

Where are the Men?

My wife and I watched the movie *The Help* in Brookings last weekend. It is a powerful movie about the life of black maids in the south during the sixties. The three hours passed so quickly I was stunned and the movie not only triggered emotions of compassion, but also anger over racial injustice and several other emotions.

I found myself troubled about the movie and then realized that one of the most troubling aspects was that there were so few men in the cast. Most of the few men present weren't really "present." There was the husband of the maid who lost her job, who was never shown, but who beat his wife continually for not being able to find work. One of the main characters was the wealthy socialite who required that the maid use a "blacks only" bathroom in the backyard, not the bathroom in the house, and then fired the maid for violating the policy. The only scene in which this woman's husband was present was one in which the maid asked for an advance on her pay to pay tuition for her son to enter college and the husband promptly excused himself from the table, leaving his wife to deny the request and lecture the maid about being responsible. Then there was the guy who showed up drunk for a blind date with the heroine in the movie, who then later won his way into her heart, only to leave her when she took a stand for racial justice by publishing a book about the lives of the maids.

The notable exception to the weak and absent men, was the pastor of the church that all of the maids attended. His sermon inspires one of the maids to share her story of racial injustice, which inspired more to do so, and the publication of that book began the social transformation process. But, again, not one of the men hearing the sermon was inspired to take action.

It's sad that men tend to avoid taking ethical stands that might threaten their careers or social standing. Often we are so engrossed in trying to be good providers for our families that we ignore the moral and ethical issues around us. As a Christian man you are called to consider your response to the injustice, moral and ethical issues around you; to be "in the movie," not absent.