



The GLOBAL ADVOCATE

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Mobilizing Disciples

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Fathers on the Move: Empowering Men for Purpose

an interview with *Pastor Victor Glover*
by *Lance Finley*

You may have noticed that God never wastes anything. Often, it is in the difficult times of our lives or in the healing of the broken places in us that God works, not only to restore and heal our individual lives, but He also works through us to help facilitate the same kind of healing and work in the lives of others. That has certainly been true in the life of Pastor Victor Glover and the work of Fathers on the Move. It is also true that God can do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesian 3:19-20) and God is proving just that in Chapel Hill, North Carolina and beyond.

Victor relates that the vision for Fathers on the Move was born in his own life experience. Coming out of incarceration, Victor found himself working to navigate life as a single father. “I wanted to be the best dad I could be to my son, but I also saw first-hand where a lot of the gaps were in the system. I learned that single dads need advocacy, too.”



Victor Glover with the youth group at his office at the Chapel Hill PD Sub station

In 2012, Victor was working at the Department of Social Services in the WorkFirst Department. This gave him another perspective of the needs of the community. “It was clear that men needed advocacy, especially the fathers. A supervisor of Child Protective Services encouraged me to put something together to help these fathers overcome their personal barriers and problems. Fathers on the Move was the answer to that challenge.”

The local unemployment commission gave Victor classroom space. The initial men were gathered through referrals and word of mouth. The early efforts of Fathers on the Move aimed to address the real needs of these men, such as understanding child support, information on father’s rights, and the importance of keeping receipts to verify purchases. Another important skill addressed dealt with résumé building, which is especially important for men coming out of incarceration. Victor shares, “Many men are released from incarceration and they don’t have a plan for life on the outside. It’s critically important to help them develop a support system. Fathers on the Move provided these men a safe place to let it all out, to tell the truth, and helped them address some of the root issues in their lives without being judged.”

In 2018, Fathers on the Move transitioned to a 12-week curriculum structure and support group system. Level 1 of the program addresses communication skills, relationship building, family awareness, anger management, employment, entrepreneurship and community relation building (helping men rebuild bridges to the community that may have been harmed by previous actions or behavior).

Level 2 of Fathers on the Move is also a 12-week program. The focus of Level 2 centers heavily on leadership development. Participants in Level 2 have completed Level 1 and are now helping lead a Fathers on the Move Level 1 group or assisting with a Level 1 group. These men become facilitators and mentors for other members of the program. Victor shares, "It's all about developing men so they can pass on what they've received to others." Victor works with the Level 2 class members and provides coaching and feedback as they lead the Level 1 classes.

Each level has a graduation ceremony to celebrate the men. Victor stresses that it's important to celebrate these milestones and significant accomplishments

in the graduates' lives. Law enforcement officers and officials participate in the celebration as well. Imagine how that instills confidence into the graduates when they see law enforcement officers believing in them and supporting the change that has taken place in their lives. Victor shares, "Our chief of police wants to start bringing rookie cops to the celebration to help teach them that people can change."

While Fathers on the Move started in Chapel Hill, God has open doors to grow and expand to other locations. In North Carolina you'll find Fathers on the Move in Raleigh, Burlington and Roxboro. Fathers on the Move is looking to expand in other locations across North Carolina including Greensboro, Asheboro, Kannapolis, and Charlotte. Fathers on the Move is also working to expand nationally in York, PA; Jacksonville, FL; Anderson and Columbia, SC; Findlay, OH, Virginia Beach, VA, Leadwood, MO as well as in the state of Georgia.

Fathers on the Move operates in both communities as well as several prison facilities. There are Fathers on the Move chapters presently in local, state, and federal



Receiving Proclamation from City Council as FOTM Month in the city of Chapel Hill NC

prisons in North Carolina. Before COVID, there were 125 men in the class being offered at the federal prison facility. While COVID has placed in-person classes and volunteer services on hold, Fathers on the Move continues to resource the men in the facility with digital materials. Participation is not mandated and that means that 125 men have voluntarily participated. Fathers on the Move is now federally certified to offer programming in the federal prison system.

Fathers on the Move works with men both in pre- and post-release. This requires work both inside and outside the prison system. They've learned that the first 48 hours after release are crucial. Men report to Fathers on the Move within 48 hours after their release and this helps greatly with their transition into society.

Fathers on the Move also has a youth level for young men older than 16 years old. They are often referred to Fathers on the Move from the juvenile court system, department of social services, health department or the local school system. The youth program offers both Level 1 and Level 2 and the youth curriculum focuses on the 3 L's – listening, learning and life. One of the main goals of the Fathers on the Move youth program is to eradicate the school-to-prison pipeline by mentoring these young men.

It Takes Partnerships

Victor is quick to point out that a ministry like this requires partnerships with lots of different agencies and entities in the communities in which Fathers on the Move serves. At the top of the list is local law enforcement; the Chapel Hill Police Department provides office space for Fathers on the Move. The Orange County Sheriff's Department has been a key partner in working with Fathers on the Move. The list of partners also includes the county commissioners, the Mayor's office, and the U.S. Attorney's office.

Victor stresses the importance of partnerships. "When we look to establish a Fathers on the Move chapter in a new community, there are three people we want to meet before we get started: the chief of police, the county sheriff, and the mayor. We have found that

those individuals are typically eager to help and often have meeting spaces or buildings that can be shared." Currently, 85% of the Fathers on the Move locations are provided by one of their community partners.

Another partnership that has formed over the course of the past year has been with Winebrenner Theological Seminary (WTS). This spring, WTS offered the first class to graduates of Fathers on the Move. Seven students completed their first seminary class in March and plans are being made to offer a second class this summer. Victor relates, "I wanted to help break the stigma of higher education. A lot of the men we work with have been told they can't do it. Well, they're doing it. They're believing in themselves. They're building their confidence and proving that they can do seminary-level work." Victor is also setting the example for his fellow Fathers on the Move as he's on track to complete a Bachelor of Science degree in Religion, Biblical and Theological Studies later this year at Liberty University.

Partnerships are vital for the work being done through Fathers on the Move. Victor is quick to add what he's learning through partnering with so many others. "You can get God's work done at a greater level when you collaborate with others. We're better together. You'll be surprised by the people who want to help you as you help others."

Get to Know Your Community and its Needs

Victor is quick to stress that a lot of the work with Fathers on the Move is rooted in learning about a local community or neighborhood and working to meet those needs. "We try to learn what the community needs and then find ways to meet those needs. We went into one community asking, 'How can a ministry or non-profit group help here in this community?' We learned from our time in the community that kids were going hungry, even with the presence of a lot of food stamp support. So, we pulled together a group of folks and took food in and fed the kids of the community. As we fed the kids, we also learned that



Victor Glover being presented by Chaplains at Butner Federal Prison for Volunteer Of The Year Award

they needed mentoring, particularly with their reading skills. We've got a Need to Feed and a Need to Read. We helped launch a reading tutor program. The local health department found out about it and offered to help by providing free books for the program. Reading levels started going in up in the community as we helped to make sure that kids didn't fall behind in the summer months when they're prone to lose a lot of their learning."

"In another situation, we found out that a lot of folks in an apartment complex didn't have their GED (high school equivalency diploma). We partnered with our county literacy agency to offer a GED class in the apartment complex. The manager of the complex offered to watch the kids while their parents were in the class. Jesus went in and met the needs of the people. We try to do the same. We assess the needs and try to meet those needs. That opens up the door because people know that we care."

What's Next?

Fathers on the Move is not only continuing to expand by adding new chapters, but God is working well beyond the initial design of the program. Victor shares, "Church planting grows out of where we've met the people and lived, loved, and walked like Christ in their midst. We're beginning to see this next development with the launch of new faith communities. There are

new micro churches growing out of Fathers on the Move inside the prisons. We're seeing Fathers on the Move meet on Thursday evenings and then a church come together on Friday night with some of the same folks. We believe we're going to see God begin to launch new churches through what has been started through Fathers on the Move."

"We're all about mentoring and discipleship. Fathers on the Move is reaching people from all walks of life and even different faith backgrounds. There are Muslims and Wiccans who are being reached through Fathers on the Move. This has revolutionized how I see the ministry of the church. We're meeting people right where they are and we're not forcing Jesus on them. We're loving them and meeting their needs and God's working through it all."

"Men are being equipped to become leaders. God is calling some of them into ministry. Some of them are starting micro churches. As they are released from prison, these men are coming out fired up for Jesus. Fathers on the Move has helped equip them and given them a confidence that they lacked before."

"We are learning what happens when you walk alongside a man and help him truly address the root causes of his issues. Something powerful happens when God helps him to name and own his pain and then let go of his pain to grab hold of what He has for him. Jesus is working in the lives of men through Fathers on the Move!" ■