

# GOD'S PORTRAIT OF A KINGDOM FAMILY

THE KINGDOM FAMILY series

Tony Evans



Tony EVANS  
THE URBAN ALTERNATIVE



# Table of Contents

Kingdom Family Series ..... 3

Introduction ..... 4

God's Portrait of a Kingdom Family ..... 5

A Christian Family Begins With a Commitment to God ..... 6

The Christian Family is Developed Within the Proper Atmosphere ..... 8

The Christian Family is in the Community of Believers ..... 12

The Christian Family is Powerful in its Impact on Society ..... 14



# Kingdom Family Series

The Kingdom Family Ebook series is uniquely designed to reveal timeless biblical principles that can greatly impact your life.

When questions are available, we encourage you to print out the EBook and answer them within each section thus giving you a greater benefit of engagement with the material.

This series closely follows the recorded teaching of Dr. Tony Evans on The Christian Family. Dr. Evans' series of messages on The Christian Family is available on both CD and DVD. To request yours, contact The Urban Alternative at 1-800-800-3222 or visit us online at [TonyEvans.org](http://TonyEvans.org).



# Introduction

I have a beautiful bronze statue on my desk that represents the family. It's a statue of a family of eagles. The mother is on a mountain, with her babies tucked safely under her wings, while the father hovers above with his wings outstretched to protect and preserve his loved ones.

That statue represents the design for the Christian family. Sadly, we are living at a time when the family is constantly under attack, and the only way we are going to be able to protect our families from the enemy's onslaught is seeking help from our God and from His Book.

In Genesis 18:19, God spoke to Abraham about the essential steps in guarding his family: "For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

Abraham learned there are three things that are necessary to protect the family:

First, Abraham had to give his family a sense of destiny. This world is full of distractions but very little purpose. We must be able to see beyond ourselves to future generations and instill in our children kinds of goals that would honor God.

Second, God told Abraham that he would have to discipline his children, commanding them in the way of the Lord. There is a direct link between the unruliness of this generation and the absence of spiritual leaders in the home. Unless this trend is reversed, there's bad news for the family.

Finally, Abraham was to offer his children a sense of dignity by teaching them righteousness and justice. I never want my children to forget that they're recipients of God's grace.

Our children need to understand that they are to be servants to others, especially to those who are hurting and to those who have never had the privilege of living with a mother and a father. Before we can expect this of them, however we as a family must actively show grace to others. So not only must we to protect our families from the influence of the world, but we must also equip them to help change the world. Helping the families to function God's way is what this ebook is all about.

Before you begin this study, it would be good for you to stop and pray, thanking God for His awesome Word and asking Him to make clear to you what your role should be in the Christian family.

# God's Portrait of a Kingdom Family

According to statistics, at least half of this country's families will eventually fall apart. Culturally, over half of all marriages end in divorce. And over half of the children in our nation are growing up without knowing what it's like to have a father in the home.



The issue of the family is critical because everything else depends on it. Churches are made up of families, and broken families contribute to broken churches. Unfortunately, broken churches then leave a broken impact on our society.

Sociologists tell us that the breakdown of the family is the most critical issue facing our nation today, and that

the devastating headlines and news reports that we are seeing every day in our newspapers and on our television screens can ultimately be traced back to broken homes.

Teachers in schools are finding out that they have to do more than teach. Their job description now

includes becoming surrogate parents to kids who are finding academics difficult because of the burdens and problems in their homes.

The police department has to act as the ultimate disciplinarian for a generation of undisciplined young people, especially teenagers, because of the absence of discipline at home.

There is no way around this issue, and there is no topic more relevant to church today than the issue of the family.

How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in His ways. When you shall eat of fruit of hands, you will happy and it will be well with you. Your wife shall be like fruitful vine, within your house, your children like olive plants around the table. Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD. The LORD blesses you from Zion and you may prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. Indeed, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel! (Psalm 128:1-6)

# The Christian Family Begins with a Commitment to God

We're not at the ideal. There are broken hearts, broken lives, people who have made mistakes, and people who have done wrong things. Yet the ideal must be what we aim for. It must be what we're pointed toward. It must be what we're looking at.

So let's begin looking at the ideal, God's painting and God's portrait—God's picture of the family as He intended it to be.

Psalm 128 lays it out very plainly. This must be our goal. This must be where we aim.

“How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in His ways. When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you will be happy and it will be well with you. You wife shall be like a fruitful vine, within your home, your children, like olive plants around your table. Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD.” (Psalm 128:1-4)

The first thing the psalmist says in verses 1 and 2 is that the Christian family begins with a personal

commitment to God. In verse 3, he begins talking about family. But before he starts talking about the family unit, he talks about the people who make up the family unit. Why? Because in order to have a satisfied and productive family, you must first have satisfied and productive people living there. Or in order to have a miserable family, you must first have miserable people living there.

When a person says, “My home is miserable,” he doesn't mean the bricks are miserable or that the grass is miserable or that the utensils are miserable. He means that there are some miserable people living there. To try to have a satisfied home when you have unsatisfied people is an impossibility.



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So the starting place for fixing the family is fixing people. And God says for that to happen, the members of the household must have their lives centered around God. If they are not centered around God, then the unsatisfaction of their lives will rub off on the other members living in the family.

When God says, "How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD," He is saying to, "take God seriously." To fear means "to be in awe of or to reverence." If you don't fear God, your lack of fear will show up in your family.

God is like the sun, and you are like one of the planets. You can only have your orbit straight if you stay within the gravitational pull. Pluto circles the sun between 2 billion and 4 billion miles away. The sun keeps it in its gravitational pull, or else it would be flung into outer space. It would leave our solar system. We have watched families leave the solar system, get



flung off into space, and be utterly destroyed because the sun was no longer the controlling factor. God was no longer the center. If we are not men and women of God, if we don't raise our children to be children of God, then we shouldn't be surprised if we are flung into outer space, so to speak, or if our lives spin out of control.

Blessedness, or happiness, is not derived from what we have, the places we go, or the money we make. Rather, it comes because a person is in the gravitational pull of God. It comes when you fear God and take Him seriously. Three things will happen because of this: God takes care of your fortune, He takes care of your feelings, and He takes care of your home.

## Engage Respond

**READ:** Psalm 144:15; Proverbs 3:13-14; 28:20.

**WRITE:** What do these verses say about God's blessings? Based on what you read, who receives His blessings?

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What is your personal commitment to the Lord? Have you moved away from that gravitational pull? If so, what will it take for you to move Him back to the center of your home?

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Blessedness, or happiness, is not derived from what we have, the places we go, or the money we make. Rather, it comes because a person fears God and honors Him as Lord.

# The Christian Family is Developed Within the Proper Atmosphere

Because the husband is responsible for setting the atmosphere of the family, he is the first focus in Psalm 128. Notice the words “your wife” in verse 3. When the husband is centered around God, fears God, and walks in the ways of God, those who fall underneath his realm of influence will follow him.

“Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, your house, your children like olive plants around your table” (Psalm 128:3).

The image in this verse is of a grapevine, and a grapevine always clings. The atmosphere in a home is that a woman should be able to wrap her branches around her husband. A wife who hangs onto her husband and totally wraps around him is doing what God wants. God has created wives to live as clinging, secure and fruitful vines.

The atmosphere in a home is that a woman should be able to wrap her branches around her husband totally because God created wives to be clinging vines.

Vines not only cling, but they also climb. When a man is the right kind of man, his wife wants to cling to him, and it is in that security that she then grows. She develops strengths, abilities, and skills. She becomes a better woman than she was before. If a wife is not growing, either there is nothing to cling to or the husband has not created an environment for her growth.

A grapevine also clusters and provides grapes for wine. If a husband lets his wife cling and climb, she'll cluster and satisfy him with her love. That love will naturally overflow, and the husband will be fulfilled.

Men should not expect a summer wife if they bring home winter weather. How does a man create the right atmosphere? By getting in alignment underneath God. That's a husband's most important





job. Having offered marital counseling for over 35 years, the problem that repeatedly comes up when couples are experiencing marital discord usually boils down to one thing: one or both parties are out of alignment. So few men understand what it means to be in alignment underneath God yet most will fiercely require the woman married to them to be in alignment underneath them.

To be aligned underneath God is to consistently make your decisions, whether personal or professional, in line with God's revealed Word. This means intentionally going to the Scripture and oftentimes as well to a person acquainted with the Scripture on a specific matter that you are dealing with.



A family runs well when a man recognizes that he must be in alignment underneath God before his wife can properly align herself underneath him. To hold a woman accountable to something that the man himself is not willing to do is a double standard, and is one of the major reasons I have witnessed as causing the breakdown of the family.

If a man is expecting a woman to be answerable to him, she should see that same principle being modeled by him being answerable to his Headship, Jesus Christ, as well. What many men do is get out of their lane in respect to the headship of Christ, but expect the woman living with them to be in her lane with respect to his headship over her. Yet, when everyone starts getting out of their lanes, there is bound to be a collision. When headship is not aligned properly, the flow of God's presence, power and authority in His representatives is compromised or lost.

When Paul writes to the church that "Christ is the head of every man," (1 Corinthians 11:3) we know that He is talking about Christian men in particular. Every Christian man, therefore, has a head in the same way that Jesus, the son of God, had Someone over Him who covered, provided for, guided Him and to Whom He was accountable. No Christian man is autonomous. Every Christian man, whether single or married, is answerable to Jesus Christ. When a man learns to submit his maleness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, he is living out the basic principles of kingdom manhood thus providing the optimal atmosphere for a kingdom family to thrive.

"Your children [shall be] like olive plants around your table" (Psalm 128:3).

*Nobody should raise your kids but you. Anybody else is a bonus. They are not the essence.*

An olive plant takes 15 years to mature. The plant must be nurtured before it can become a tree and produce good oil. But once a tree matures, it can

produce oil for numbers of years. We need to nurture our children around the table. If parents are never with their children, then you can't expect the children to mature properly.



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Our problem today is not merely a lost generation, but it is the product of a lost generation. We have fathers who never saw their own fathers be a kingdom husband or a kingdom dad. Or we have mothers who never saw the same of their fathers or mothers. So we have children raising themselves. Because of this, our tables have no olive plants around them.

They sit empty.

The way God designed a family to be led, particularly by a father, is around the table. A Jewish father raised his family around the table. The table was not just a place for eating. It was a place for nurturing. Food was simply the context for discipleship and relationship building. When a Jewish father sat around the table, he wasn't just filling his stomach. He was convening there to lead. It was there that he poured value and significance into the lives of his children by listening to them and being with them consistently.

A Jewish family didn't sit at the table just to eat. Rather, that was a place for a man to spend substantive time each and every day teaching, listening, knowing and leading his family. It is not that there weren't other times for these things to be done but they were always in addition to the family table. This is because fruitful vines and olive plants need consistent nurturing in order to produce or to grow. Yet so many of our tables sit empty today. Men's schedules are full. Women's schedules are full. Children's schedules are full.

In failing to prioritize the consistency of the family table – or daily family time wherever you may choose to spend it, we have failed to lead our families well. As a result, we have a generation of young people who set their consciences to the culture rather than to that which was given to them at the table.

When I go to the airport, I pass through a magnetometer which is designed to register metal. Sometimes when I walk through and forget to take my keys out, the magnetometer will beep. Yet other times, in the same exact situation, it doesn't. This is because a magnetometer has to be set. Some are set very sensitive and others are not. When a child's mind has been set by a culture lacking the values of the kingdom of God, his or her conscience no longer goes off in light of poor choices they are about to make. The filters no longer work because the father failed to set it according to the kingdom.

## Engage Respond

**READ:** 1 Corinthians 11

**WRITE:** Husband, are you creating an atmosphere of growth? What specific things have you done this



week to serve your wife?

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How much time do you spend with your children?

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How often do you eat meals together? Pray together?

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Wife, in respect to time, energy, and passion, how much of yourself do you put into your home? What activities could you begin to include that would provide a more intentional engagement with your home and the people in your home?

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# The Christian Family is in the Community of Believers

Let's go back to Psalm 128 and continue with the rest of that chapter.

“The LORD bless you from Zion, and may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. Indeed, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!” (Psalm 128:5-6).

The Christian family is maintained in the community of believers.

Zion was the city of God. It was Jerusalem. It was the place where a father would lead his family to the worship of God. The author of Hebrews picked this up in Hebrews 12:22: “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God.”

The reason we see so many broken families is that they're not involved in a maintenance program. That maintenance program is the people of God.

What is Mount Zion for us today? It's not the city of Jerusalem. It's the church of the living God. You remember that old saying, “The family that prays together, stays together.” It's true. The family that is

centered around God, and that gathers with God's people to be affirmed and reaffirmed in the things of God, will stay together. In other words, men and women, if we are serious about having a long-term family, then we have to be equally serious about leading our family in worship. My father worked harder than any man I've ever seen.

He was a longshoreman who lifted heavy boxes day in and day out. My dad worked so hard that he would be dead-tired when he came home because he had to carry stuff on his back all day long. But every Wednesday night and every Sunday morning, even if he had to work all night Saturday, he'd take us to church.

“But, Dad, I'm tired.” I would say. To which he would reply, “No, son, I'm the one who's tired. But we are



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going to church, because as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

The church does not exist solely for programs, projects, preaching and buildings, but rather it exists as the primary vehicle for preparing believers to display God’s glory, impacting the culture, restoring lives, and advancing the kingdom.



The primary purpose of the church, in view of the distinctions of the kingdom, is to represent the socio-ethical and socio-political aspects of God’s rule. It is to be a model for the world operating in the world while offering an alternative to the world. In doing so, it sets itself apart as a haven, much like an embassy.

An embassy is a sovereign territory on foreign soil where the rules and laws of the representative nation apply. Embassies never belong to the countries that they are in. They belong to the country where they are from. If you were to visit another country as an American citizen and you went to the American Embassy, you would find that all American laws and procedures would be carried out there, no matter what country you were in. The American Embassy is fundamentally a little bit of America a long way from home.

The church is supposed to be a little bit of heaven a long way from home. It is to be the place where the values of eternity are made manifest in history. The place where the victories in heaven bear fruit on earth.

By intentionally connecting with a healthy, functioning kingdom-minded church – families are nurtured and fed both through receiving the Word of God and through discovering avenues for its application.

## Engage Respond

**READ:** Read Psalm 128:5 again.

**WRITE:** What did the psalmist say would come from Zion?

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What is your commitment to your church community?

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Are you willing to lean on other believers for support, or would you allow yourself to be used of God to minister to others? Have you obeyed God’s Word in leading your family to worship?

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# The Christian Family is Powerful in its Impact on Society

When families are centered around God, when husbands and wives turn to Him to fix their problems, and when children are raised among other believers, the family unit is strengthened. Strong families make strong churches, and strong churches can have a powerful impact on society.



“The LORD bless you from Zion, and may you see prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. Indeed, may you see your children’s children. Peace Israel!” (Psalm 128:5-6).

There was well-being in Jerusalem because this family was right with God. Fixing our community starts with

our walk with God, then moves to our relationship with our families and our involvement in the church. Then, suddenly, the city’s not the same. Remember, God is the manufacturer of the family, and He will always stand by His product. He will honor His

warranty, His guarantee. If you want Him to stand behind you and your family, then you’d better keep taking it back to Him. If you’ll only do that, your satisfaction is guaranteed.

Few people would argue today that our communities and our country are feeling continual tremors of a curse today. Yet the solution of turning that curse into a covenantal blessing doesn’t come through more tax dollars, government programs or building more prisons.

The solution is simple: We need more kingdom families.

We have a lot of fancy churches in our country today with a lot of fancy men attending them. We have the right architecture, the right equipment, and the right songs. We even have the right-sounding things to say. But the true test of Zion does not rest in how good Zion looks, rather it is in what kind of impact Zion is making in the community at large.

Not only does God speak about the city improving in response to a man who fears God in Psalm 128 (Jerusalem), but He also speaks of the entire nation

feeling the impact of this man's life (Israel.) What is important to notice about the progression of Psalm 128 is that God starts with the individual, moves to the family, moves to the church, and then moves to the society. That is how His kingdom works. His kingdom works bottom up, not top down. Yet everyone these days seems to be more concerned with what the White House is doing than what their own house is doing, as well as what the church house is doing. When society functions according to kingdom principles, though, it parcels out the responsibilities for maintaining a healthy, functioning society into more areas than just the government.

Societal impact isn't determined on the basis of the health of the existing society either. In fact, in the book of Jeremiah, we find an example of this when God tells His people who are living in the midst of a pagan land, Babylon, that they are to,

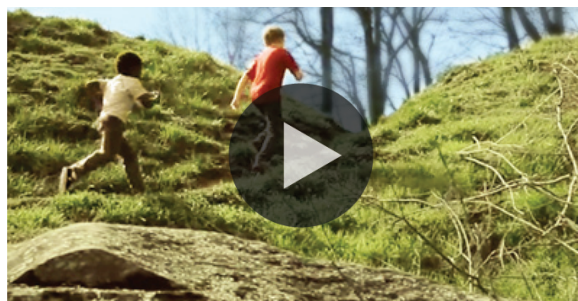
“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.”(Jeremiah 29:7)

The Israelites were to make the city in which they lived a better place because of their presence. It was in the welfare of that city where they would discover their own welfare; however, they were to be an integral part of improving the society in which they lived while not merely complaining about it and waiting on someone else to make a difference.

Specifically, with the growing absence of fathers in our land – either spiritually, physically or emotionally,

someone needs to step in as surrogate fathers to raise the next generation of men and women. And if we in the body of Christ don't do it, then it will be music, entertainment, or peers that will fill that void.

When God spoke of being a “father to the fatherless” (Psalm 68:5) in Scripture, He wasn't referring to some ethereal spirit floating around in never-never land. He was speaking of His people who are to be His representation – His hands and His feet – being surrogate fathers to those in need. That's what it means when James writes, “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress....” (James 1:27)



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Too frequently, we relegate only those as orphans who have experienced the death of a parent or of their parents while overlooking those who are spiritual orphans, or whose parent or parents have abandoned them either relationally, emotionally or physically. A child without the positive influence and presence of a father or mother – whether or not that parent is alive or dead – lacks a parent. That is an orphan. What we need to do is open our eyes to see the multitude of orphans in front of us. On our very doorsteps are

the lives of those who have been left on their own without anyone to speak life into them, or to raise them. The boys and girls in need of surrogate fathers and surrogate mothers – in need of mentors – are not just boys and girls, they are princes and princesses.



They are children of the King and we should view them as such.

Because when we specifically allow fatherlessness to continue at the rate that it is and do not take the necessary steps to change it, our society will continue to reflect it.

Our society's problem is not solely our government's problem. It is the church's problem. It is our problem. Our mission field is not merely across the sea. It is across the street – in our own Jerusalem and Judea – in Detroit, Dallas, Baltimore, Miami and in your community. To look away now may cost us more than we can afford. It may even cost us the futures of our own sons and daughters.

Through meeting social and community needs through things such as mentoring, tutoring, coaching, job-training, technology institutes, and in countless other ways – we can tame this cultural chaos. We can reclaim our country for Christ.

## Engage Respond

**READ:** Jeremiah 29

**WRITE:** How can the dynamics of the family relationship be used to influence your city?

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What specific things can you do this week to “out-serve” your wife? your husband? your children? your parents?

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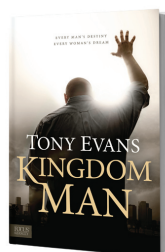
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If you were to die today, how would your children remember their home life? Would they remember being raised in the fear of God or they just remember fighting and unhappiness?

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