

19 Kids and a Mission to Make Christ Known

Sarah Currens and her daughters waited in line for three hours to meet the Duggar family at the Billy Graham Library Saturday afternoon.

The subjects of the TLC reality show *19 Kids and Counting*, the Duggars have become a household name in the U.S. and around the world.

"We watch their show a lot, so we thought it would be cool to actually meet them," said 12-year-old Hannah Currens, who heard the Duggars would be holding a book signing at the Library and asked her mom if she and her 9-year-old sister, Hayley, could meet their favorite TV family.

A Different Kind of Reality Show

Michelle and Jim Bob Duggar are known for raising their 19 children with Christian values. They spend time studying the Bible and praying as a family. They also emphasize the seemingly lost art of playing outside instead of couch surfing and playing video games.

"I'm just happy there's a wholesome show on TV," said Sarah Currens. "They're so well-behaved, and they're hard workers. It starts with the parents. I think they instill good values in their children early on."

Those values aren't lost on Hannah and Hayley, who notice something different about the Duggar kids.

"They're entertaining to watch, but they're all really well-behaved," said Hannah Currens, who walked away with a notebook full of signatures from the Duggar parents and their children.

"It felt like a dream," said Hannah. "They were really nice."

Like they are on TV, but better.”

A Platform for Sharing the Gospel

Before spending hours signing their new book, *The Duggars: 20 and Counting!* the family walked through the multimedia exhibits of the Billy Graham Library. The younger children curled up on the laps of their parents and older siblings to watch the story of Billy Graham’s life.

“I’m just so grateful for his faithfulness to God’s word,” said Michelle Duggar. “This is so amazing to see how God just took this young man and took him all over the world.”

Like Billy Graham, the Duggar family views television as a platform to share the Gospel with the world. Their strong emphasis on faith and family has made them role models for thousands of other families. But, with the spotlight also comes criticism.

“They’ll say all kinds of ugly things about us,” said Michelle Duggar. “We acknowledge our faults. We admit we are not a perfect family, but we’re learning. We just want to please and honor God. It’s not about us.”

It Started with a Photo

The Duggars got their first taste of the spotlight when Jim Bob was running for the U.S. Senate in 2002 after serving three years in the Arkansas House of Representatives. That year, the whole family went out to the polls on election night. Michelle, who homeschools the children, was using the opportunity as a lesson in civics.

Jim Bob lost the election, but a photographer snapped a photo of the family that ended up in the *New York Times*. A freelance writer for *Parents Magazine* spotted the photo, which led to a feature article in the publication. A documentary request from Discovery Health Channel followed, and later, the reality show

on TLC.

Each step of the way, Jim Bob and Michelle prayed, asking God whether they should accept the publicity. They kept sensing a call to use their newfound platform to share their faith.

“We said, ‘We’ll do it as long as you don’t edit out our faith, because our faith is the core of our life,’” said Michelle Duggar.

More than ten years and eleven television seasons later, the Duggars continue to stay true to their faith, viewing their time in the spotlight as a divine appointment.

Drawing a Crowd

Nearly 600 people waited in line to meet the Duggars at Saturday’s book signing event. Among the many admirers were Marcin and Christie Marciszko and their two young children.

“I’m most impressed that the Duggars stay grounded in the public eye,” said Christie Marciszko. “They seem to cling to their family values, and I really appreciate that.”

The Marcins, who live in nearby Fort Mill, S.C., waited in the hot sun for hours, not just to have a book signed, but to encourage the Duggars to keep up the good work.

“They defy the odds,” said Marcin Marciszko. “They go against society’s grain.”

“Most importantly, they have a love for Christ.” said Christie Marciszko. “That’s the foundation.”

A Mission to Make Christ Known

After so many years in the public eye with no end in sight, the Billy Graham Library seemed like an appropriate place for the Duggar family to visit. It was a chance for the children—from biggest to littlest—to learn about the lasting

impact of a life lived wholeheartedly for Christ.

“To be here and to see how Billy Graham’s life impacted the whole world, it really gives our children a vision of how they can impact lives also,” said Jim Bob Duggar.

For Michelle, the visit encouraged her to keep on clinging to the family’s mission—one that is increasingly rare.

“To make Christ known,” said Michelle Duggar. “To love the Lord and serve others, and to make Christ known.”

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