

Phil Strong's next book is coming soon.

BUILDING A STRONG FAMILY

Here's a short preview.

Prologue:

Does the concept of family bring you warm feelings or nightmares?

For many people their memory of younger years is filled with positive experiences of strength and solidarity. That's what it's like for me; my upbringing was in a safe home with parents and siblings who loved me. I was encouraged to pursue interests in many areas and challenged to achieve academically.

Successes were celebrated loudly and publicly. Any mistakes I made were first confronted with love and then correction. While my family was not perfect they gave me the best chance I had for a good start in life. But I do realise this is not the case for every person.

Perhaps your younger years were unsafe. Perhaps you were lonely. Just this morning, before sitting down to write this, I watched a mother tell her daughter that she was an embarrassment to her. This happened right in front of us. I can only

imagine the deep pain that young girl felt and I shudder to think of the future pain she will experience as insecurity, fear and shame take root in her psyche. It's possible you were also abused emotionally as a young person.

There are extremes in our communities and these extremes cases often make the News as families are publicly shattered, arrested, or terminated. But behind many closed doors there are families who are fractured without the publicity. The withdrawal of love, the harshness of words, the sting of punishment, the absence of support or leadership, the burden of expectation, all these negative experiences are fracturing families and it's causing significant flow-on effects in our communities.

These fractures cause fragility in the deep recesses of our soul. Our emotions are scarred and our hearts forever disabled when pain runs deep. This fragility is carried into our futures like a permanent limp, affecting how we interact and love others as we journey through the seasons of life.

When families are divided this division causes disillusionment. Confusion becomes rampant when children are caught in-between the battles lines drawn by their parents. The absence of answers

extends into blame that often results in self-hate, causing a perilous precipice from which many young people fall, lost in the abyss of hopelessness.

Short term solutions that comes as a “quick-fix” may numb the pain but they almost always lead to long term problems. Too many times I’ve seen grown adults chose a childish answer to a problem, preferring the easy answer instead of the right answer.



Where has the timeless quality of wisdom disappeared to from the human race?



The heart and soul are the most precious possessions we have as humans beings. What good would it be for our future if we gained everything and yet lost our soul?

What’s my point? Why have I led you down this path?

You’ve picked up this book called ***Building a Strong Family*** and you’ve read the first few pages. I wonder why.

Perhaps you're willing to hope there's a way to avoid some of this pain. I'm hoping you're willing to do your part to make that a likely possibility.

I want you to dive into this book like a hungry teenager at an all-you-can-eat buffet!

Look, I know I don't have all the answers. I'll remind you at the end of the book that there's not just one expert who can fix your life, remedy your family and guarantee your success. But at the end of the day you are the one you can control. So take a firm grip on the steering wheel of your life and point your family in the right direction!

This book is a collection of stories that help to highlight some principles Kathy and I have learned along our journey. You've already glanced at the bullet-points on the back cover so you know some of the key benefits you could gain from the ideas I'm going to share.

One of my favourite thoughts comes from a couple of stories from what we call the "City of Tears." Any city that can overwhelm you repeatedly days after day is going to leave you with fond memories and amazing stories. What you could gain from those

stories is a belief about your future that will give you a different step.

There's a drug that we share in our home all the time, and we do it because it's good for us... especially the children. Kathy may have a red face while you read that chapter and the hilarious story about her morning relief on the side of a narrow road along a coastal cliff face, but you'll laugh I'm sure.

In Chapter 13 I'll accuse parents of not doing their job. At the risk of offending you here (as well as there) I'll happily point my finger at you and include you in that accusation. You'll have to turn or swipe there to see what I mean, but I promise you it's worth the look.

A few ideas didn't make it into this epistle and remain under the heading of a possible follow-up title, Leading a Strong Family. When I get there I'll encourage you to force your kids to talk with you, even if they think it will kill them. Another thought that can help you today is urging parents to accept that responsibility, boundaries and discipline all begin on day one of parenting. And just because I like you, (you are holding my book!), I'll share one more thought that didn't make this manuscript; it's

healthy to have disagreements as long as the disagreements are healthy.

There's no extra charge for those bonuses, you're welcome!

What does all of this mean for you?

You can begin a journey of your own toward family success. Kathy and I have always been very transparent about the lives we lead and the highs and lows we experience. We don't actually think family success is so much a destination, more like a feeling along the way. If you could find a way to be happy with your family amidst the highs and lows, you'd be interested wouldn't you?

Please allow me to share five keys for you before you begin your journey. Think of these five keys as foundation stones for your success. If you are deliberate in establishing these five keys in your life then you'll increase the chance of your family success. That's my goal here in sharing them, and I'm assuming success is your goal also.

Key Number One: Intentionality.

My friend, Wendy Walters, says in her book *Intentionality* that you must participate in the design of your own future, crafting your destiny through passion and uniqueness while leveraging your influence for the greatest good.

No success happens by accident. You have to be intentional about building a strong family. That puts the burden of responsibility on you to be clear about what you're doing and why. Wendy says it's essential to focus your choices, and I agree with her.

To be intentional means you'll have a strong determination, be resolute and unwavering and not easily distracted. Intentionality will be a very helpful foundation on which you can build your strong family.

Key Number Two: Diligence.

Hard work is not the most attractive idea to most of us, I know I like to run away from it at times. But it's the thing that sets apart those who succeed from

those who don't. Make yourself eligible for success by being diligent in your efforts.

Diligence means making the right choice, not just the easy choice. It means working hard even when no-one is looking. I can tell a lot about someone by the way they work in the shadows long before the bright lights of success hit them. When you are hard working without the need for recognition or reward you will most certainly establish a solid base from which to enjoy greatness.

Key Number Three: Integrity.

I like to define integrity as 'remaining the true you'.

For you to remain true to who you are you'll first need to discover and clarify who you are. (There's some good encouragement for that in chapter 2).

You are unique, there's not another one of you in the world — that's an advantage, not a disadvantage. Remain the true you.

Through my many years of coaching and leading others I have seen too many people disregard who they are to adopt what they consider to be a more favourable persona. "If only I could be like so-and-so" they will tell me. If you have a teenage

daughter you'll know what I mean; at some point they mimic an idol or a friend who they adore, often to their detriment.

This has to stop. You need to be real, no matter how raw. The world needs you to be you. Your family desperately needs you to remain the true you. Integrity matters.

Key Number Four: Faithfulness.

This has so many layers for me there's a risk I'll get on my soapbox and hammer you... so I'll be careful. What I mean by faithfulness is the unfaltering, unwavering, untiring dedication to your family.

The Bible speaks many times of the concept of a covenant, if you haven't heard that you may of heard of a marriage being called a covenant. In short, a covenant is an agreement. But there's a bit more to it. The public forming of an agreement (covenant) included cutting an animal in half and walking between the two halves. By doing so, each party was publicly declaring, "if I break this agreement may the same ending come to me as has

come to this animal.” How’s that for a declaration of faithfulness?!

When you are undying in your faithfulness to your family you will undoubtedly cement strength into them.

Key Number Five: Commitment.

Building a strong family is not a quick process, a simple edit or a re-badge. It’s not the same as washing the car and seeing the mud disappear. You’ll need to remain committed to the long journey. What Kathy and I have found challenging, as well as exciting, is each season has been different. As the kids grow the needs of our family shifts. But each season does gain benefit from the previous one. It’s like building in layers, strength comes over time.

A good analogy of this would be an exercise regime like weight-lifting. There’s a need for strength building early and willingness to see change. There’s the discipline of regularity and the pain of progress. Each new level brings pain to the body, but it heals more quickly. For those of us who don’t stick to it,

strength is lost over time. Building a strong family is the same.

I congratulate you for beginning this journey. As you read the stories I'm confident you'll find pearls of wisdom drop into your mind and heart that will bring benefit to your family. I'm offering my stories that share my challenges, my failures, my successes and everything in-between. My prayer is that they would help you in some way.

Like I said before, I want you to approach this book like a hungry teenager at an all-you-can-eat buffet. If you just want to eat the fries, make a meal of them. If you like to begin with the shrimp cocktail, or ice cream, that's up to you.

This book is an easy one to read. Check the list of headings in the contents and read the chapter that grabs your interest. Each chapter stands alone, there's no need to read the book from front to back if you don't want to.

Go on. Grab a cup of tea or coffee. Or a kombucha, if that's your preference. Find a quiet spot and begin.

It's time for you to build a strong family.