

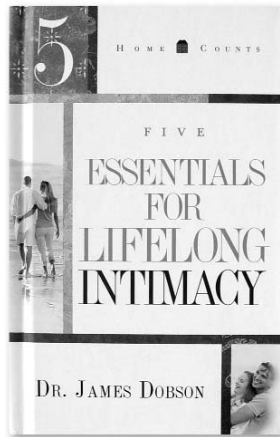
# FIVE ESSENTIALS FOR LIFELONG INTIMACY

Basic Principles for a Fulfilling Marriage

Dennis Rainey reminded the Dallas Seminary family that great families who live out God's standards are built on great marriages, those in which husbands and wives share their lives and hearts at the deepest levels.

At Dallas Seminary, we are committed to producing servant-leaders whose marriages and families are real-life examples of the truth they teach. Building true intimacy is something all of us want for our marriages—and renowned family expert Dr. James Dobson shows you how it can be achieved.

In *Five Essentials for Lifelong Intimacy*, Dr. Dobson speaks



directly to the deepest concerns and questions of modern couples: Will we grow together or apart? What can we do to keep romance fresh? With marriages crumbling all around us, how can we cultivate an intimate relationship?

Marriages are under assault today. But the essential ingredients for building a close, long-term relationship haven't changed because they are founded on God's Word. That's what makes Dr. Dobson's insights so powerful. *Five Essentials for Lifelong Intimacy* will help refresh and renew any marriage. Be sure to request your copy today and begin the exciting adventure of building a fulfilling, lifelong love!

To receive this resource as our thank you for your support of Dallas Seminary, use the enclosed reply card (for subscribers) or call 800-992-0998. Thank you!



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# VERITAS

Equipping Christians to live by truth—*veritas*—from God.

## Building a Great Family by God's Standards

by Dennis Rainey, M.A. (BS) 1976

### Dennis Rainey

Dennis Rainey is the president and cofounder of FamilyLife, a division of Campus Crusade for Christ, and is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary. Dennis is also senior editor of the HomeBuilders Couples Series® and daily host of the nationally syndicated and award-winning radio program "FamilyLife Today." He was the recipient of the National Religious Broadcasters Radio Program Producer of the Year Award for 1995 and 2003. Dennis has written numerous books, including *Staying Close*, which received the Gold Medallion Award from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. Dennis and his wife, Barbara, are on the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ—Dennis since 1970, and Barbara since 1972. They have six children, five grandsons, and three granddaughters, and live near Little Rock, Arkansas. This article is taken from Dennis's address to the Leader Board, a one-year leadership development experience for marketplace leaders that is part of the Seminary's Center for Christian Leadership.



We live in a troubled era. We have seen professional basketball players climbing into the stands to exchange punches with fans. We have watched fathers, mothers, and coaches in children's sports pummel each other while their kids look on in horror and disbelief. National television networks have been guilty of indecent exposure and fabricated news stories. Public figures have been forced to resign amid revelations that they lied on their résumés. And we are witnessing an all-out effort to redefine marriage by the promotion of same-sex "marriage" as an acceptable alternative to one man and one woman.

These public assaults on decency and morality are shocking even to our jaded culture. But they pale in comparison to the daily attacks that marriages and families

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must endure from forces bent on their destruction. The family is under fire today. Your spouse and children, and mine, are in the crosshairs of the enemy.

The amazing thing is that people know many of the underlying reasons for these problems. The *USA Today* newspaper recently published the results of a poll on this question: What are the causes of moral decline in our culture? Sixty-two percent of the respondents said it was due to a reduced influence of religion; another 62 percent also blamed an increase in pornography on the Internet; 73 percent named adult language and sexually explicit television; 80 percent said society is becoming too tolerant of bad behavior; and 83 percent cited a rise in drug abuse.

All of these factors are significant, but I believe the leading cause of moral decline in America today is even more basic than these. It is the failure of families to teach their children good values.

I recently received a letter from one of our radio listeners that was so startling I asked the writer's permission to share it with you. A woman named Cassie wrote:

"I am a 28-year-old single professional. I grew up in an unstable, non-Christian home. I have had five parents and three sets of siblings. My mother called me this past Sunday to inform me that she was about to bestow on me a sixth parent and a fourth set of siblings. I understand to the very depths of my being why God hates divorce and why we should too. No good thing comes from it ever. Divorce has not only stolen from me a family, but also the trust that marriage is a good and desirable thing. *Divorce answers no questions, solves no problems,*

*resolves no conflict, gives no respite, restores no dignity, and grants no peace."*

The italics and underlining in that last sentence are Cassie's, not mine. Letters like this make it clear that we are not playing

"patty-cake" in America any more in terms of our families. The family is under siege.

### ***The Family Is Satan's Primary Target for Destruction***

According to Genesis 3-4, Satan's first attack was against the family. He knew exactly what he was doing and where

**YOUR SPOUSE AND CHILDREN, AND MINE, ARE IN THE CROSSHAIRS OF THE ENEMY.**

to fire his best shots. Because that is the case, why would we expect things to be any different today? Our marriages and family lives are not lived out in a fantasy land, but on a spiritual battlefield. If we do not know God's purpose for the family and how to go about building a great family that can withstand attacks and thrive in a hostile culture, we could become spiritual casualties.

A great family is not a perfect family. A wonderful verse for a family to adopt is, "Love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8). I could paraphrase that verse to say, "Love covers over a multitude of *kids*."

If you came to our home, you would find dents in the walls, some made by children and some by adults. You would find a door that still doesn't quite shut right because two teenage boys were wrestling in their bedroom. You would find a burn in the linoleum upstairs where one of our children was smoking one night.

These are some of the external things. But if you were to look at the heart of our home,

you would find a family whose goal is to be godly. The real greatness of a home is the size of the hearts for God of the people who live there. Nobody has a perfect family, but all of us can have great families because a great family is a work in progress.

God has great plans for your family. As imperfect as it may be, the family is the

supreme conductor of the Christian faith from this generation to the next. God started out with the family, and I don't think He has changed His strategy since the beginning of time. God wants to use families to spread His Word and His glory throughout the earth.

I believe you want your family to become a great family in God's eyes, just as I want this for my family. So let me give you some specifics about what it takes to become a great family.

### ***Your First Priority Must Be to Know God***

This is where it all starts. If you have an inaccurate understanding of who God is, that is going to color every choice you make as individuals, as husband and wife, and as parents. If you know the truth

**NOBODY HAS A PERFECT FAMILY, BUT ALL OF US CAN HAVE GREAT FAMILIES.**

about God, life still may not be easy, but it will be purposeful. A great family must be a family built on the Word of God. And that starts with you and your spouse. Knowing God must be the passion of your lives.

### *Your Second Priority Must Be to Obey God*

Knowing God must result in obedience to God. The obedience that God desires and expects is obedience that comes from the heart. If you have a Bible concordance, a great study would be to look up the word “heart” and follow it right on through the Bible, writing down what God says about our hearts.

When Barbara and I were first married, we were deeply influenced by the example of a great Christian couple, Bill and Vonette Bright. Dr. Bright, of course, is the late founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. He and Vonette had written out the title deeds of their lives and given them to Jesus Christ.

So the first Christmas we were married, Barbara and I went to separate rooms of our sparsely decorated little home in Colorado and wrote out a

title deed to our lives. We gave to God everything we had and ever hoped to have, saying to Him, “God, You are the owner of it all. You have the title deed to our lives.”

We folded those sheets of paper and put them in an envelope as our gift to God before we gave each other anything. We put that envelope in a safety deposit box on December 19, 1972, and did not open it again until 1989, 17 years later.

When I read my sheet, I laughed at what I thought was important back then and what I had given to God. I wanted two children, and He gave me six. Skiing was important to me, so I gave to God the hope that I would have a pair of great skis someday. But even though we didn’t know all that God had in store for us, those sheets reflected our heart’s desire to obey God.

These two priorities, to know and to obey God, are summed up by Jesus in the two “greats” He gave us: the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. These two summarize all of life and all of the Scriptures. The Great Commandment is to love God

with everything we have, and the Great Commission is to obey Him by making disciples of all the nations. This is the place to start.

Building on this foundation, let me give you five things that characterize a truly great family from God’s perspective.

### *A Great Family Knows Its Purpose*

The first thing a great family knows is its purpose. A great family knows that God put us here on earth and formed us into families not just to perpetuate the race, but to be receptacles and channels of His love and grace to a needy world.

### *A Great Family Builds by God’s Plan*

Second, a great family knows the biblical plan or blueprint for family life and follows God’s design. The Bible says, “Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain” (Ps. 127:1). Who is the architect of your family?

The reason we must build our families according to God’s plan is that when two imperfect people try to build a marriage and a family using their own plans, the result will be a pretty strange-looking structure. Imagine two builders with

different sets of plans working on the same house. I wouldn’t want to live in that house, and neither would you.

### *A Great Family Lives Out Its Values*

Values are where life and truth collide. This is because life tests your convictions. For instance, you may have strong convictions about modesty in dress, but one day your daughter may come to you crying and saying you’re not fair to forbid her from wearing what all the other girls are wearing, even at church. That’s when the strength of your convictions is tested.

I believe one of the reasons the Christian family has, for the most part, become ineffective in impacting our culture is that we have a lot of Bible knowledge yet few convictions. But I can promise you this. If you as a father and mother don’t know what your convictions are and stand for them, the world will set your standards for you. The sad fact about the Christian community today is that our homes are virtually no different than those of our unsaved neighbors in terms of the values we live out.

One of the most important things Barbara and I ever did in

**A GREAT FAMILY MUST BE A FAMILY BUILT ON THE WORD OF GOD.**

raising our children was to go away for a weekend and decide on the values we wanted our family to live by. We each wrote down 10 things and ranked them in importance, then got together and worked out the list of our top priorities in terms of values.

### **A Great Family Grows Through Its Trials**

A great family also has the endurance to hang in there and grow through the tough times. There will be valleys and pain on the journey of life. Some families are destroyed by the trials and problems they face. But God's desire and will are that your family learn the truth of Romans 5:3-5 and James 1:2 that God has a good purpose in our sufferings, which is to grow and mature us in Christ.

There is nothing the world, the flesh, and the devil can send your family's way that you cannot survive and grow from if you keep your eyes on the Lord and make it your purpose to love and obey Him in everything.

### **A Great Family Has Impact for God**

The fifth and final trait of a great family I want to share with you is this: A great family impacts the culture and the people around it.

Dr. James Stewart is a pastor in Edinburgh, Scotland. Read carefully what he says: "If we could show the world that being committed to Christ is not tamed humdrum or sheltered monotony, but the

most thrilling, exciting adventure that the human spirit will ever know, then those who have been standing outside the church and looking askance at Christ will come crowding in to

pay allegiance, and we might as well expect the greatest revival since Pentecost."

Your family can be such a great advertisement and endorsement for the Christian faith that people will follow you to church to see where they can get some of what you have! Or as our beloved Prof. Hendricks used to tell us in class, "Get on fire for God, and other people will at least come to watch you burn." May God help us raise families that honor and serve Him.

**A GREAT FAMILY KNOWS THE BIBLICAL BLUEPRINT FOR FAMILY LIFE.**

## **Becoming a family of godly influence**

There isn't a day that goes by but what I am reminded that at its very heart, Dallas Seminary is a family ministry. Believe me, I wouldn't want it any other way!

The reminder may come as I see a married couple holding hands as they walk across campus or a mom watching her children play on the lawn while they wait for dad to finish class.

I love the family atmosphere and emphasis of our school, which is as important to a good education as books and classes. Helping husbands and wives develop loving, God-honoring marriages and raise their children in "the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4) are high priorities for all of us at Dallas Seminary. We want to produce servant-leaders who are also servant-lovers, men and women who are passionate about their relationship with Jesus Christ and with their spouses and children.

That is why we recently invited Dr. Dennis Rainey to come back to campus and help us learn better how to build great families that love each other and influence our culture for Jesus Christ. Dennis and his wife, Barbara, are wonderful role models of the message they teach, and I wanted you as a valued member of the Seminary family to benefit from their insights.

I pray that this message will stir in you a renewed desire to build a family that is truly great in God's eyes. Dennis Rainey has given us some intensely practical ideas and exercises we can use today to strengthen our marriages and families. This issue of *Veritas* is another shining example of what we designed this publication to be—a tool in your hand to help you put God's Word to work right where you are.

Our commitment to minister to you is only right, for it is your prayers and financial support of Dallas Seminary that enable us to prepare godly leaders who can help individuals and families live for the Lord. Thank you for partnering with us in this work.



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