



The Duggars: 20 and Counting!: Raising One of America's Largest Families--How the

By Jim Bob Duggar, Michelle Duggar

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This practical, positive book reveals the many parenting strategies that Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar use as they preside over America's best-known mega-family.

Each time a new baby arrives, the press from around the world clamors for interviews and information. Visitors are amazed to find seventeen (baby number *eighteen* is due January 1, 2009) well-groomed, well-behaved, well-schooled children in a home that focuses on family, financial responsibility, fun—and most importantly, faith.

Readers will learn about the Duggars' marriage—how they communicate effectively, make family decisions, and find quality time alone. They'll discover how the Duggars manage to educate all their children at home, while providing experiences that go beyond the family walls, through vacations and educational trips. And they'll see how the Duggar family manages their finances and lives debt-free—even when they built their own 7,000-square-foot house.

Answering the oft asked question—How can I do with one or two children what you do with seventeen (soon to be eighteen)?—Jim Bob and Michelle reveal how they create a warm and welcoming home filled with what Michelle calls “serene chaos.” They show how other parents can succeed whether they’re rearing a single child or several. With spiritual insights, experience-based wisdom, practical tips, and plenty of humorous and tender anecdotes, the Duggars answer the questions that pour into the family’s Web site on a daily basis—especially after every national media interview and TV appearance—including their segments on the Discovery Health Channel’s “Meet the Duggars” series.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Listening to Michelle Duggar read the Duggar family biography is like sitting in a living room and having a conversation with a gentle and soft-spoken woman who is in awe of what the Lord has done in her family's life. You can imagine the twinkle in her eye as she fondly recounts stories about the early years of her marriage to Jim Bob. Likewise, you can hear the joy in her voice as she discusses each of their children. Far from being a perfect family, the Duggars deal with many of the same challenges as the rest of us. After your "chat" with Michelle, you will certainly have gleaned greater insights into parenting."

T.D. © AudioFile Portland, Maine

About the Author

Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar married in 1984. Some time after the birth of their first child, they prayed that God would give them a love for children like his love for children and that he would bless them with as many children as he saw fit in his timing. Soon after, Michelle became pregnant with twins! The Duggars currently have ten boys and nine girls, and all their names begin with "J"—Joshua, Jana and John-David (twins), Jill, Jessa, Jinger, Joseph, Josiah, Joy-Anna, Jedidiah and Jeremiah (twins), Jason, James, Justin, Jackson, Johannah, Jennifer, Jordyn-Grace, and Josie.

The Duggars are the #1 program on TLC/ Discovery Health / TLC documentaries and have appeared multiple times on national TV shows, such as *The Today Show*, *Good Morning America*, *The View*, *Inside Edition*, *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, Fox News Network, CNN, MSNBC, and others. Foreign television appearances include Italian Public Television, KBS (Korean Broadcasting System), and Discovery Home & Health (UK & Australia). They have been featured in magazine and newspaper articles in China, India, New Zealand, Australia, France, and Germany. As a family project, the Duggars built a seven-thousand-square-foot home. Both Jim Bob and Michelle are licensed real estate agents and conduct the Jim Sammon's Financial Freedom Seminar in their community. They purpose to live completely debt-free—postponing purchases until they have the cash. Jim Bob served in the Arkansas House of Representatives from 1999 to 2003 and was a candidate for the U.S. Senate in 2002.

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Organization Tips Our Sanity

Systems, Schedules, and Methods That Work for Us

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

-- Ecclesiastes 3:1

We've come a long way since those days when there were seven of us living in the nine-hundred-square-foot car-lot house. After living there for seven years, our next house on Johnson Road seemed like a mansion. It had three bedrooms, two baths -- and a Laundromat!

While we were living back at the car lot, Michelle had managed our family's laundry with a single washer and dryer. But in the wintertime, the washer, which was out in a detached garage, would freeze up. Then she would have to carry all the family's dirty clothes to a self-service laundry in town.

It was a chore, loading all the baskets in and out of the car, in and out of the storefront laundry, and then back to the house while sometimes having to also corral a bunch of children. But there was an upside too: it took less than half the time to do the laundry, because while she was there, she could use multiple washers and dryers.

That gave me (Jim Bob) the idea of having our own Laundromat right at our house. I suggested to Michelle that we install two washers and three dryers in the Johnson Road house as we were remodeling it before we moved in.

She thought I was crazy. What family has two washers and three dryers in their home? But after we talked about it a little more, she agreed it could be a timesaver. So, over the year of the remodeling project, we watched for opportunities to buy high-quality used washers and dryers, and we've had our own Duggar family Laundromat ever since. (Now we have four washers and four dryers.) It may have been that first set of multiple laundry appliances that helped us realize, with five children and possibly more in the future, we needed to live differently from other families, who had only two or three children. We started looking for ideas and innovative ways to make the household run more efficiently. In this chapter, we'll share some of the organization tips, systems, and schedules that keep our household running smoothly.

Up, Away, and Out of Sight

I (Michelle) am not a natural-born organizer, as some may be. But when we were living in the little house at the car lot and preparing to move to the Johnson Road house, I realized I had to get organized or I would go under. Someone recommended Emilie Barnes's book *Survival for Busy Women*, and I'm still using the methods and ideas that book taught me. After reading the book, I immediately started implementing Emilie's great tips for getting organized, including her system for simplifying a household move. The ideas I'm sharing here are based on or adapted from her ideas.

If you ask me, homes for big families, or maybe any size families, need almost as much storage space as living space. My goal has always been to keep most things like toys, games, books, and equipment out of sight and out of reach but easy to access. That plan keeps stored-away things out of the children's minds, so when they aren't using an item, they often forget about it. Then when we bring it out again, it's like receiving a new gift at Christmastime; they are so excited about playing with it again. Plus, it's something that hasn't been underfoot all the time. That practice, along with the children's lack of exposure to broadcast television advertisements promoting the latest new toy or game, keeps them from constantly asking to buy new toys and games. Another reward was that little hands or eyes were not reaching for or seeing those packed-away, out-of-reach items. I wasn't constantly tripping over things the little ones had pulled out -- or at least not as many things as I tripped over before! Emilie's system made things much easier.

Moving Methods

Although we had "only" five children when we moved to the Johnson Road house, we had a lot of stuff, and moving it all when the remodeling was finished was going to be a really big job. It took us nearly a year to finish the remodeling, though, so I had lots of time to get packed. We were hoping to move before Jessa was born, and I met my goal of having everything packed a month before she was due in November 1992.

As it turned out, however, we didn't move until March 1993, so during those last few months at the car-lot house, we were living with the bare minimum while most of our belongings were packed in boxes. Emilie's system made that possible, and I loved getting a taste of how good it feels to have an uncluttered house! All the boxes were packed, labeled, and neatly stacked in a back room, ready for the move, but accessible in the meantime. Here's how we got organized for that move, and how we've stayed organized ever since.

1-2-3, GO!

1. Sort

The first step in getting organized, either for a move or just to simplify your life, is getting rid of stuff you don't need. If you move something you don't need, it can stay unused in a box somewhere for years, taking up space and adding clutter to your life. So I followed Emilie's suggestion to start by spending fifteen minutes at a time, cleaning out and packing one closet, one drawer, one shelf, one something.

You'll need three black plastic garbage bags. (It's important that you can't see through the bags so you won't be tempted to retrieve something from a bag once you've already sorted it.) One bag is for the stuff you're going to throw away. The second bag is for the things you're going to give away or sell at a yard sale. The third bag is for the items you're going to keep, either putting them back in the closet or drawer if you're simply organizing, or packing them into a box if you're moving.

If you're busy (as most moms of young children are), make it your goal to work just fifteen minutes at a time. It can seem overwhelming if you think you have to organize or pack a whole room at once, but knowing you're just going to work at it for fifteen minutes makes it seem more doable. Sometimes I would even set a kitchen timer so I knew when the fifteen minutes were up. Then I walked away until the next time I had fifteen minutes free.

Once you've sorted out that drawer or closet, you're ready to pack the keepers into a box. Even though it cost some money at a time when we were saving every penny possible, I chose to buy cardboard file-storage boxes with lids that were all the same size so they would stack easily and could be labeled clearly. I didn't want to use clear plastic boxes because I didn't want the children to be able to see what was inside and be tempted to dig stuff out.

2. Label Boxes and Corresponding Index Cards

The most important part about packing for moving or for storage is labeling the boxes according to an organized system and recording the contents on index cards. Yes, this takes a little time and is a bit tedious, and a lot of people skip this step. But it's absolutely crucial, especially if you're packing well ahead of your move, as I was.

Using a felt-tip marker, I color coded every box at the upper corner to show what room it went in. Then, on its corresponding file card, I used the same color to fill in a triangle covering the upper corner. I put these cards in a little recipe box. The color coding made it easy to see that like-colored boxes were stacked together when we moved them to the new house, with each color going to the appropriate room, right from the get-go. We didn't have to move the boxes again once we got them to the new house.

Each box was also clearly numbered. And on the index card numbered to correspond to that box, I wrote down each item I packed in that box. I wrote at the top of the card where the box was stored: in the pantry, the garage, or one of the bedrooms. I wrote everything in pencil so that later I could erase things that were removed from the box.

The system worked wonderfully when we moved, but it also made life lots easier before we moved. For instance, we were all packed up in November but didn't move until March so when we were hosting a big Thanksgiving dinner, I could get out the card file, go through the cards that were color coded for the kitchen, and easily find the big platter I wanted to use for the turkey. The system eliminated having to unpack and dig through twenty kitchen boxes. I would say to one of the older children, "Please go get box number twenty-three from the pantry shelf and bring it to me."

I packed seasonal things like Christmas decorations in those boxes for moving, and many of those decorations have been in those boxes or others like them ever since! The cards and the color-coded system let us know exactly which boxes contain specific Christmas things. So if I want to set out something early, like the ceramic Christmas tree that is a keepsake from my mother, I can send one of the kids to get box fifty-four out of the garage.

We asked a friend to design and build shelves in the pantry and laundry room at our Johnson Road house to custom fit the box system. This one thing helped tremendously to keep our cabinets and shelves clutter-free and much more organized. Every time I would go to get something out of a cabinet, I wasn't reaching around or knocking over items I used only occasionally to get to the one item I was really after.

We're still using the same system. Now we also store folded off-season clothing in labeled and color-coded boxes. Hanging off-season clothes go to an out-of-the-way closet.

3. Write in Pencil So You Can Weed Out

The system was also helpful in weeding out things we didn't need when it was time to move out of the Johnson Road house twelve years later. I went through the cards and put a little check by all the things I wanted to get rid of: items that were obsolete or those we had outgrown or no longer used. Or, if I planned to pass along items to other families that I knew could use them, I wrote their names beside the item on the card. And when...

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