**To God be the glory…**

It is with great honor that I thank God and President Jerry Young for the privilege to serve as the president of the National Baptist Laymen’s Movement. I stand on the shoulders of eight great men who served as president of this august body. Words cannot express my deepest love, and appreciation to all National Baptist Laymen Leaders., our State, District and Local Presidents and officers for your loyal, devoted support and loyalty to God, and the National Baptist convention, USA., Inc. and to all of our great laymen and laywomen I am grateful for your prayers and well wishes. I thank Bro. Harold Simmons, my State President Rev, Dr. Guy Campbell, Jr., the National Baptist Convention General Secretary Rev. Dr. Calvin McKinney, My Pastor Rev. Dr. David Jefferson, Sr. for recommending to Rev. Dr. Jerry Young to become President to lead this great Laymen’s Movement at search a time as this.

 I accept the mandate and challenge that President Young has charged us with. He wants us to grow the Laymen’s Movement on every level: the National, State, District as well as Local Church. I solicit the support of every leader and man to work together to get the job done. My State President Rev. Dr. Guy Campbell often says, “Working together works.” We will be counting on our pastors who we say we love and support to take a lead role in our effort, to encouraging the men in their church to disciple other men and those who may have fallen by the wayside to come and get involved in this great task. Yes we have an awesome responsibility but with God on our side we can and will be equal to the task…for the church doth wait so let’s rise up and make her great. We are Godly men.

 This week we will hear much about Jeremiah 29:11 and will hear even more as we “Envision the future exceptionally.” We will find that the future in Jeremiah is one that is bright—one that everyone in the community through prayer and worship seeks as their collective future and hope. Many of us want to desperately know the plan that God has for each one of us as individuals, but let the prophet Jeremiah remind us that it’s not all about us, and it might not look like what we think.

 Even more important than our decision about which college to attend, which city to move to or what job offer to take is the future hope of the Kingdom of God foretold by the prophets and fulfilled in the reign of our now and coming King. In this way, the promise of Jeremiah 29:11 is bigger than any one of us—and far better.

**A Guide for Godly Men**

Men of today need to understand the reason of our being. The need of this understanding was never so mandatory till now. The world of today is unreliable, unstable and uncertain and to remove these defects, a strong leadership is urgently required. We are to be Leaders; who are not self-centered and occupied by our worldly cares but show willingness to manly accept the challenges thrown at us. But even this acceptance and excellence is not sufficient. We should be men whose leadership is searched for, who are able to carry out manly stuff like shaving with a strap razor, making fires without the aid of a matchstick and deep frying turkeys, remain disengaged. Rather than getting engaged in chores that require hardships and manhandling, we should not be men of the present era skulk behind computer screens and pretend to fulfill our given duties, despite knowing the reality and not acting as we should. The world needs those men who have a strong heart, a vital power of decision making, consistent behavior, noble attitude, perseverance, and a will power so strong that drives them to get engaged into sacrificial tasks and being a passionate leader at the same time.

 We require men, who follow the path of God! A book has been written about such men with a distinctive message as compared to other resources echoing with the message of manhood. So, the aim is the same; to seek out men of God.

 Men who just stand up and show their presence and contributions are not required rather those who work for the good of the world, whose approaches and methods are timeless, who have realized the sole purpose of their existence, who follow Jesus for the sake of redemption of their fellowmen and those who are prone to the concept of sin in their manhood are the need of the hour.

 This search does not end here. Men of God who comply with their words and act upon them are in demand. We have observed men who have loopholes and vacuum between what they say and what they do. There is a huge difference between their actions and their beliefs. Men of God with active conscience and consistency are required.

Let us “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (James 1:22).

 By just having a firm belief in the being Godly men and God is not enough if that belief is not bringing any difference in your thoughts and actions; as a father, as a friend, as a son, as an employee or as a boss. All these beliefs are useful only if they are practiced. We may act as a platform or source for anybody who wants an in-depth knowledge about Godly men but before that the flaws, present in us, that separate actions from beliefs must be rectified.

 We may come to the conclusion that such an approach is taken as very subjective. However just by acting upon these manhood beliefs is not sufficient and this is not the sole way to redemption as well but I am convinced that converting the said words into action is necessary. This is the least that can be expected from the mentors of Godly men to be neglected or else acting opposite to their beliefs.

 All this is to be done for the sake of the Gospel; the men of deeds not of works, the ones following the trail showed by God. Things need to be redirected as urgent for the following of Godly men. We require men who are ready to take the responsibility; designed and bestowed upon them by God, who are ready to bear the burden of it and predispose their manhood towards the Gospel.

 Jesus is the one who is the savior of men, for Jesus has taken our sins upon Himself with His righteousness and has replaced the rebellions. This reality rings true for us as we will be redeemed because of our manhood and the services we owe towards God. Moreover men are in debt to Jesus for their redemption and for the position of a leadership they have been appointed to. We are subject to create followers and spread the word. Instead of classifying the orders of the Gospel, We men who are redeemed need to incorporate the instruction in our conventional lives and in the roles of fathers, husbands, sons and leaders that we play. We need to act beneficently towards our kids and families.

 Leaders who promote this understanding and this combination must not judge us as those who move away from their religion who do not follow Jesus anymore rather they should consider us as a primary front for spreading the good news. The Gospel provides unlimited breakthrough chances for the both men and women to spread their services. But in order to do so, self-sacrifice and courage is required. These services include increasing witnessing to the people who are out of reach and are ignorant of the word of God. Our prayer should be for willing people that the word will encourage, appreciate and push forward those who desire to be the men of God and aim to act upon the instructions delivered by Jesus.

**Pastors And Leader In The Church**

Peter said, “I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-2).

 The current scenario of the renaissance of manhood is like that to a great extent and its entrance into the Christian culture should be eulogized. Some observers consider it making up to the decline of male attendance in the local church that has been seen in past years. But if we are holding the position of a pastor or a leader in the church, we must encourage a rebirth or reunion of men as a good sign with respect to manhood. Enjoying the relishes of manhood is not enough. It is also not about styling ourselves in the demeanor and praising one’s manliness. It’s all about being moved and called a true follower of the Gospel and God.

 Keep in mind the warnings given by peter: “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Our adversary the devil who prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8). This warning might be directed towards a specific person but it was aimed at the shepherds of the flock of the God. Beware of the dangers, the perils that take the form of lions, patrolling outside the barn and the locality. The people on his target list are the disengaged dads, preoccupied husbands, stubborn sons, and lethargic men. If marriages are the true reflection of the Church and Jesus Christ, then certainly, Satan will track husbands and try to mislead them about the love that Christ has for them. If God represents himself in the form of a father, then Satan will distract dads and will try to convince them into depicting God as an angry, harsh and inconstant figure, putting the Gospel in danger.

 The church works for the betterment and according to the will of the men, so both act accordingly and in compliance with each other. So, all the pastors and leaders need to prepare the men. Do not try to merge manly activities by replacing and swapping things rather lay the foundation of the church which will invite all the males of every age group to live their lives as per the instructions and examples by Christ, the way his life is full self-sacrifice and compassion, the manner which voices his love for Church and His volunteering ways as a compensation for His neglect. Endure the hurdles in the way of being a good dad. Prepare the fathers to nourish and bring up their children in a much more disciplined manner. Play the roles of pastors and leaders who teach about following and practicing moral values and show their expectations towards the men to behave like this. Demand men and boys to be resilient, tough and hopeful towards their lives. Strong men will lay a foundation of reputable churches so we should shepherd them up. Now some questions arise, how can one build a culture of Godly men in one’s church? And what does that look like? The answer to these questions is simple yet subtle; more challenging than ever.

**Teach to the Men in Your Church**

The reorganization of the men starts with announcement of the word from the pulpit of the Church. There can be no special event then the one holding the ceremony of proclamation of the Gospel. As the congregation pays heed to the exegete of the scripture, and as we begin to gather people who are faithful towards God and his Gospel, special attention is to be paid to those men who can be of help in the expanding of the services. For instance, when the word is being preached, it must not be general rather it must inhibit all the details. And say, “Listen to this young man...” and then recite the word of God to the people. And may find ways to stress upon points like “This is for you husbands...” or God is speaking to fathers here... ”. Precisely the same method can be applied for grabbing the attention of children and women. Nevertheless, the chance of spreading the application to men must not be missed.

 One method in this respect is to keep the pictures or introduction of those men, serving the church, close while planning and preparing to speak to them. Say prayers for the selected men and muse on first Thessalonians 5:14: “Admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.” Then allow the Holy Spirit to guide through that spiritual work of God and help in guiding, leading, encouraging and admonishing the needed men.

**Create an Appetite**

 Tim Challies wrote in one of his compilations, “Men don’t follow programs, they follow men.” Before getting worried about planning and the framework of the announcement, the foremost thing to do is to evoke the thirst and want of the knowledge in men. Following are some ways that may help in achieving this task.

 Expose the targeted foes: men need a constant reminder of what they might be losing. Despite the serene and calm environment in which we exist, it must be analyzed from a smart person’s perspective considering the world as a battleground rather than a walk in the park. And the men need to think themselves as soldiers, who are about to fight a hard battle (2 Timothy 2:1-4). In order to demonstrate the true spirit of the cause, arouse the interest of the men. Several ways can be adopted like showing an encouraging movie or a documentary that would boost their confidence and prepare them.

 Plan a retreat for men: where men can gather in their free time and talk about primary issues that need to be addressed. The retreat can serve as a basis for increasing their thirst for knowledge with the help of interesting trainings and drills. Men with devotion and leadership characteristics may be chosen to sharpen the instincts of others and provide connection between the message and the situation. Older and wise men should be given the chance to train the new ones. Whatever things are to be done, it should be kept in mind that they are not supposed to be overdone. The best way could be taking small steps in the initial phase, create a space which can be filled with ideas and response and then proceed with the deliverance.

**Resource the Selected Wise Men**

 The theme of the message would be that we all are followers of the word of God. A congregation based on literate people should be founded, that must focus on spreading the message based on the love for God and to enlighten the general public about the blessing this world is for us by God.

 Conversations must be carried out on the books. Quotations, events, examples, and stories teaching an edifying lesson could be utilized in the pulpit. Men could be asked about their interest in the reading. Their favorite books, the sort of literature they like to read and any recommendations they want to propose. A group reading session could be arranged for the sake of guidance in addition to the Laymen’s quarterly.

 The Church should have a collection of good books by the intellectuals and should be comprehended and studied by the men. There could be challenging competitions among the men to read those books. Short books on morality and religious teachings in form of essays or short stories would be a good choice for example, C.J. Mahaney’s Sex, Romance and the Glory of God etc.

**Make a model of it**

 What should be remembered here is more is caught than taught. As leaders let the people take a leaf out of your book. Be a role model for the men. The way the pastor and leaders lead the congregation, the way they delivers the messages and the way they are benevolent towards all equally, all these habits and manners must be learned by the men. Spoon feeding the etiquettes and manipulating the minds and styles of people will not be helpful on this level.

 A Breakfast or a lunch could be arranged with men for the sake of promoting harmony and kindness. Complaints shouldn’t be made by the pastors and leaders. Complaining about presenting a massage on a cold and late night cannot be an acceptable excuse. The pulpit is to spread positivity only and thus it must be used for the same purpose.

 Men should not be given any reason to complain at all. They should not be given a chance to get away while complaining about things as the purpose they will be gathered for is moral and a life dependent in a Genesis 3 world. If the situation requires take the men to a nearby cancer health center and show them around to acknowledge the lives those men are living.

 Grumbling about the upcoming work load would not be a pleasant thing. So try to avoid it. As a pastors and leaders, we should assure that nothing hinders our progress. We should work with full devolution in the church and aim for the hardest work.

**Serve All of Your Men**

 The men should be paid respect and regarded high. They should be praised and appreciated for the work they are be up to. This is the particular duty of a true spiritual leadership. Both the funky and the fun saints fall in this category (found in every church). I pray that many such saints keep serving the churches and may God have mercy upon them.

 Here I would like to add these words of Paul to the Corinthians, “The parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (I Cor. 12:22, 24-26).

 So every man should be served well, until they are mature enough to understand the teachings of Christ (Col. 1:28). This will be the true depiction of heaven. Just like the ways adopted by Jesus’ disciples, the way they followed him, it may look haphazard, but the ultimate goals of cultivating the society must be met no matter how much man-effort it requires.

**Create Challenges and Opportunities**

 Assembling a group of men together and assigning them certain tasks to rehabilitate the distorted and dispersed world is neither an easy task, nor is it very easy to aid the men spiritually. This is not how things are going to work. Men are thought to be the leaders and have a higher status in the society thus this concept has formed the basis of founding the ministries as well. Getting the men, remodeling them, working on their character and duties, helping them build their self-esteem, providing them sources to bring back the lost soul of the Churches, arranging reading sessions, making them stand in the circles and reciting hymns and confessing the worst sins ever committed , all this used to happen in the past but not now. Men are thought to be problem-solvers and task achievers.

 This thinking needs to be incorporated in the current scenario. Men should be assigned bigger tasks. They should be set to work in a loaded environment. Easy grounds, flowery paths, comfortable working environment must not be given to the men of today. They should be given heavy and difficult tasks to accomplish so that they can realize the extent of their strengths. They must realize that they are not born to do meager work.

 Think of a few tasks, for example, dealing with swaggers and vagrants in the congregation, dangerous missions or building ventures. Get a few men out exclusively to lead in these endeavors — in the event that we give a general welcome we’ll normally get a general (and unimportant) reaction.

 Before you start try not to worry about the subtle elements. We can simply get a few of the men together and give them an issue to comprehend. For example, regarding the upcoming winter you can say, “Let’s check on all the widows in our church and see if they all have necessary stuff to keep warm in the winter." Some might require another heater. That may cause a little problem for us to solve as we have to find a new heater. We will solve the problem and take care of the issue. This is what men do.

 We could even arrange some normal things like shoveling snow for the elderly ladies by gathering a few men and afterward go out for eating at Applebees’ (or another most loved restaurant). Appreciate what they did and the kinship of tackling shared activities and difficulties for the kingdom.

**Fill in Strategy and Structure**

 Once we start lecturing, demonstrating and also follow it ourselves, we should come up with some major effort requiring projects as well as estimating ventures for a while. Though we should not focus much on the front end but we should focus on the structure and strategy, which won’t get our structure in the way and also we won’t become too programmatic.

 When we have a prosperous and growing movement, it's time to get back with an organization to be sustainable. Strategy and structure at this point will help guide and institutionalize what is happening. One thing to keep in mind when institutionalizing things is what’s the message the church is sending men visually - in the newsletter, the lobby and even their designs illustration on the screen.

 Like the Christian bookstores, these areas tend to target women, but usually can be made more focused on men without women less involved in their service. Institutionalize it but only after it has taken shape.

**HELP MEN take it home!**

 Finally, we will have the intention of helping lead the men as husbands and fathers. We could gather the men out for breakfast or lunch and ask, "How does your leadership look at home?" Expect them to be facing the challenges of some kind, but help them make a move. It doesn’t have to be a touchdown, just start with some one yard plays.

 One way to know how things are going in the marriage of a man is to say. "Tell me about your last date with your wife" This is usually a very good barometer for that marriage. It also gives the opportunity to offer suggestions to date. A good way to serve men in the church is to have on hand a list of ideas for local dates. Remember men who get this list, however, it is to be kept secret - a code of honor among men of his church. Your wives do not need to know about this shared intelligence. Pastors and leaders like you looking to invest in men and parents, be encouraged to explore the great work that God is doing through the church ministries and home intentionally connected. A seminar, for example, that outlines a vision for families called "Family Equipping Ministry Model".

 We adopted Men’s Straight Talk Men Ministry in my church which is an adaptive process of proclamation and practices of a congregation for parents - especially fathers - are recognized, trained and accountable as individual’s discipleship primarily responsible for their children. Each ministry is redirected to partner with parents in the task of discipleship.I hope you find this messaage useful, but more importantly, I hope that we will be committed to shepherd the people of our church on a regular basis and encouraging -admonishing toward Godly men and make disciples for the glory of God. Whatever we can do to encourage men to return to our congregations we should do it like our lives depends on it. Throw out the life line someone is sinking today…

***"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true,***

***Whatsoever things are honest,***

***Whatsoever things are just,***

***Whatsoever things are pure,***

***Whatsoever things are lovely,***

***Whatsoever things are of good report,***

***If there be any virtue,***

 ***And if there be any praise,***

***Think on these things." --Philippians 4:8***