

*Kingdom
Woman*

Shaping Your *Child's*
Spiritual *Future*



*Tony Evans &
Chrystal Evans Hurst*

We are so glad you've chosen to get a hold of this eBook on *Shaping Your Child's Future*. This special edition is for those who are pre-ordering the new release *Kingdom Woman*. Join us in praying that this book impacts not only yourself but the countless numbers of women whom God desires to use for His glory.

Women, walking in the way of a kingdom woman will transform you forever. Starting now you can dis-

cover your true spiritual destiny and leave discouragement behind.

Come with Dr. Tony Evans and his daughter Chrystal Evans Hurst as they explain how you can unleash new spiritual purpose, power, and possibilities in your life. Tony Evans' bold and inspired teaching offers fresh, no-nonsense insights into biblical principles, assuring you that God is on your side and that He tenderly cares about every woman.

With humor and vulnerability, Chrystal Hurst will share practical ways to help you embrace your role as a woman and develop wisdom, sensitivity, and spiritual beauty.

You don't have to seek anyone else's approval for the life God has given you. Today live like the woman God designed you to be.



Tony Evans & Chrystal Evans Hurst

Dr. Tony Evans is the founder and president of The Urban Alternative, a national ministry dedicated to restoring hope and transforming lives through the proclamation and application of God's Word. For over three decades, Dr. Evans has also served as senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas. He is a prolific author of numerous books, including the best-selling *Kingdom Man*. His radio program, *The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans*, is heard daily on more than 850 radio outlets. Dr. Evans is also the chaplain for the Dallas Mavericks and former chaplain for the Dallas Cowboys.

Chrystal Evans Hurst is a gifted writer, speaker, and worship leader. Being the eldest child of Dr. Tony and Lois Evans, the Word of God has surrounded and guided her for her entire life. As a member of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, Chrystal assists her mom, Lois, in leading the women's ministry and loves to encourage women toward a deeper relationship with the Lord. Her blog—*Chrystal's Chronicles*—poignantly reflects her thoughts about her faith and day-to-day experiences. Most importantly, Chrystal is a dedicated wife and homeschooling mother of five.

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All of us know the children's story, "The three little pigs." As the story goes, a big bad wolf is roaming the forest with an appetite for pork. To protect themselves, the pigs constructed houses.

The first pig built his house of straw. The second, realizing that straw was too weak to stand up to any serious huffing and puffing, constructed his home using sticks.

The experience proved both pigs wrong. Their houses turned to rubble by the wolf; they ran to the home of pig number three, who had built his house of brick.

As expected, the wolf made numerous attacks on the house, but all to no avail. Why? The third pig's house had been constructed with the right kind of building material.

Today there's a big bad wolf standing outside all of our homes, seeking to blow them down. That wolf is called the world, and its attack is relentless. How well our families survive has everything to do with the kind of material we use to construct our houses. The wolf of this world has lungpower so potent that it can destroy any family not made with God's building material.

Abraham's Instructions

In Genesis 18:19, God gave Abraham sound, clear instruction on how to construct a family that would stand. His word to Abraham sums up the entire message of this booklet: "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."

Three things were necessary if Abraham was to avoid

the destruction of his home by the world. First, he was to give his family a sense of destiny, a sense of purpose that grew out of knowing his own purpose. Our world is full of meaningless distraction but very little purpose, and purposeless parents raise purposeless children. All great people have before them a sense of destiny that transcends their own lives.



How do we instill a sense of purpose in our kids? We start by thinking of family life as a relay race. In a relay, everything depends on the baton. It doesn't matter how fast you run, how fine your form, or the distance between you and the runners behind you. If you fail to pass the baton, you are disqualified. In the race of faith, the same is true. You may have fine form in the church. You may be sprinting with this committee or that. Perhaps you're rounding the track as you serve. Wonderful! But remember, God is the judge of this race; He's holding us accountable for making sure that our children take firm hold of the baton of faith and keep running.

Passing the Baton

My youngest son used to lead a prayer meeting for some of his peers. One day, it occurred to me that, though I had been excited about the meetings when he lived at home, I had never offered my help. Consequently, I took my next opportunity to submit a proposal: "Suppose we took a verse of Scripture each week and worked on it together so that, before your prayer meeting, you could read the verse and give a word of encouragement. What do you think of that?" My son replied, "You know, Dad, I never thought about that, but it would be great!"



Now, he didn't know that what I had in mind was helping him take the next step toward becoming a preacher. My aim was to put into my son's hands the same baton which, years earlier, my father had passed on to me.

If we fail to hand off our baton to our children, be assured that someone else will. Drug pushers, for instance, are expert baton-passers. They tell our kids, "You can drive fast cars, wear fancy clothes, and carry wads of

cash ...just like me." It's an enticing invitation that many young people (in the absence of a worthy alternative) find difficult to resist. No wonder Satan works so hard to ruin marriages. He's trying to pre-empt the passing of the baton. Why settle for destroying a single life when, by corrupting a marriage, he can spread his poison through two, three, or even four generations?

Since it's clear that someone will pass a baton to our children, don't you think we should reserve that right for ourselves and make sure that the job is done properly?

We need to see beyond our children to our grand children and even our great-grandchildren. We will have to begin looking at the world not simply for what it is, but also for what we wish it to become. Having determined what we want to see in the future generations of our families, we can raise our children with a goal in mind rather than simply going through the motions for today.

An older man once asked me what I would like to have written on my tombstone when I die. I told him, "Tony Evans knew God and influenced the world for Him." He then said, "Now that you know what you'd like said about you when you die, you'd better begin working on it today."

I never forgot that, because it gave me a sense of destiny. Even so for our children. What do you want them to look like when they are parents? You'd better start working on it now.

Discipline

Second, God said of Abraham that he was to discipline his children by commanding them in the way of the Lord. Notice that Abraham, the father was to be the primary source of family discipline. This thought is also

carried over into the New Testament when Paul told the church at Ephesus, “**And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**” (Eph. 6:4)

The unruliness of this generation is directly attributable to either absent or spiritually impotent men in the home. Unless this trend is reversed, catastrophe awaits us. Abraham’s authority in the disciplining process was both definitive and prescribed. He was to command his children, not suggest to them, and the basis of that authority was the Lord. He could not command them to do anything inconsistent with the Lord from whom he received his own commands. Parents today need to take a definitive role in commanding conformity from their children, but only as we trust and obey God.

One time I asked my son to take out the trash. He responded, “Dad, I don’t feel like it.” Say what?! I thought. He was telling me that as my instructions hit his frontal lobe and were processed by his brain, and as the signal went down his spinal column through the various nerves that were to instruct the muscles to accomplish the task, there was not enough emotional stimulation to provoke his skeletal frame into a trash-emptying mode. To which I responded, “I can change the way you feel!”

In other words, he had to empty the trash for no other reason than I said so. (By the same token, my son must not see me telling God, “I won’t obey you because I don’t feel like it.”) Unless there is discipline to do right in the home, there will be little discipline to do right in society.

Dignity

Finally, Abraham was to give his children dignity by teaching them righteousness and justice. The world is an unfair and insensitive place. Our children are born with that same tendency toward unfairness and insen-



sitivity. That’s why you don’t have to teach them how to be selfish. No books are written on *The Ten Ways to Raise Evil Kids*. They manage to be self-centered all by themselves. Our job as parents is to show them what’s right, not only for their own benefit, but also for the benefit of society at large. We desperately need as many

of families who both care and do something about the cycle of injustice in the world.

People are discarded like worn dolls when they're deemed useless or unnecessary. As a result, the poor



among us are the most vulnerable, since they have little with which to fight back. However, God's heart is with the poor, and the measure of a strong Christian family, church or society is how it treats the most defenseless citizens.

I never want my children to forget that they are recipients of God's grace in many ways. I always want them to see themselves as servants of others, especially to hurting people and those children in urban America who have never had the privilege of living with mother and father. The only way that can be assured is for us as a family to actively minister grace to others.

Each Christmas when the kids were still at home we identified a family from one of our sister churches and purchased gifts for each person. Lois and I provided the food and took it to them and shared a time of prayer, worship, and giving. In addition, I kept my kids vitally involved with our churches outreach to those in need.

Purpose

One time, Priscilla and Anthony, Jr., went with their youth group to help families whose homes had been flooded in another section of Dallas. When they entered one home, an older lady told them she had just gotten off her knees from asking God how she was going to eat since she had lost everything. That's when the kids came with the food. My children broke down in tears at the thought that God had used them as His means of answering prayer. They have heard many a sermon from me on our responsibility to minister to others, but no sermon in the world could have been more powerful than the one the Holy Spirit preached to them by using them as emissaries of His grace.

Lois and I also told our kids, while growing up, stories of how things were for us growing up without very much and how, during my seminary years, we wondered on more than one occasion how we were going to make it. Even then, however, we agreed that it was best for Lois to stay home with our preschool-aged children. Now,

when we hear our younger daughter Priscilla teach God's word; when we see our older son lead worship; when we hear our older daughter living out her highest ambition as a godly wife and mother; and when we see our younger son helping me in the ministry, we know that decision was worth all the sacrifice.

We used to take our kids every summer to the block where I grew up. As they saw the devastation and deterioration of that neighborhood, it became a prime reminder of how God had preserved their father and why I'm in the ministry trying to help people rise above the disintegration engulfing urban America.

I often sat with my children, too, to talk about their futures-what colleges they'd like to attend and what careers they'd like to pursue. After they expressed themselves, I always asked the following questions: "How will the kingdom of God be better off if God gives you what you desire? How will those less fortunate be better off?" I let them know emphatically that until they could answer those questions, they would never have purpose, nor would they have God's full blessing on their lives.

Only one life, 'twill soon be past.

Only what's done for Christ will last.

Investment in Your Family

Genesis 18:19 closes with the provision that if Abraham was ever going to realize all that God wanted to accomplish through him, it would happen through his investment in his family. The same is true today. If the block where you live is ever going to become a better block, your neighborhood a better neighbor-

hood, your city a better city, our nation a better nation and our world a better world, it will start with you and your family.

We must never be content with simply protecting our kids from the world. Rather, our goal should be to equip



them to help change the world so that when they go out into it, they do so as lights in the midst of darkness. If we do our parenting job right, and they choose to walk with God, it won't be them so much as the world that's in trouble because of the impact they'll make upon it.

Even if the society at large doesn't become a noticeably better place, you and your house will still be victorious. No one has summed up this truth better than Joshua: "Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the river and in Egypt, and serve the

Lord. And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:14-15)

Giving Our Children A Living Faith

On a hot summer day many years ago, my parents stood on the platform of a train station in Baltimore, waving goodbye as I headed off for college in Atlanta. My mind was full of excitement as I considered the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead. My life sprawled out before me, full of possibilities.

What I could not see behind my parents' smiles and tears were the inevitable questions that sincere, Chris-

tian parents ask at a time like this: Is he ready for all those possibilities? Is he prepared to be on his own? Can he face both temptations and opportunities and make wise decisions? Most importantly, is the faith his mother and I have instilled in him a genuine, personal faith that will stand him in good stead day in and day out, or has he really just gone through the motions because he thought that's what we wanted? Only time could provide the answers to all those questions, even though my parents knew the direction I had chosen for my life and my commitment to ministry.

As we're raising our kids, we have to keep in mind that the day will come when they go out on their own, no longer under our direct supervision. Will they be prepared?

It should be evident to Christian parents that when our kids reach that point of making their own way in the world, the most important thing they'll need to take with them is a living, personal faith in Jesus Christ. They'll need to know how to pray, for example, for their own concerns and for those of others. Even more crucial, they'll need to have a desire to pray when there's no one around to make him or her do it.

God Has No Grandchildren

Helping our children develop such a faith isn't easy, and it's certainly not automatic just because the family goes to church together on Sundays. We can't simply teach them faith the way we can teach them math. Christian values must become personally meaningful in an individual's life and experience. We should pray that our kids become like Jesus, “**And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.**” (Luke 2:52)

“Increasing in...stature” refers to physical growth. Pray here for your kids' safety and good health so they can develop to the full extent of their God-given abilities.

“In favor with God” is a clear reference to spiritual growth. Pray that your children will always have



tian parents ask at a time like this: Is he ready for all those possibilities? Is he prepared to be on his own? Can he face both temptations and opportunities and make wise decisions? Most importantly, is the faith his

tender hearts toward the Lord, that knowing Him, walking with Him and serving Him will be their greatest desires. Pray also that true Christlikeness will be developed in them as time goes by.

Finally, “in favor with...men” refers to social growth. Pray that your kids will learn how to get along with others, how to be true friends, but without compromising their values. Pray that God will bring them good friends who will be a positive influence. And pray that even now, God would be preparing the boys and girls who will grow up to one day become godly mates for your children.

Seize the Day

In a movie called *Dead Poet's Society*, Robin Williams plays a prep school English teacher who, early in the school year, takes his students into the hall of their old and prestigious school and shows them the framed pictures of graduating classes from decades ago. “Move up close to the pictures,” he tells them. “Those boys were young and intelligent and full of dreams like you. They were just like you. “They’re all dead now,” he continues. “They’ve turned into dust. But lean close; they’re calling out to you. Listen. They’re telling you, ‘Carpe diem,’ ‘Seize the day.’ Can you hear them? ‘Carpe diem, carpe diem.’”

The message was clear, and it applies even more to us as spouses and parents. Life is passing quickly, so make every day count. Live it to the fullest. Don’t let an opportunity pass to do good, to build your relationships, to advance God’s kingdom here on earth. Make the most of every day.

Satan has turned many of us into master procrastinators. We wait too long to strengthen and nurture our

marriages, and our divorce rate is now approaching that of the secular world. We ignore the discipline and spiritual training of our kids until it’s too late and we’re leaving them on their own at a faraway college. We always think there’s more time—there will be time enough tomorrow, when we’re not so tired or we’ve finished that important work project or the holidays are over. And we play right into the devil’s hands.

I’m not suggesting we need to panic about finding time



to do everything we should, because the good news is that we have all the time we need. Think of the most productive person you know, the one who gets all kinds of work done and also has a healthy family life. Do you realize that you have just as much time available to you as that person? You do—we all do. We all get the same twenty-four hours each day, seven days a week.

Seizing the day, then, doesn’t have to do with time so much as it has to do with priorities. The fact is that we always make time for the things that are most important to us, whether or not we understand that’s what we are doing.

One day a number of years ago, Lois told me I wasn't spending enough time with our kids. I had kind of been feeling that way myself, but had tried to ignore the uncomfortable idea. So I said a little defensively, "I just wish I had more time, more hours in the day. I've got so much to do!" I quickly learned that was the wrong answer.

"You fly 30,000 miles a year preaching to people around the country," she said. "If you cut back on the number of trips you make, you'd have more time."

End of lesson? No, she was only warming up. "You



also work late at the church four nights a week. If you would delegate more and stop acting as if God had two saviors of the world, you'd have more time. Even when you are home, the phone rings again and again, and

you always pick it up. If you'd take it off the hook when you're with your family, you'd have more time for us."

Lois has a way of getting right to the heart of a matter, and she was on target again this time. My problem with shortchanging my family had little to do with time and almost everything to do with my priorities. Without realizing it, I had put my idea of what it meant to be a great pastor and preacher — my ego mixed in with God's calling — above my calling to be a great dad. That was a bad, albeit unconscious, decision.

My older son brought that same point home to me one day. I noticed he had a dejected look, so I asked him what was wrong. All he did was grunt. After I practically pulled teeth to get an answer, he finally told me, "Every time I want to talk to you, you're busy counseling other people." That was like a dagger in my heart. The very thing I had preached against, I was doing to my own son, and I was justifying it in the name of ministry.

I remembered how the great prophet Samuel had lost his children because he spent so much time on the road (I Sam. 7:16; 8:1-5). I also recalled how Eli, the high priest, had forfeited his ministry and his very life because he had ignored his responsibility to discipline and train his sons (I Sam. 2:12-17,22-25; 3:10-18). Clearly, I needed to reorder my priorities. I didn't want the world to become my kids' new father, nor did I want Lois to have to try being both mother and father to them. So with my blessing, Lois took out my appointment book and, like a mobster with a submachine gun, began to mow down engagement after engagement and meeting after meeting. I also committed to always being home for dinner on certain days of the week, and I told my assistant to let my kids through whenever they needed me. I'm happy to say that I've

stayed with my new priorities, and I now have more time for those who count most—my wife and children.

What about your priorities and your schedule? Do you find yourself saying “tomorrow” a lot? “Honey, tomorrow I’ll spend some time with you.” “Kids, tomorrow I’ll take some time to play with you.”

“I’ll Do It Tomorrow”

Too often, when those tomorrows come, the husband has left the home and the kids don’t feel like hanging around the house much anymore. Forget about tomorrow. Families don’t fall apart all at once; it can take years. Communication doesn’t stop in an instant; it disappears by bits until it’s gone. Discipline doesn’t break down overnight; it starts with one small inconsistency that leads to another and then another.

Procrastination is not only a dangerous enemy, but also a deceptive one. We bask in the glow of a new marriage and think, I’ve got a lot of time to work on this. We bring a new son or daughter home from the hospital and say to ourselves, just think of the years we’re going to have with each other!

Let me make two simple observations based on experience: one year in a marriage will go by before you’ve had time to blink; and one evening at the dinner table, it will suddenly dawn on you that the young lady or gentleman sitting across from you is about to graduate from high school.

We have only one block of time in which to nurture our families, in which to build communication, in which to instill biblical principles and consistent discipline.

Today. It’s all our Lord promised us.

Today. Seize it.

Worship

If we neglect the spiritual condition of our families, we can be sure the devil and this world won’t do the same. That fact alone, if nothing else, should give us the incentive we need to provide for our families’ spiritual welfare. One key way we do that is family worship that goes beyond attending church together. Church services are an important starting point, but Sunday school, A.W.A.N.A., Pioneer Clubs and other programs should supplement, not substitute for, family worship.



What I’m advocating—what Lois and I did with our children from the beginning—is what used to be called family devotions, or the family altar. We found that the traditional times of right after breakfast or dinner worked well. Many families now schedule a family night each week, where the whole evening is devoted to family fun as well as worship.

For such a practice to work, several things need to be kept in mind. First, what you do has to be geared to the ages of your children. Don’t expect little ones to sit rock-still for twenty solid minutes of Bible reading.



Gear what you do to their interests, their level of understanding and the length of their attention span.

Second, try different approaches. Experiment. Don't get stuck in a rut, and don't worry if some ideas don't work too well. You can always try something else next time. But you don't want family worship to get boring or to become the vain, mindless repetition Jesus warned about in Matthew 6:7. And with the variety of helps available today, there's no reason you should get stuck in a rut.



Third, at least some of the time, let your kids be active participants and not just spectators. Get them involved and worship will be much more meaningful to them now, as well as something that's far more likely to develop into a lifelong habit. Let them read the Scriptures. Have them act out a biblical story, complete with homemade costumes. As they get into the elementary school years and beyond, they can retell a biblical story in their own words, perhaps illustrating with original artwork. Invite them to ask questions about the passage under consideration and how it applies to their lives. And don't be afraid to answer, "I don't know; as long as

you add, "but I'll find out and get back to you as soon as I can."

Finally, I have to say to all husbands and fathers that it's our privilege and responsibility to set the spiritual tone in the home. God will hold us accountable for how faithfully we've nurtured our families— we can't pass it off to our wives as far as He's concerned. It's our assignment to lead the family in worship.

Disciple

The example we set as parents is probably the single most important part of guiding our children in this misguided world of ours. Paul said it most boldly in I Corinthians 11:1: "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ." As daunting as it may seem, we parents should say the same to our children and then live in such a way as to back it up.

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