

The Duggar Family: 19 Kids and Shining

In Matthew 5:16, the Bible says, “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Shining is something the Duggar family does a lot of on *19 Kids and Counting*—formerly *17 Kids and Counting* and *18 Kids and Counting*. It’s a rare sight to find a Christian family spotlighted in a mostly positive light during prime time on secular TV, let alone a cable network. But that’s exactly what you’ll find if you tune into *19 Kids and Counting*, which airs Tuesday nights on TLC and is now in its sixth season.

The reality show follows the lives of the family of Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar, who, during the course of their 28-year marriage, have produced 10 sons and nine daughters. With only two sets of twins among the 19 children, Michelle has been pregnant for more than 12 years of her life. Another vital piece of Duggar trivia is that each child’s name begins with a “J”—Joshua, Jana, John-David, Jill, Jessa, Jinger, Joseph, Josiah, Joy-Anna, Jeremiah, Jedidiah, Jason, James, Justin, Jackson, Johannah, Jennifer, Jordyn-Grace and Josie.

The Duggars, who live in a 7,000-square-foot house with nine bathrooms in Tontitown, Ark., are not a typical family, and “with this many kids, it isn’t always easy, but we somehow make it all work,” the show’s introduction succinctly points out.

The Duggars have been making it all work, and their unabashed Christianity is a large part of it. *19 Kids and Counting* is one of my favorite shows, and it’s not just because my wife, Tammy, and I have a fairly large family—we have five boys, ages 11 and under. Speaking of which, our sons also love the

show.

I like the series because the producers allow the Duggars to talk about their faith in Christ so freely. It's probably because their faith is so much a part of their lives that it would be hard to put together the show without that element.

"The thing that really sticks out in the show is all the kids get along," Tammy keenly observed. "You never see them fighting."

The Duggars () are conservative Baptists who endorse the Quiverfull movement, which advocates Psalm 123:3, "Children are a heritage of the Lord." The family dresses in traditional ways—skirts or dresses for the girls, and polo shirts and trousers for the boys. When the Duggars go on road trips, the whole family together sometimes sings hymns such as "Amazing Grace."

The Duggars' homeschooling day, like the rest of their life, follows a biblical theme. "Our No. 1 goal is to lead our children to seek a close relationship with God and give Him every area of their lives," Jim Bob and Michelle wrote on the family's website. "We have heart-to-heart talks with each of the older children regularly. We try to keep up with their attitudes and actions. It is a joy to see our children becoming best friends."

Jim Bob—a real estate agent, property manager and former Arkansas state delegate—and Michelle have also written two Christian books: *The Duggars: 20 and Counting!* And *A Love That Multiplies*.

Sounds too good to be true? Sure, the show tends to focus quite a bit on the family's old-fashioned values, hard work and thrifty living, but the Duggars walk the talk—not just talk the talk.

During episodes about the Duggars' oldest son, Josh, getting

engaged and marrying Anna, the family clearly conveyed their conviction of the importance of a sexual relationship within the context of marriage as well as discussions about dating and courtship. During a recent episode titled "Duggars Down the Aisle," the older Duggar girls discuss what they look for in a husband.

In another episode in which most of the Duggars traveled to El Salvador on a mission trip, the family members were shown genuinely expressing compassion, offering love and prayers to poor villagers and orphans.

Sure, it seems odd that Jim Bob and Michelle do not allow their children to watch a lot of television, but they allow them to participate in a television series that has been going strong since September 2008.

By dropping seeds of the gospel per each episode, the Duggars are making a positive impact on television, instead of TV making a negative impact on their kids. In light of John 1:5, which says, "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it," the Duggars are letting their light shine in the increasingly dark world of TV.