

CONTENTS

Introduction: If You're about Urban Youth Ministry, This Book Is for You	7
Chapter 1—Sonship and Daughterhood: The Human Model	15
Chapter 2—Family Models: Providing the First Models, Mentors, and Messages	31
Chapter 3—Models in the Synagogue: Leaders in the Neighborhood	53
Chapter 4—On-the-Job Training: Lessons from the Leaders	65
Chapter 5—Observance and Obedience: Learning to Live Out What We've Been Told	83
Chapter 6—The Effectiveness of Rituals and Relationships: Strengthened by the Power of Belief	95
Chapter 7—Models of Intercession: Who Has Your Back?	111
Chapter 8—Nations in the Neighborhood	125
Chapter 9—Designed for World Impact: Created in God's Image to Change the Planet	145
Bibliography	165

INTRODUCTION

The year was 1959. In a community hospital on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, René Darlene Rochester was born to her proud parents, Frederick Douglas Rochester and Bernice Bryant Rochester.

Both of my parents were hard workers. My mother was a nurse at Children's Hospital in Boston. My father, a graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music, was an accomplished musician and a part-time instructor in voice and piano in the Fine Arts departments at both Boston University and Northeastern University. To support his family, he also worked evenings, playing dinner music at Hugo's Lighthouse Restaurant (now known as Atlantica) in Cohasset, Massachusetts.

My birth certificate looks like those of other children born that same year in our community: It contains the handwritten word *colored* in the space provided for race. I was born approximately five years after the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. On May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that racial segregation in public schools violated the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. This ruling was then applied to other public facilities, and in the years following, other decisions struck down similar Jim Crow legislation.

I can only imagine the thoughts going through my parents' minds. Their two daughters (my sister, Karen, was born in 1956) would at-

tend school alongside white students in the infancy of integration. This was a new day!

Well, nine months after my birth, things changed in the Rochester house. My father suffered a blood clot to his heart and died, and my mother was suddenly left to raise two daughters under the age of five on a single income. The financial and emotional pressures increased, and we had to move from Roxbury to the Jamaica Plain housing projects. We were, as the mothers of the church would say, "in the need of prayer."

So, what would be "the working model" or strategy of service to minister to my family? If you relied on the demographics of what you heard in your social work class or the "Ministering and Reaching the City" course, you might believe the wrong thing. For example: "*Baby mamma drama*"—*where's the father? Is he in prison or just shackin' so the mother can collect welfare checks?* But that wasn't the case in my family.

To better understand how to minister to my family, you would've needed to understand the ramifications of Jim Crow legislation and how it's impacted people living in many urban communities of America. The book of 1 Chronicles refers to this as *understanding the times* (1 Chronicles 12:32).

You'd also have to understand our culture. Understanding a culture comes from observing the people of a community. The ways people think, the languages they speak, the religious customs they follow, the foods they eat, their senses of humor, and their child-rearing styles and philosophies—these are just a few of the expressions that encompass a culture.

In my case, you would have discovered that the history of and conditions involved in my family's move to the projects had a pro-

found influence on my formative years, and God has used those experiences to prepare me for one of the many ministries to which I've been called—training urban youth workers.

URBAN YOUTH MINISTRY MISCONCEPTIONS

Over the nearly two decades of my calling, I've seen and heard many misconceptions about urban ministry and problems surrounding it. For some, their ideas and methods are based on courses they took in college. After finishing their bachelor's degrees, some of these individuals have left everything to work as missionaries within a particular inner city for a year, and now they're ready to give their lives for the cause. Certain individuals feel that five years of relocation to an urban community prepare them to be seasoned experts fully equipped for any method of ministry.

Others may be involved in urban ministry because they were moved by a speech they heard at a fundraising banquet.

Then there are those already living in urban communities who have a heart for young people in the neighborhood, but they've been so burned by the drive of past ministry agendas that they share things like, "You can't tell *me*—I live here!"

And pastors of small churches may end up with staff members handling a variety of youth issues and are genuine in their passion, but they lack the skills or resources to effectively reach this fast-paced generation.

Whatever the scenario, the answer begins with H.O.W.: **H**earing God's voice, **O**beying God's voice, and **W**atching God work in you and through you—wherever God places you. I believe God has called, appointed, and anointed individuals to serve youth in urban communities. The people of the city are waiting for these individuals to come

and live out the good news of the kingdom of God in their neighborhoods. I believe the urban minister (servant) must be one who has recognized the call of God, responded with a heart of repentance, and is willing to be reformed for his or her position and assignment.

BEGINNING THE PROCESS

One of the developmental tasks of childhood, the teenage years, and young adulthood is discovering and affirming one's identity. But what defines it? Is it a person's family ties, religious or spiritual experiences, sense of vocation, personal creed, or dreams and ideals?

When discussing big questions like this, the church often turns to its greatest—and always reliable—example: Jesus. And it's no different for this question. Indeed, one of the important things you'll discover in these pages is that Jesus affirmed his identity through his relationship with God in the midst of a community of people modeling God's kingdom culture.

Models, Mentors, and Messages: Blueprints of Urban Ministry gives you the opportunity to learn from Jesus—the Master Teacher—how to position yourself to be a co-laborer with God in serving the people of urban communities. For Jesus was called of God to fulfill a purpose on earth—just as you are. And he was the master of ministering to cities and villages—and you can be, too.

In chapter one we'll observe "the call of God" on Jesus' life and how we, too, must respond to the call. In chapters two through four, we'll observe the developmental stages of Jesus' life, focusing on how his family, his heavenly Father, his Jewish community, and neighboring nations were all used to shape his destiny. You'll also read about how your own genetic propensities, your divine nature as a believer, and your call as a follower of Christ are what set in motion and ultimately influence your purposed destiny.

Jesus lived out the Word to those around him. In the days of his adult ministry, he continued to uphold his Jewish culture using parables and illustrations that pointed people to the concept of the One True God. In chapters five through nine, we'll see how Jesus' formative years growing up around other people groups prepared him to minister to the nations and train the Twelve to reach the world beyond Jerusalem.

In these pages you'll also learn about Jewish culture in Jesus' day. Judaism was more than a belief system. Certainly it encompassed religious laws—but it also involved sacred rituals and age-old customs; thousands of years of uninterrupted history; a spiritual, physical, and political attachment to the homeland of Israel; a commitment to social justice and righteousness; a deep love for learning; a dedication to the perpetuation of the Hebrew language; and varied cultural expressions in art, music, dance, and theater. To the Jewish people, everything they learned had a spiritual aspect to it. They lived and learned from a holistic mindset that everything was connected to the hand of Yehovah God. We'll also observe how the Greek Hellenistic culture began to compartmentalize learning.

Jesus handled God's claims while living in an earthly form. He dealt with the tension and inner conflict over human desires for social acceptance, loyalty to family, economic prosperity, and other ideals that we all struggle with. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus triumphantly made decisions that allow us to have a High Priest who can sympathize with our challenges and weakness. We're also told that it wasn't easy for Jesus.

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all

who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:7-10)

While on earth Jesus conquered the challenges of choosing to walk in obedience to his Father and fulfilling his call—even to his own death. Jesus' resurrection and empty grave prove him to be the ultimate role model and mentor.

Our Savior was born in human flesh, yet he had a divine Spirit. He was initially trained by models in both his family and in the Jewish community; but as Jesus came of age, he had to learn to submit not only to his earthly father—whom he could see—but also to his heavenly Father, the invisible God. His outer ear heard the voices of his family members and community, but his inner ear heard the voice of his heavenly Father.

I'm encouraged to know that Christ Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to lead us and guide us into all truth, enabling us with the power to obey. Throughout the pages of this book, you'll discover and learn to discern the voice of God among your family and community in order to make life decisions. This type of discernment is necessary for each of us to accomplish what we've been put here on earth to do. (And I hope you'll dig into the Questions for Discussion at the end of each chapter in small groups to further flesh things out.)

A UNIQUE ANGLE

Models, Mentors, and Messages is coming at you from a unique angle. Here you'll read about issues surrounding urban youth ministry from an exegetical *and* theological *and* experiential point of view—to say nothing of the fact that as a woman of color, practitioner, and academician, I've lived it and worked it and learned it. You'll read about issues that people tend to dance around, too. And despite all that's gone into the creation of this book (including the research), I

don't think we can begin to talk about change in urban youth ministry without talking about the Holy Spirit—so I do that a lot in these pages, too. My aim has been to bring everything together that life has shown me and present something fresh and holistic that urban youth workers can use effectively.

IF YOU'RE ABOUT URBAN YOUTH MINISTRY, THIS BOOK IS FOR YOU

This book is for *whosoever* wants to do youth ministry in the urban venue. It doesn't matter what you are: Asian, African American, Caucasian, Latino, or another color or ethnicity or combination thereof; it doesn't matter if you're from the suburbs and feel led to serve in the inner city, or you're a native of the 'hood and need resources to better serve youth and their families—it's my prayer that this book will give you a better understanding of how to posture yourself to recognize the guidance of God in the urban landscape.

But beyond that, whoever you are and wherever you're headed, *you must learn about your community and learn from the people in your community.* Because issues specific to the culture you're trying to reach will come up. Are you willing to approach your mission with humility? If so, you've taken an important first step. For the remainder of your steps, my desire is that this book will help you learn more about effective, collaborative partnership and the cost of being willing to walk in community.

May we all be willing to pay the price and then receive the blessing of one day hearing: "Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter now into what I have prepared for you!"

SONSHIP AND DAUGHTERHOOD

THE HUMAN MODEL

*But when the fullness of the time came, God
sent forth His Son, born of a woman,
born under the Law, so that He might redeem
those who were under the Law,
that we might receive the adoption as sons.
(Galatians 4:4-5, NASB)*

Abraham Heschel, in his article on "The Spirit of Jewish Education," writes that what's needed most isn't textbooks but "text-people"—because the teacher's personality is the "text" that pupils will read and never forget.

We who are called to urban youth ministry must realize the power of being living *models* who dare to *mentor* and live out the *message* of the gospel. Jesus was sent on assignment by his Father to *model* on earth the *message* of a heavenly kingdom, and he *mentored* others to do likewise. Jesus is our blueprint. He displays the basic design for all ministries, whether they're rural, suburban, or urban.

Paul wrote to the church at Rome, "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope" (Romans 15:4). It's good news to know that others have already prepared a road for future generations to travel—we can learn not only from our biblical spiritual ancestors, but also from elders in our communities.

MY EXPERIENCE IN EAST AUSTIN

I spent my early childhood years in Boston and most of my adult life in Austin, Texas. I was privileged to earn an athletic scholarship and become a member of the Lady Longhorn basketball and track teams at the University of Texas at Austin (UT). That's where I received my first lesson in urbanization and gentrification.

It all began during my recruiting trip. I received a tour of the city, and I saw how the university influenced the surrounding community. Everywhere we went, I saw the Longhorn emblem and school colors (burnt orange and white). But it wasn't until I was in need of a perm that I became aware of East Austin. It was a whole new world that didn't have the Longhorn insignia.

The year was 1977, and UT had six African-American students in the women's athletic program—five of us on the track team, and two of us on the basketball team. (I was on both teams.) We ate together and rode in the same van on trips. And the older students of color let the freshmen know where to go partying and get our hair done.

Minnie's Beauty Salon was just across the highway off East 12th Street. When I walked into the salon wearing my Longhorn sweatshirt, I had no idea the boundaries I was crossing. During those first several minutes, not much was said; but everyone felt the instant climate change. When Minnie began working on my hair, she casually noted, "It's your sweatshirt." I asked a few questions, and she gave me a history lesson about East Austin and its relationship (or should I say, lack thereof) with the University of Texas.

I heard about Huston-Tillotson University (HTU), the historically black college located around the corner from her shop, and how many of her clients were affiliated with the school. I listened intently and let her know that I, too, was from "the east side" in a sense, too—albeit of Brockton, which is south of Boston.

UT wasn't very popular in East Austin in those days. As the university continued to build, it expanded to the east and bought up land where generations of African-American families lived. Dr. Charles Urdy—a former professor at Huston-Tillotson University and former Austin City Council member—lived through the changes in East Austin:

“East 11th and East 12th Street were the heart and soul of East Austin. Practically everything we needed or wanted was either on those streets or near those streets. It was sort of the business hub for East Austin. And it is where most people spent most of their time outside of work. Most people only left East Austin to go to work.”

This healthy, vibrant community actually disintegrated as integration happened. Opportunities drew young adults away from the East Austin community, and consequences included a decline in business, an increase in crime, a weakening of schools, and marginalization. Integration in Austin proper appeared beneficial, but not in East Austin. Despite an urban renewal effort started in the 1960s (and, many believe, never completed) and multiple infrastructure improvements, Austin has been unable to assist East Austin in its economic and social transition. (Cited from <http://www.klru.org/austinnow/archives/gentrification/index.php>)

So which models and mentors can assist communities experiencing this type of transitional change? Many of us know there's a need for change in our personal lives and communities, but we struggle with the process of transition.

LEVELING THE FIELD

The announcement at Jesus' purported birth was “Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King.” At the time of Jesus' birth, world leaders didn't know what to do with a message like that. The colonized Jewish culture was still living under the oppression of a