

## **Don't Be a Deadbeat**

**J.S. Russell**

It's often said that experience is the best teacher and being that we've been there, done that, and hopefully have grown, we can offer insight and alternatives to our children as long as we reach out to make the effort. Our presence doesn't always have to be physical and since we are in here, it can't always be. Things like letters, phone calls, the Storybook Project, and the occasional gift can make all the difference and mean a lot.

The more I learn, the more I want to arm my daughter and loved ones with information to protect them and give them an advantage that I didn't have. It is with my words and acts that I continue my fatherhood and showing the example of growing into a better man. I've exceeded what my father had done for me while I've been in prison and it was important to me to break that cycle. My relationship with my child matters a great deal and I won't let where I am get in the way of being the best father that I can be.

True we need to be there and it is also true that we have to show them what will be most beneficial. Maybe we need to get help to work on ourselves, get our education, or just reflect so that we recognize the change that has to be made in order to make better decisions. Don't let this situation be an excuse as to why you can't do what needs to be done.

Society lacks men so it's up to us to raise up our young ones by reaching through these bricks, bars, gates, and miles of distance to let them know that they are on our minds and in our hearts. They have to know that they matter. We can show our love by being real. The reality is that this is what happens if you make certain mistakes, but we can teach them to learn from our mistakes and use what we've learned. This is how we can still be able to provide, protect, teach, lead, and guide.