent, unsure of how to answer.

“Who your daddy, Gary?”

No answer.

The coach demands, “Who’s your daddy?”

“You,” the young player finally replies.

One of my spiritual daughters was asked the same question, but in a different context—she was learning how to fly a helicopter. The view

and the sights were incredible. “So who’s your daddy?” the pilot jokingly asked her, sensing her enthusiasm.

“You are!” she answered.

Who’s your daddy? The question is slang for, “Who’s in control of things?” “Who’s showing you the ropes?” “Who’s taking care of you?” Sometimes, it’s meant in a derogatory way, implying control and manipulation and even bullying; other times, it’s used comically.

The question is a commentary on our times. We are a generation devoid of the intended intimacy of the family unit, and we compensate through using terms that reflect this lack.

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

(Matthew 12:34)

God wants to be the Abba-Father of an entire generation. *Abba* is Aramaic for “father,” a word used to express intimacy and endearment. I don’t intend to promote a common, casual, or irreverent depiction of God the Father. He is a holy God, and we honor Him and give the glory due His name. Even in His holiness, He loves us so much that He desires that we have the childlike boldness to come to Him as our Daddy, our Papa, in times of need. (See Hebrews 4:16.)

I believe that at the core of every problem we experience as an individual, a generation, and even a nation is disconnection from a father. It’s an issue of breach, an issue of broken trust.

I remember when, as a boy, my trust was broken with my own father. My dad was an underwater demolition frogman—today, we would call him a Navy SEAL. We were at the Naval Amphibious Base Coronado in San Diego, California. To be at the Amphibious Base as a young boy was bigger than life. Dad had bought me brand-new fins and a mask, just like the ones the Navy SEALs used. Dad was already in the water, and I walked up to the edge of the pool, so excited that I could hardly contain myself. But suddenly, I realized my dad was drunk and stopped dead in my tracks.

I believe that at the core of every problem we experience as an individual, a generation, and even a nation is disconnection from a father. It's an issue of breach, an issue of broken trust.

"Jump on in, Doug," he said. "Come on in, son. Jump in."

I wanted so badly to jump, to be with my dad. He could swim like a fish, and I wanted to learn, too. But I was frozen with fear. If he really loved me, why would he have gotten so drunk? Would I be safe with him? Could I trust him?

I couldn't do it—I couldn't jump. I was afraid that I would drown because he wasn't in control of his senses. A measure of intimacy with my dad was severed that day and was never restored. I never learned how to swim.

At some point, we've all experienced broken trust. When it happens repeatedly, we unjustly connect the wounds, hurt, and mistrust from damaged earthly relationships with our heavenly Father. The result is generations of orphans who don't understand the love of a heavenly Father because they never had the love of an earthly father. They don't know how to trust their heavenly Father because they were unable to trust their earthly fathers.

So now we have a generation of men and women who don't know how to be good fathers and mothers trying to raise another generation that is also in need. Entire nations of young men and women have orphaned themselves from the heavenly Father, or have yet to come into the revelation that God is their Father. Entire religions have forsaken the Father because they have denied the Son. (See 1 John 2:23.)

We all are looking for identity through what I call the three As: affirmation, acceptance, and approval. We look for it as individuals, generations, and nations.

The redemptive plan of God involves pouring out His grace on this generation and on entire nations, because He is the Father of all

generations and nations! “Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” writes Paul (Romans 5:20). So when the pain of fatherlessness abounds in a generation, how much more does God’s grace abound to them! If the issue is widespread fatherlessness, then the redemptive plan of God involves an outpouring of supernatural grace upon a generation that has not received the love, embrace, or affirmation of their earthly fathers. Are you ready to be a part of His multigenerational outpouring of grace?

We all are looking for identity through...affirmation, acceptance, and approval.

John the Baptist cried out, a lone voice in the wilderness, preparing the way for the coming of the Lord (see Isaiah 40:3); but the emerging generation is crying out with a corporate voice, “The Lord is coming! The Lord is coming!” Can you hear the cry?

God is “a father of the fatherless, a defender of widows,...[and] sets the solitary in families” (Psalm 68:5–6). God desires to take orphaned people, “dysfunctional” in the worldly vocabulary, and to set them into the family of the body of Christ. God is calling forth a generation wandering in the desert of life. He wants to give them a focus, a destination, and a destiny, to put a cloak on them, and to empower them to do great things in the name of Christ. He wants to transform a fatherless generation into a prophetic generation!

God waits with open arms for His prodigals to return, and He has sent His Son to find the lost. Are you willing to go the extra mile and join Him?