



Manuscript Review

“The Legacy of Absence”
by
Tim Olson

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Provided for:
Tim Olson

Genre:
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Thank you for the opportunity of reading your manuscript. My goal with your manuscript review is to provide guidance on how to improve your book and get it ready for editing and publication. It's my hope that these suggestions and thoughts can help both you and your book for the better. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Overall Impressions

The Legacy of Absence: Resolving the Wounds from Uninvolved Fathers in Individuals, Families, and Society is a book about the impact of a father's absence in his child(ren)'s life. A father may be absent for many reasons: work, addiction, divorce, prison, or even death. The negative impact on children is the same; this is known as the Father Wound, and all of us have a Father Wound. A child knows that his father is gone and that he has chosen to do something else rather than spend time with him and take care of him. The only exception is death, where a father does not have that choice. A child's consequent behavior is thus a result of being abandoned by his father. And a parent's abandonment has repercussions on a child's entire life, including his work, finances, relationships, and emotional well-being as an adult.

Your study and analysis of the Father Wound, its detrimental effects on a person's life, irrespective of gender, their family and the society they are a part of certainly provides food for thought. While I was reading your book, I couldn't help but reflect on my own Father Wound; in fact, one of the parts of the book that impacted me the most was when you relate how your father wounded you because your experience is eerily similar to my own. I too had a passive and uninvolved father during my childhood, and understanding (or, at least, starting to understand) why and how this affected our family dynamics as a whole, why I felt out of place in the society I was a part of, and how it has shaped my life since then to today, now that I am an adult, was very enlightening.

Your book is an interesting, thought provoking, and enlightening read.

What's Working Well

Establishing a connection with the reader in a book such as this is paramount. And you do this immediately when you introduce us to Don, a man who has never had a good relationship with his dad. A man who could be any one of us, so, if our case is similar to his (though it need not be), it isn't hard for us to connect and identify ourselves with him. What is more, Don's story comes full circle at the end of the book when you mention him

again to tell us what he has done to heal (or start healing) his Father Wound. This, I thought, was very well done. It gave us both cohesion and closure to the book, as well as a sense that we too can start healing our Father Wounds. I will talk about the connection with the reader again later, but for now I wanted to point out that this is an effective way of telling us readers that the Father Wound is universal. It is an epidemic affecting all levels of society in the world today. Later, you use these exact words in Chapter 4, but in Chapter 1, when you are only just introducing the problem and letting us know that a Father Wound needs to be given a lot more importance than it usually is, your words come across in a much more impactful way.

I liked that your writing style is easy to read and accessible to most readers, something that is very important when it comes to a topic as essential as this one, and that the book itself is organized in such a manner that it is readily comprehensible to the reader. The lessons you impart are clear and easy to learn for anyone willing to do so while the questions you make at the end of almost every chapter compel the reader to stop for a minute and think. And this makes the lesson of that chapter all the more significant and meaningful.

Areas for Revision

Broadly speaking, the book is structured as follows: in Part I, you explain what a Father Wound is and exemplify the distinction between Father presence and Father absence. In addition, you identify four distinct father-child scenarios based on both a physical and relational connection. Also, you explain what an uninvolved father is and how to identify him from a conglomerate of other fathers in society. Finally, you conclude that a father's presence (or absence) in the life of his child impacts that child for a lifetime. So, actively choosing to be present in your child's life is vital. Part II of the book addresses the core of the issue and talks about the cycle of uninvolvedness and how this uninvolvedness affects a child when he is creating his own identity and figuring out who he is. An absent father also eventually affects both his child(ren)'s family life and professional life as adults. Finally, in Part III, you talk about forgiveness and reconciliation. How forgiving your father is the first step to healing the Father Wound and, if possible, rebuilding your relationship with him later on.

Personally, I think that highlighting the difference between a father's presence and absence in the life of his child(ren) is very important. And the example of the two Ukrainian boys that you give in Chapter 4 highlights this difference loud and clear. But this is one of

the few examples in the text of father presence that is distinctly contrasted to father absence. The others get lost among the myriad of examples given of father absence throughout the book. Yes, this is a book primarily focused on the *negative* impact of father absence but it is precisely because of this that I think that the cases of father presence and a *positive* impact in a child's life should stand out more. In other words, the positives are important too. And sometimes, it is hard to see them in the text.

This brings me back to a positive I mentioned earlier: the connection with the reader. As mentioned before, you do this through anecdotes. These anecdotes ultimately make us want to root for the people you talk about and witness their healing journey because in essence we too are rooting for ourselves when we identify and see ourselves in them. But this connection, in my opinion, though strong and extant, is not as impactful as it could be.

Let me give you an example: When I was reading your book, I couldn't help but notice that my case is very similar to yours. I mentioned this. My father was present physically but emotionally uninvolved. My mother had to compensate for his emotional absence, and her style of parenting was a combination of a performance-based and shame-based system. As a reader, I connected and identified with you. But I only did so in a negative way. And by this, I mean that the both of us have experienced negative influences as a consequence of our fathers not being there. I, like you, have been shamed by my mother. The way I was shamed might not be the same, but I was shamed, nonetheless. The descriptions and accounts of the positive, on the other hand, of acknowledging that we have a gaping Father Wound and (the beginning of) our journey towards forgiveness and reconciliation were not as in-depth and meticulous as I was expecting them to be. That is, the description of the hard work it takes to start healing were not as assiduous and comprehensive as those of the negative impact of absence in the anecdotes told throughout the book and that prevented me from connecting with you or anybody else that you talk about in a positive way.

In other words, I wanted to experience the healing journey of these people right along with them. To walk hand in hand and live the journey with them. Every healing journey is different and that journey is personal. I understand that, but I wanted to know if what they had lived was anything like what I have lived. Everyone is in a different phase of that journey and I also know that people who have a negligible Father Wound don't usually seek help, but again, all the positive gets lost in the negative.

The connection with the reader also comes through the stories you tell us about your work in Ukraine. These stories highlight the problem as a universal one, present in the entire globe, and I think that addressing the issue of fatherlessness in Ukraine is relevant and important. Unfortunately, the history behind this problem in Ukraine isn't going to impact or affect the average reader in the US, to whom this book is addressed, as much as we would like to think so. Now, if your average readers were people living and experiencing this phenomenon in Ukraine, then yes, the impact of these stories on them would be huge. But the average American citizen almost never leaves the country, and I don't see these stories impacting them as much as we would like them to. Yes, stories like Don's address the issue of fatherlessness in the United States but these get pushed back to the background in the chapters focused on Ukraine. The history of fatherlessness in the US isn't even talked about. I say this because the US is the most fatherless nation in the world. We have a National Father's Day, but we don't celebrate it the same way we celebrate Mother's Day. In the US, most families need a double income or they cannot pay their bills, so both mom and dad have to work and because childcare is expensive some families don't have any other option but to leave the kids alone in the house under the care of their eldest child most of the time after school. Most adults work long hours, and women inevitably come to a point in their lives where they either have to choose between working and becoming financially independent or having a family. These are very real problems in the US, and I don't want to lessen the ones in Ukraine but a very small number of readers in the United States are going to identify with what is going on in a country they've never been to and know so little about other than that it is currently at war with Russia.

I do think, however, that highlighting the pervasiveness of fatherlessness at a global scale is important. And if you want to do this, don't just talk about the US and Ukraine. Fatherlessness in Mexico and in most of Latin America is rampant as well; in this part of the world, however, the origin of fatherlessness doesn't come from Communism. It comes from Machismo and a way of life that extols violence and abuse towards women; a way of life that blames them for men's behavior and actions. Extramarital affairs and infidelity, for example, are not seen as something that a man chooses to do of his own accord and volition but as something that happens to a woman because she "let herself go", so it is her *fault* that her husband's love and loyalty steered away from her to another; if a woman knows that her husband has been unfaithful to her, she doesn't get mad at him for cheating on her but she does get mad at the woman that he cheated on her with. The joke of the married woman hitting and yelling at her husband's mistress, and not at her husband, is a pervasive one in Mexican society, for example. If, on the other hand, a woman decides to leave her husband, it is not *she* who left him. It is *him* who left her when

he decided to cheat for something that she was not doing right. But men who have children with one woman, cheat, and then have children with another, and so on and so forth, also beget abandonment.

I also agree with what you say in Chapter 8. Little girls obtain their sense of self-worth from their fathers. The way that their father perceives women is going to influence the way a little girl sees herself and the way others see her. If a little girl, for example, wants to learn how to swim but her father says no because her "shoulders will get too broad and too masculine", that says a lot about the way he perceives women. And this is what the little girl will learn and make herself fit into as she grows up. Likewise, Machismo teaches girls to expect being cheated on and that all men leave their homes and families to form new homes and families with other women; some of them even do that with four or five different women. If their father leaves a little girl's mother, that little girl will eventually expect all men to do the same. And live their entire marriage, if they do get married as adults, expecting their husbands to cheat on them and leave them. They will learn that all men abandon their wives and children. Today, sadly, this is the norm in Mexico. The Father Wound in women, however, though existent and acknowledged, is barely talked about in the book. Most of the people whose stories we hear from are the stories of Father Wounds in men. Father Wounds affect men and women differently. I think this should be addressed more diligently.

Finally, I want to talk about the Mother Wound. I know that this book focuses solely on the Father Wound, and you clarify that early on. But I think that the Mother Wound, in relation to the Father Wound, is too important a topic to set aside. You say that we all have a Father Wound. Likewise, I think, we all have a Mother Wound. And both of these affect our lives in unison. They don't hurt us separately. They are both uniquely and irrevocably united. And they both hurt us as one. You said it yourself: when a father is physically present in the household but emotionally uninvolved in his family's life, the mother tries to compensate and can eventually become too controlling. My mother was like this. She controlled every little aspect of our lives. Even the way we dressed. And my siblings and I reacted by making rebellious choices. My sister took a second outfit to school in her backpack and changed. When the bell rang, at the end of the day, she would go back to the bathroom and change into the first outfit again before my mother arrived to pick us up. I never listened; my mom would tell me to do something, and I would rebel by not doing it. It is all correlated, and I honestly think that such a correlation shouldn't be set aside in a book about wounds we receive from our parents even if you do intend to focus more on the Father Wound than on the Mother Wound.

It is true, nonetheless, that a Mother Wound is more often addressed than a Father Wound. Most people don't think about the Father Wound actually, because, in most cases, the father isn't the one who stays home with the children and takes care of them while the other parent goes off to work during the day. It is the mother. And she, as our primary care giver, is whom we tend to think about first when it comes to the wounds we receive from our parents. But pointing out that there is, in fact, a Father Wound, caused by the absence of a father in the life of his family and child(ren), is one of the most valuable lessons of your book. It reminds us that it exists, that it is there, and that we shouldn't take it lightly.

Final Comments

When reading this book, readers should expect to find a helpful guide to begin their journey in healing the wounds from uninvolved fathers. And the structure I outlined above—in three parts—sets out to do this, focusing primarily on your path for forgiveness and reconciliation. I do not intend to deter from this purpose. However, I do recommend a thorough developmental edit where a balance between examples of positive and negative influences of father presence and absence respectively is more noticeable and impactful for the reader.

Father Wounds are universal, and this phenomenon is an epidemic that affects all levels of society in the world today. Hence, I also think that it is important to emphasize that global pervasiveness not only by focusing on the United States and Ukraine but also by exemplifying how this problem occurs in other countries of the world as well.

Finally, I don't think we should forget about the Father Wound and its effect on women. A developmental edit where we work to include this in the text will help, in my opinion, improve your book for the better and help heal more people's lives.

Thank you for trusting me to review your manuscript! As I said, reading your book was a thought-provoking and enlightening experience and I hope to help you make other people's experience reading your book as insightful and instructive as mine was.

I look forward to speaking with you soon, and good luck on your publishing journey.

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