

# HEALTHY Home

*A Practical Guide to Build  
a Spiritually Vibrant Family  
. . . Starting with You*

**Tim Alba**

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For bulk orders, please contact the author at:  
TimAlbaWD@gmail.com

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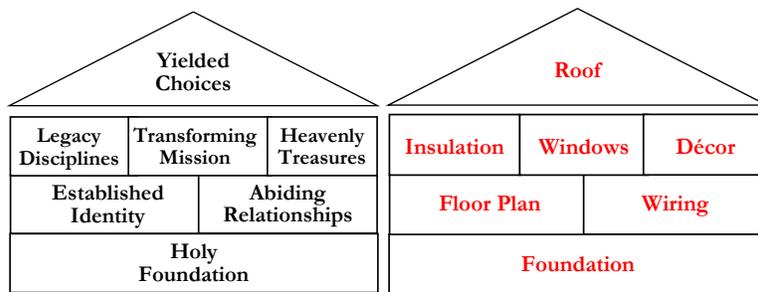
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## Foreword

I love the title of Tim Alba's newest book, *HEALTHY Home*. More than just a great title, this book is an invaluable guide to help you build one—specifically, your own. If you are pursuing one of life's greatest callings—building a family—you will find this resource to be theologically sound, deeply practical, and thoroughly researched.

*HEALTHY Home* isn't just a book; it's a game plan. It will help you set clear goals, create alignment, call the plays, and navigate the often-underestimated challenges of family life.

As a pastor and father of six grown children (and now a grandfather), I'm acutely aware of how much our culture has changed—and how complex family life can be. People genuinely want to be spiritually healthy, but few know what that truly looks like. Yet amid those challenges, I've had the privilege of watching parents like Tim and Anna Alba build their homes with biblical wisdom, skill, and courage. And I love the results: strong, joyful, faithful children who have grown into spiritually healthy adults.

Tim and Anna are not just teachers—they're practitioners. I wouldn't want to read, much less endorse, a book on family life from someone who wasn't living it out. The Alba family radiates faith, fun, and authenticity.

When you read this book, you'll get a glimpse into their home and discover what Tim calls the “secret sauce” of building a spiritually vibrant family. You'll also see how you can use the “7 Big Rocks of a HEALTHY Home” to help your family *want what they need* to be faithful.

I've known Tim for more than twenty years—through his leadership in both the corporate C-suite and our church. He's authentic, practical, and thorough. He's taught this material to hundreds in our congregation and lived it out in countless conversations. Tim is consumed by a vision to see men and

women rise up to build godly, healthy homes—and to one day hear God say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

We are leveraging this powerful content at our church through a sermon series, connection classes, and our practical mentoring ministry. I encourage you to use it too—with your family, your church, your mentees, or anyone who needs guidance on their spiritual journey. After all, as this book reminds us, “A healthy home starts with a healthy you.”

Now you have the opportunity to benefit from that same passion and insight. My prayer is that *HEALTHY Home* will help you experience what God intends your home to be—a place of grace, growth, and generational impact.

John Meador  
Lead Pastor, Cross City Church

## Chapter 1

### Choose a Family Spiritual Fitness Goal

Dream with me for a moment about your family.

If you could wish for one thing – anything – for your family, what would it be? Love? Safety? Success? Faith? Physical health? All good things that we all want.

For Christian families, though, there are three dreams – three spiritual fitness goals – that shape us. One of these three dreams is by far the most common. A second dream is shared by many Christians. But there’s a third dream, a road less traveled, that changes everything when it shapes *your* family.

The first family dream is what everyone wants: a happy home.

#### **Dream #1: Happy Home**

How would you fill in this blank? “All I want is for my family to be \_\_\_\_.” Inevitably, the answer I hear is “happy.” Tired parents especially just want everyone to get along and be happy. It’s the same with momma: If momma ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy.

A happy home is great. But if your family dream is happiness, there’s a problem. A big problem. If you’re satisfied only as long as you get what you want, you might find happiness in the moment, but not the lasting joy you dream of.

Doing what you want in order to get what you want . . . that sounds so good, but it’s no way to live. Happiness is so fleeting. Good luck keeping everyone in your family happy. You can’t always know what they want because they often don’t know what they want. And when they get what we want, they want something else. Happiness isn’t a light switch that stays on; it’s more like a

blinking strobe light that drives you crazy because it's a fickle short-term goal with dangerous long-term consequences.

A happy home is better than an unhappy home, but there's something infinitely better that God wants for you and wants from you – the second family dream: a holy home.

## **Dream #2: Holy Home**

I used to say that my goal as a parent was that my kids would be holy, not happy. I wanted both, but sometimes I had to choose between the two. And I chose holy. Because holiness brings happiness, but happiness doesn't bring holiness.

Holy cleans you up; happy just cheers you up. Holiness pursues God's will, not yours. God chose you to make you holy (Eph. 1:4) and declare you holy (1 Cor. 1:30), but you can never fully achieve holiness. You just receive it and pursue it.

Holy hearts are satisfied with less (Phil. 4:11-13) because they're satisfied with what they need, not what they want. And they know that God always provides what they need (Phil. 4:19).

A holy home is a great spiritual fitness goal because it's God's goal for you (1 Pet. 1:16, 1 Thess. 4:7). But holiness is often mistaken for three things: 1) just compliance, 2) just you and God, and 3) just emptying yourself of sin.

First, many people see holiness as just compliance (doing what you're required to do) instead of what you get to do. Holiness requires obedience. But obedience isn't begrudgingly complying with God's will; it's willingly aligning with God's will.

Second, while holiness is right-standing with God, it's not just you and God – secluded piety. Yes, you need daily God-and-me prayer time. Yes, you need to focus daily in His Word – the Bible – and let it guide every part of your life. But holiness isn't a lake that just receives; it's a flowing river that enlivens others, starting

with your family. You can't make your family holy, but you can reflect the holiness of God that draw them in.

Third, although you (like all of us) can never be sin-free, you must continually empty yourself of sin. But just emptying yourself of sin isn't enough. Holiness is also being filled with the Holy Spirit. The amount of His filling you want, though, determines the amount of time you prepare. If you want a little holiness, you'll occasionally clean. But if you want a harvest of holiness, you'll keep sweeping, uncluttering, and making room for the Holy Spirit.

You can't do better than holy. However, there's a third dream that makes holy come alive with a vibrancy that attracts others to the faith that stirs your soul. This dream doesn't focus on just compliance, seclusion, and cleanliness. It turns spiritually flabby families into lean, mean spiritual machines. It's the third family dream: a spiritually healthy home.

### **Dream #3: Healthy Home**

Every Christ-follower wants to be spiritually healthy, but many don't know what that looks like or where to start. After all, how can we pass down something we don't understand and can't describe?

Spiritual health, like physical health, has two parts. Physical health is: 1) the absence of illness and 2) complete well-being. Not one. Both. You can't be physically healthy with the existence of illness. But being free from illness doesn't mean you're healthy and strong. You're just not sick.

The same is true of spiritual health, which also has two parts: 1) the absence of ongoing sin and 2) complete faithfulness. Both are needed. And as we'll see in later chapters, both flow from the source of spiritual health – wanting what you need to be faithful.

God won't affirm ongoing, unconfessed sin, no matter how well intended it may be. But just avoiding the “worst” sins doesn't

make you spiritually healthy and strong. You can be clean yet empty, like the man in Luke 11:24-26 who got cleansed of a demon but became worse off when seven demons returned. Why? Because, like many Christian homes, he was clean of what's wrong but not filled with what's right. Free from the presence of demons but not filled with the presence of God. Still susceptible, due to a lack of spiritual well-being. And so are we if we don't do both – root out sin and fill the void with complete faithfulness.

A healthy home is vibrant because it's both free from bondage and free to live victoriously. It hates sin and savors the Savior. It rejects an old sin nature and revels in a new Christ nature. It engages and builds up. It energizes and activates you to be strong and steadfast in your walk with Him. It strives for exceedingly abundant life on earth and eternal life in heaven (1 Tim. 4:8).

Spiritual health doesn't lay a new foundation; it builds on Christ's foundation (1 Cor. 3:11-13). It's the pursuit of "wholly holy" – a holiness that fills and fulfills the whole you. Being wholly holy strengthens. It sticks. It satisfies. And it saturates your family because you're instilling faithfulness from within them, not trying to install faithfulness upon them.

A healthy home, though, isn't just a dream. It can be a vivid reality by taking steps to turn good works into the fruit of the Spirit – happiness into joy, friendship into love, pleasure into peace, doggedness into patience, tolerance into kindness and goodness, good intentions into faithfulness, empathy into gentleness, and self-awareness into self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). And where does a healthy home start? It starts with a healthy you.

### **A Healthy Home Starts with a Healthy You**

If you want your home to be healthy, *you* need to be healthy. Your faithfulness won't guarantee theirs, but it's the biggest factor in what they choose. Kids grow up thinking that your spiritual health

– good or bad – is normal. For example, my young kids assumed that all dads were impatient because I struggled with patience. But they also assumed it’s normal for a dad to love his wife, a wife to respect her husband, and grandparents to selflessly serve people in need. And although they said we were “SO boring!”, they eventually realized that our boring family wasn’t so bad after all.

Years later, though, I realized that I was making a common mistake – I was trying to create little copies of me, instead of little copies of God. Indeed, you can have good intentions and good works, yet still miss the mark.

While your family needs to see God’s Spirit thriving in you, they also need you to help them pick their own spiritual fitness goal and walk their own path to faithfulness. And a great place to start is dreaming big and aiming small.

## **Dream Big**

Having no dream is dangerous, as is dreaming about things that don’t matter. But an even stealthier danger is dreaming small. Whether it’s fear, fatigue, failures, or something else, your family needs you to overcome any excuses for not dreaming big.

Set a high bar. Ask God to do great things through your family. You’re created in His image, so dream like it. Yes, we need balance. But it’s better to burn out while pursuing a grand goal than rust out with mediocre dreams. Dreaming big isn’t reckless; it’s world changing when we’re preparing our family to be faithful.

In my book *Well Done, Mom & Dad!*, I share three core needs – vision, character, and culture – to prepare your family to be faithful. But it starts with a vision, a grand dream, of what God wants for your family and how to turn what is into what can be.

For decades my personal dream was to hear Jesus say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21). I talked about my personal dream often, created a family mission statement based

on it, and even commissioned a painting to visualize it. And although my fervor to hear “Well done!” hasn’t waned, God did a fresh work in me. He gave me a new dream, a *family dream*, that absolutely grips my soul – the dream of watching Jesus do the same thing . . . with my kids and grandkids!

Personal dreams are great, especially if they’re God-honoring and clear. But a family dream dares to dream bigger, lead bolder, and serve better. It promises more. And it requires more. We must become a better student of God as well as a better student of each family member’s needs and gifts in order to bond each of them to God. A family dream is harder than a personal dream, but it’s much, much grander. And that’s the point!

A big family dream also encourages and challenges you, no matter how your family responds. When my family did various exercises to unpack and apply our family dream, my kids gave me eye rolls, slumped shoulders, and heavy sighs. But when my kids became adults, I learned how those exercises had helped shape their own God-sized dreams and led them to the second part of knowing where to start: Aim small.

### **Aim Small**

When marksmen aim small, one of two things happen. They either hit the bullseye or they miss small. In the movie *The Patriot*, the lead character saves his son from certain death by urging his fellow shooter to “Aim small. Miss small.” By aiming small, even when you miss the bullseye (and we all miss it sometimes), you’ll still hit a worthwhile target.

So, the question is: What should you aim for?

The answer: Aim only at what you need to hit.

Don’t aim at things that don’t matter. For example, as a young parent, I fought every little battle. And while it’s true that faithfulness in little things enables faithfulness in big things, it’s

also true that I harped on too many little things. I had to learn that aiming small isn't focusing on small things; it's focusing on the heart of big things with direction, determination, and devotion.

First, aiming small requires direction. What are you aiming for? Early on, I was so busy, tired, and distracted with providing for my family that I didn't always aim at what they needed. Sound familiar? It's so easy to get "directionally challenged" unless we let the Bible and the Holy Spirit point us in the right direction.

The aim of my church, Cross City Church, is to be real people with real hope and experience real life in Jesus Christ. We define REAL as: Relate well to God and people; Engage people with the gospel of Jesus Christ; Adopt them into the body of Christ; and Lead them to be Christ-followers. REAL isn't a motto; it's our aim. And while you don't need an acrostic, you need an aim. Do you and your family know what you're aiming for?

Second, aiming small requires a determination to keep your target in the crosshairs. And that involves doing things you dislike or aren't good at. But what's worse than doing unpleasant, important things is the regret of not doing them. Therefore, this book takes aim at four questions that we all need to answer but likely don't get around to considering:

- What's my family's dream? (Chapter 1)
- Where are we in realizing this dream? (Chapter 2)
- How can this dream become a reality? (Chapters 3–10)
- How can we keep living this dream? (Chapters 11-12)

And third, aiming small requires devotion to the people you love. They're real people in need of real hope and real life. They're counting on you. And they need you to stay devoted to the daily choices that help them be faithful.

Who's counting on you to dream big and aim small?

Here's the family that keeps my dream big and my aim small (plus three grandkids not yet born then).



How big is your dream?  
How small is your aim?

Even if you're not yet confident in your aim, take a shot. Your family will understand misfires, but what they won't forgive is not trying. You can always reload and re-aim. Just make sure your family's spiritual fitness goal is a vibrant, healthy home. If so, strap on . . . this is about to get really good!

To get started, the next chapter provides a simple tool – a “spiritual stress test.” It takes only 15 minutes to complete, but it can change your life. As I jokingly tell our HEALTHY Home classes, these 15 minutes can save you 15 years of counseling. Granted, great Christian counseling is a powerful tool to strengthen and heal families, but why not build an immunity to stop the endless cycle of spiritual pain and recovery?

By taking this assessment, you'll be on your way to knowing the spiritual health of you and your family. And once you know your spiritual condition, you can improve it.