

FOREWORD BY DR. GARY CHAPMAN

Best-selling author, *The 5 Love Languages*

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE



*Your Family,
Your Faith, and
Your Voice Matter
NOW MORE
THAN EVER*

DR. TIM CLINTON

President, American Association of Christian Counselors

Cohost, *Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk*

What does the future hold for America? Will the current and coming cultural battles ultimately destroy or preserve our freedoms?

From the president of the American Association of Christian Counselors...

Dr. Tim Clinton, an eminent American counselor and associate of Dr. James Dobson, believes this moment in American history is a reprieve. It is a moment to take stock. We must know the season we are in, maximize our opportunities, and ready ourselves for the cultural battles that are sure to befall us. It is a moment to prepare. It is a moment to focus on the future.

And it starts with you!

The future is bright, the victories are destined, and great things await the faithful who prepare.

Focus on the Future by my dear friend Tim Clinton is a must-read for the times we find ourselves in. Tim weaves together our storied past as followers of Christ, starting with the effect of the early Christians on the Roman Empire right through to today, as we navigate spiritual warfare on levels we have never experienced. There *is* a new attack on the family, but as Tim points out, there is still great hope for these troubled times, and *Focus on the Future* points the way forward.

—JENTEZEN FRANKLIN
SENIOR PASTOR, FREE CHAPEL
NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

I have been grateful to call Dr. Tim Clinton a friend for many years. He is a master in his field, bringing hope, healing, and godly perspective to the thousands of lives he impacts every day. This book, however, surprised me. Everything I expected to be there was there, but there was so much more. You will be deeply touched by Tim's vulnerability and tender heart. You will be drawn closer to Christ.

—SHEILA WALSH
AUTHOR, *PRAYING WOMEN AND
PRAYING GIRLS DEVOTIONAL*

Dr. Tim Clinton's dynamic new book, *Focus on the Future*, is a positive, hopeful message that is a pleasure to read and will motivate you to see good things in your family's future. While we see ugliness all about our national landscape, Dr. Clinton points to the beauty of timeless truths and gently reminds us these promises are yours and mine—to lean on. Thank you, Dr. Clinton, for writing this powerful book when Americans need this message most!

—HON. MICHELE BACHMANN
FORMER MEMBER, US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tim Clinton's new book, *Focus on the Future*, boldly forges the path for those who care about Christian values and culture. This is the book we've all been waiting for!

—DR. ROBERT JEFFRESS
SENIOR PASTOR, FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, DALLAS

With insights from history and Scripture, *Focus on the Future* helps us understand our current cultural moment, bringing clarity to our uncertain times and giving us a way forward. If we desire to protect our families and our freedoms, if we want to effect change in our nation here and now, then we need to be eternally minded people.

—SAMUEL RODRIGUEZ
SENIOR PASTOR, NEW SEASON CHRISTIAN WORSHIP CENTER
PRESIDENT, NHCLC; AUTHOR, *YOU ARE NEXT!*
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, *BREAKTHROUGH*

I have enjoyed watching Tim Clinton over the years as the Lord has prepared him to stand in the gap for our nation's future in this critical hour. In *Focus on the Future*, he masterfully outlines the foundation of Christianity in America. If you care about leaving a legacy of faith and freedom for your children and grandchildren, you need to read this book!

—RALPH REED
FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN, FAITH AND
FREEDOM COALITION

As we stand at the crossroads of faith and freedom, the importance of marriages and families as the bedrock of society has never been more crucial to our survival. Carrying the mantle of forerunners such as James Dobson, Tim Clinton delivers a Christian manifesto for the future that is both challenging and hopeful.

—DR. TONY EVANS
PRESIDENT, THE URBAN ALTERNATIVE
SENIOR PASTOR, OAK CLIFF BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Never before has our future seemed as dark and desperate. Yet into this crisis Tim Clinton courageously shines the bright light of biblical truth for all to see. A clarion call for Christians who recognize the signs of this critical time, *Focus on the Future* is one of those landmark books we will be referring to for years to come.

—PAULA WHITE-CAIN
OVERSEEING PASTOR, CITY OF DESTINY

How will our faith be tested in the days to come? Will we succumb to a culture that tramples truth underfoot? Or will we respond to the trumpet's call and fight for our families by upholding, defending, and living out those eternal values given to us by a loving God? Tim's book will teach you how to speak truth boldly, trust God more deeply, and create a legacy of faith triumphant. It's a must-read for the days in which we live.

—JANET PARSHALL
NATIONALLY SYNDICATED TALK SHOW HOST

As Dr. Tim Clinton writes, there is an urgency to contend for the faith and “pass a holy way of life on to generations yet unborn.” The data is alarming. Loneliness and suicides are at all-time highs, fatherlessness abounds, and a staggering number of young people have no church involvement. Those of us who love the Lord must invest in the next generation. It will bear fruit because relationships heal and restore. Investing in the generations to come will transform individuals, families, communities, and churches—let's get engaged now, while it's not too late!

—JAMES ROBISON
FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT, LIFE OUTREACH INTERNATIONAL
FORT WORTH, TEXAS

A gift to the body of Christ, *Focus on the Future* isn't just what we need today. It is what we need to be ready for tomorrow. Throughout this book you will find clear, scriptural wisdom,

which will inspire any reader to look ahead and answer the questions “How am I using my voice to defend the faith when faced with opposition?” and “How is my family protecting our values and forging ahead with the Great Commission amid a time of great confusion?” Thank you, Dr. Clinton, for another incredible resource.

—BECKY THOMPSON
BEST-SELLING AUTHOR, *LOVE UNENDING*
FOUNDER, MIDNIGHT MOM DEVOTIONAL PRAYER MOVEMENT

FOCUS **ON THE** **FUTURE**

DR. TIM CLINTON



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*To my children, Megan and Zach, and their families.
“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His
face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD
lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace”
(Num. 6:24–26, NKJV).*

The world can no longer be left to mere diplomats, politicians, and business leaders. They have done the best they could, no doubt. But this is an age for spiritual heroes—a time for men and women to be heroic in their faith and in spiritual character and power. The greatest danger to the Christian church today is that of pitching its message too low.

—DALLAS WILLARD, PHILOSOPHER AND TEACHER

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As always, a special thank-you goes to my family for their love and support. Julie, you bring such beauty and light to every day. I am so blessed to be loved by you. To my daughter, Megan; my son-in-law, Ben; and our first granddaughter, Olivia—and to my son, Zach, and his new bride, Evelyn—what joy you all have brought to me. I am overjoyed to be your dad and papa. I don't want to miss or waste a moment of life together. Let's leave it all on the field. Love ya!

FOREWORD

EVERY GREAT REFORMATION begins with an analysis of what is. Focusing on understanding contemporary culture, its history and present state, leads to deciding the best road into the future. The future is inevitable. What we do in the present, as a nation and as individuals, will greatly impact what the future looks like. This book, written by Dr. Tim Clinton, is a well-researched picture of the present state of the family, the church, and philosophical views in contemporary culture. However, the heart of the book focuses on how to move from where we are to where we want to be.

Obviously views differ greatly on what the future should look like. No one denies that we are a greatly divided nation. Not only are we divided, but we have also developed a war-like attitude toward those who disagree with us. Years ago sociologists described our nation as an “argumentative culture,” but today we have moved beyond argument and are now seeking to denigrate and destroy those who hold a different view.

The Christian church finds itself in the midst of a secular culture, which leans more toward hate than love. Hate seeks to destroy. Love seeks to enrich. The art of solving conflicts by empathetic listening, with a view to understanding each other’s thoughts and feelings, and focusing on finding a solution has been lost. We now focus on winning an argument rather than

seeking a solution. What we have failed to note is that when we win an argument, the other person has lost. No one wants to be a loser. So why would we want to create losers, in the family, in church, or in society?

How do we learn to have a win-win solution for our differences? I believe the answer lies in the words of Jesus, who said, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...Do good to those who hate you” (Matt. 5:43; Luke 6:27, NIV). Who among us can practice this high standard? I believe the answer is, none of us without divine help. That is why those who are truly followers of Christ must take the lead in demonstrating love to those with whom we disagree. Speaking the truth in love is not always easy, but for the Christian it is an imperative. We must treat all humans with dignity and respect. We believe that all humans have worth because they are made in the image of God. In becoming channels of God’s love, we can play a redemptive role in impacting the future.

The family is the most basic unit of society. Healthy families tend to produce healthy adults. Healthy churches will focus on the power of Christ to enable husbands and wives to have loving, supportive, caring marriages, which in turn provide a healthy environment for children.

In this book Dr. Tim Clinton not only identifies where we are as a society but points the way to a better future. He shares practical ideas on building healthy families and healthy churches. It is a resource for pastors, counselors, and any Christian who wants to have a positive impact on the future of our world.

—GARY D. CHAPMAN, PHD
AUTHOR, *THE 5 LOVE LANGUAGES*

INTRODUCTION

WHAT'S PAST IS PROLOGUE

IT WAS A scene of horror that made men's hearts fail them. Jerusalem, with the holy temple within her, was besieged by Babylonian armies. The onslaught lasted for nearly two years. Starvation was rampant, and cannibalism became commonplace. There are accounts of mothers going mad with hunger and consuming their young. Agonies of every kind filled the ancient city.

Finally, in 587 BC the forces of Nebuchadnezzar II broke through Jerusalem's walls and conquered the Holy City. Horrors mounted upon horrors as enemies decimated the city and pilaged the sacred temple, sending precious metals back to their homeland. The Babylonians forced King Zedekiah to watch them kill his sons. Then, they blinded him and sent him to Babylon. More than four thousand of his people were taken into captivity with him. Only a poor and destitute few remained as a remnant in the land with nothing but carnage and rubble.

The inevitable question swirling in the minds of the captives as they trudged their way to bondage in Babylon was, Why?

The prophet Jeremiah bore witness to all these events. He too pondered and grieved and sought his God for answers. Finally, in the Book of Lamentations, he wrote the words that explained the

terrible destruction of God's people. Jerusalem, he warned, "did not consider her future," so "her fall was astounding."¹

FACING DIFFICULT TIMES

In many ways, America has been on the same trajectory as Israel in Jeremiah's day. What's more, I believe that the pandemic and the presidential election of 2020 have caused unprecedented changes in the fabric of our country. Overnight our lives turned upside down, and the tone of our nation changed. As we emerge from these events, we are wondering what the future holds for our health, our jobs, our food supply, and our safety. Beyond this, many wonder about the long-term economic effect and how these things will play out on a global scale. What we experienced was not only an outbreak of sickness from the virus but also an outbreak of fear and anxiety.

God and His Word are the antidotes. Christian organizations have continued to provide supplies and services to the communities hit the hardest. As individuals and families navigate the return to social normalcy, they are reevaluating their priorities and lifestyles.

It's a good reminder that we can have faith that overcomes fear in troubled times. Psalm 46 is a favorite of mine. Many people turn to it for encouragement in dark times when things seem hopeless. Let's look at the first three verses:

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling.

—PSALM 46:1–3, NKJV

God is in the midst of our troubled times. If we call on Him, He can bring peace to our situation. Verses 3–9 of Psalm 46 remind us that no matter what we are facing, God is in the midst of it. And then the psalm says,

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

—PSALM 46:10–11, NKJV

By the time you read this book, the social distancing of early 2020 may be well behind us, but the repercussions might still be rippling throughout the land. Whatever season we're facing as you read this, we can hold tenaciously to Psalm 46 and reclaim our voices as one nation under God. The times we are living in are truly momentous. As Christians, we have the answers the world is looking for, solutions that can change the course of our nation. As we focus on the future, don't let it overwhelm you. There is hope, and one person can make a difference. This book offers insights on what you can do to impact our generation and leave a legacy for your children. This is a moment we cannot overlook. We cannot miss the opportunity to step into the fight for our family, faith, and freedoms. We can—and, I believe, will—win this fight one family, one mom, one dad, one day at a time. Regaining our voice and reclaiming the ground we've recently lost are crucial in this hour.

AMERICA AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE

To help illustrate the critical point we've reached as a nation, let me ask you to think back to the world into which the Christian church was born, the world of the Roman Empire. It was a time marked by confusion and fear.

Imagine a world in which the emperor is considered a god but

dozens of other gods also rule daily life. Imagine a religion-weary people who are often confused about what god to honor so a child will be born healthy, a crop will flourish, or a voyage will go well. These were the Roman people. They were tyrannized by the demands of religions and priests, by the complicated system of deities thrust upon them.

Then consider the sheer violence of the time. People were burned to death and eaten by wild animals and tortured for the entertainment of crowds. Criminals were whipped and crucified, all in public view. It was a brutal age when it was acceptable for the elderly to commit suicide and fathers could decide not to accept newborn babies as members of their families.² And I haven't even touched on the shocking, rampant sexual perversion.

I could go on, but why have I taken the time to describe these things? Because there was an answer for it all. It came in the birth of the Messiah in a manger in Bethlehem and then the birth of the Christian church on the day of Pentecost decades later. As that early church grew and began to address the crises of Roman society, God granted a traumatized people His love and healing and wholeness.

The people of God offered a sick and suffering society a better way. We know from the pages of Roman history that the Christians began to care for the discarded and abandoned. The churches gathered abandoned babies and children. They cared for the elderly and the sick. They also won the Roman people to Christ in high numbers and began to teach them of the value of each person in God's eyes and the vital role of the godly family.³

The early church was a countercultural movement. Believers fought to end the infanticide and sexual perversion that had tortured the empire. They almost wiped out these practices.⁴ The apostle Paul told the Corinthians to conduct courts of their own rather than take their disputes to secular judges.⁵ The early

believers obeyed. Soon it became known that the best place for justice was these Christian courts.⁶ Justice spread. The wisdom of God came into public view. Kindness and mercy prevailed. It was nothing short of amazing.

The hardness lifted progressively. The coldness in human relationships abated. Men and women heard in the preaching of the gospel how they ought to conduct themselves, what power God had given them for doing good. Actions changed. Words changed. New customs came into being. Life became sacred and protected for millions of the Roman people. Awareness grew of the soul as the place where God lived in a person, as a holy place to be treated with love.

In fact, it is not going too far to say that love won. The brutal, soul-trouncing Roman Empire gave way to a Christian message rooted in human worth and the soul's value. It wasn't perfect, and it wasn't the same everywhere. Yet the Christian message made such a difference that Roman rulers started handing authority for civil matters to pastors and churches, so effective had they been in changing lives.⁷ A kingdom perspective, kingdom culture, and kingdom mindset healed the hearts and minds of the people.

My goal is to encourage you with this review of how the Christian faith changed the Roman Empire and with the fact that we in America today are not Rome. We do not have it nearly as bad. But we are similar in that we are heading toward Roman levels of chaos and violence. We can exhibit Roman levels of disregard for the weak and infirm. We see a nearly equal level of sexual perversion. We are witnessing rampant sexual abuse, the horrors of late-term abortion, and even infanticide. We are seeing much the same kind of attack on the family. The souls of people are ground up in our callous and abusive age, just as they were in ancient and pagan Rome.

But here's the good news: What changed history once can do

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it again. What saved a society two millennia ago can do it today. This is why we've met together over these pages. Let's get started!

THE REPRIEVE

THE FUTURE. OUR days will inevitably fold into continual tomorrows until we leave this earth. Though time moving forward is unavoidable, the future still feels mysterious and daunting. Yet wise people have the courage and foresight to ponder the future. They imagine what might unfold, how the days to come might be, and what steps they must take in preparation. They map out careful plans. They make the changes needed to face or to change what is coming. They do all they can to fashion the kind of future they would hope for future generations.

Thinking about the future in this way has led to much of the greatness we see in history. The visionary spirit of our American Founding Fathers is at the core of our rich legacy. It is why their speeches and private letters brim with references to posterity, with expressions of their hopes for generations yet unborn. John Adams captured this well when he wrote in a letter to his wife, “Posterity! you will never know how much it cost the present generation to preserve your freedom! I hope you will make a good use of it.”¹

It is also what Abraham Lincoln did. When he declared in his epic speech at Gettysburg that “government of the people, by the

people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth,” he was thinking of the future, of what that moment meant for the good of the world to come. His words have been quoted the world over, especially where brave people long to see good government ruling a just and prosperous nation they can pass proudly to their children.

We saw the same forward-focused direction in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, he spoke of a future, of a dream that “one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’” It was a dream yet unfulfilled when Dr. King spoke it, and it is yet unfulfilled today, but it was promised by our forefathers and intended by many great souls who came before us. Because of Dr. King’s words, a generation has reached for his dream of the future and has increasingly made it a reality.

Considering the future is a common trait among the wholehearted, among people of faith, among people of God and godly vision—the exceptional and everyday heroes. They stand in their moment in time, however troubled, and they face the call of the future. They envision what can be and how to answer the challenges of their age. Then they build for a future better than the past they have known.

This is exactly the opportunity we have now. I believe our generation has a mandate to focus on the future. I believe our voices matter now more than ever. There’s been an agenda to silence our voices, and we’ll look at what has led to that. We’ll also discuss why it’s urgent to get that voice back—the future of our faith, our families, and our freedom depends on it.

OUR MOMENT IN TIME

We all know that we are living in a tumultuous age. Our society is in upheaval. Our nation is torn. As a result, our nation's political landscape is largely unfruitful. We have dissension and strife in nearly every arena, on almost every topic of importance. Contention reigns and is growing. Disillusionment is spreading, and a divide is deepening in our country. Yet a resilient American spirit—something deep inside our hearts, the substance our country was founded on—is beginning to reemerge. It appears as an uprising of hope, of hard work, and of the courage we need to heal our nation.

Some believe we are in a critical moment in which Christianity and conservative values must be fought for like never before in the United States. I couldn't agree more. Our nation continues to move at breakneck speed into relativism, hedonism, and a rejection of the values of human life and family. Regardless of who sits in the Oval Office, we should no longer wait for government to set the tone of respecting and honoring the stalwart values of Christian and social conservatism.

In addition, researchers are exposing the dysfunction and destruction of modern-day issues such as pornography and absentee fathers while also finding the positive outcomes of faith-based living. We are witnesses to unprecedented events that beckon observers to stop and stare in awe at the political, cultural, and emotional landscape of our times. Yet our future depends on our ability to quickly assess and move forward, ever fighting for our future. There is no time to gape at the wreckage or the new risings of hope. Every called warrior must show up for battle.

Our marching orders are not simply a matter of policy. We will take action on many fronts, guided by fervent prayer. I believe that Dallas Willard's words aptly describe our times: "Social and

political revolutions have shown no tendency to transform the heart of darkness that lies deep in the breast of every human being... Obviously, the problem *is* a spiritual one. And so must be the cure.”²

This reprieve gives us a brief moment to ponder our circumstances and bravely put our convictions to action, doing what heroic people have always done as they look to the future. Years ago, someone asked religious scholar Martin Marty if he believed the current spirituality surge in America was real. His response caught my attention. He said, “The hunger is always authentic... It’s just that you can feed it with Twinkies or with broccoli.”³ By that, he meant that *it all depends on what the church does with the opportunity culture has given to her*. Think about that. Let those words sink in.

A number of years ago, I attended a meeting with Dr. James Dobson at the headquarters of Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs. I do not remember the reason for the meeting, but I do remember his challenging words. In a 2017 Family Talk newsletter, Dr. Dobson recalled that same meeting and said, “We need to pray that the church will awaken and take her rightful place. Until then, parachurch organizations must stand in the gap—but we must pray that the church be awakened.”⁴

Our true hope is the power of Christ coming alive in His body, the church. The question is, What will the church do with the opportunity culture is giving us right now? #focusonthefuture

Pastor Rick Warren once reminded me that the one social institution in every community across the globe is the church. Our true hope is the power of Christ coming alive in His body,

the church. The question is, What will the church do with the opportunity culture is giving us right now? Could it be that, like Esther, we have been called “for such a time as this”?⁵ We must focus on the future and seek to discover our part in leaving a legacy that will impact future generations.

To do this, we must first confront the truth about our nation as it is today. We must be courageous, clear-eyed, and willing to know the facts, however disturbing they may be. Only then can we be the change our hoped-for future requires.

As Christians, we need to show sincere compassion while we fight for responsible solutions to control threats to our national safety. We must follow our call as Christians to love mercy *and* act justly⁶ rather than adopt a response that is only merciful or only just. We must clearly explain and put into enthusiastic action our responsibility to care for those in need.

Rita Dunaway writes in *Restoring America’s Soul*, “If we fail to describe and explain our own vision for caring for the poor, sick, and elderly, then we create a vacuum for the Left to fill with their assumptions that we are simply greedy, tight-fisted, or too concerned with our own selfish pursuits to consider the unfortunate plights of others. If we allow these assumptions to go unchallenged, then we are perpetuating a fundamental misunderstanding about who we are and what our ideology is.”⁷

When we give in to assumptions about the ideas of others or do not make our ideology clear, we are participating in a lack of communication that tears down what needs to be restored. We get into a place where we can’t even reason together. Even more, we can no longer hear each other.

MY AMERICAN STORY

I want to tell you a bit about my own story so you know why I feel so strongly about the things I’ve said here. In many ways, I had

a traditional, all-American childhood. The main difference from others of my generation, perhaps, is that my family was deeply Christian. Beyond this, my life was relatively normal. I grew up in rural Pennsylvania, less than an hour north of Altoona, and I was one of eight children.

My father was the kindest man I've ever known. He was the pastor of three small-town churches, a circuit rider of sorts who tended small churches and groups of Christians throughout our region of Pennsylvania. My father was also deeply patriotic. As kids, we heard the heroic tales of our forebears often.

Dad was one of those World War II veterans that Tom Brokaw called the "greatest generation" ever. He talked about being on the USS *Pennsylvania* in the South Pacific and his war experiences as a young man. He was so happy to get back home that he kissed the ground when he finally arrived stateside. My dad was thankful to God that he came back home at all, unlike many who gave the ultimate sacrifice during that horrific war. It just made sense then that the Fourth of July was one of his favorite holidays and that he continued to fly a flag in the yard until the day God took him home.

The deep kindness I saw in my dad was probably the fruit of his deep faith. He believed that God was real and that His ways could be understood and lived by faithful people. Dad never browbeat. He was never harsh but instead taught an intelligent, peaceful faith born of the certainty that God called him to serve and was with him. When Dad died, I stood in line with my siblings for hours, listening to those he loved and served share how much he meant to them. I've often thought of how his impact on their lives will move down through generations in ways that only heaven can record.

I surprise people by telling them that Dad never raised a hand to me. He always reasoned. He always explained. You respected

him and never wanted to disappoint him. He had power and authority by virtue of his character and his way. It was how he shaped his children.

However, my mother was another story. Now, she too was kind and loving and loved to laugh, but she had no hesitation about disciplining her children. She was old-school! To her, a spanking was love applied to the seat of understanding, and she had much love to apply. Steadfast in her convictions, she raised us to stand strong in what we believed.

So, we had a relatively typical small-town American life together as a family. Jesus was at the heart of our lives. We honored and understood that my father's pastoral work required sacrifice. We gave ourselves to school, sports, friends, and the rites of passage of most American children of our time. Parenting does matter, and my parents made such a deep imprint on my soul in my early years that when an eleventh-grade teacher once asked me what I wanted to do one day, I replied that I wanted to be in ministry like my father.

An interesting twist for me, however, was that I developed a fascination with the ways of human nature earlier than most people. I suppose this was due to my father's work, my large family, my parents' deep connections to other people, and, I realize now, the calling of God on my own life. I wouldn't have expressed it this way at the time, but all these years later, I see my early ponderings in this light.

Several defining moments in my early years served to set this trajectory. A pivotal moment happened when I was sixteen. I remember that I had hurt my knee during preseason high school football, and I was home waiting to go to a checkup for my injury. While I was still in bed that morning, the phone rang, and my dad answered. That is when he received the news that my sister Candace had been in a horrible car accident.

I recall vividly that my father and I rushed to the scene. When we arrived, we saw the mangled car and my unconscious, bloodied sister inside. On an old dirt road, I slammed the car in park, jumped out, and started running for her. It was typical of my father's nature that he immediately said, "Tim, you go to her, and I'll pray."

I ran to the car. The scene was ghastly, but I climbed in and began checking my sister.

"She has a pulse!" I shouted to Dad.

"Work on her, and I'll keep praying," he replied.

I remember green gum was all through her teeth. I did what I could for Candy, and then we got her in an ambulance and to a hospital. She suffered a traumatic brain injury and then was comatose for nearly thirty days. It was a torturous time of waiting and hoping and praying, but I clearly remember that my family's hope was in God, and that hope, while tested, never wavered.

An episode like this makes an impression on a young man's soul. It changes him. It teaches that life is delicate, that it can be taken away. Life is precious and should be respected and lovingly protected. It also reveals the condition of the human soul. He sees faith in action. He sees parents facing the possible death of a child. He sees courage arising and hearts reaching for hope and what people mean in each other's lives as family and community responding to trouble. He witnesses God working through love and tender care and the gifts He has given to human beings.

Today, my sister is married with three children. We call her Ruthie Graham because she is always evangelizing and singing God's praises. She had a long road of recovery from her traumatic brain injury and still struggles with chronic pain and the trauma effects. It has only made her more thankful for the gift of life—and us thankful for her. My sister's car accident taught me much and marked my young life. I'll never forget August 20, 1976.

Another incident also impacted me profoundly. There was a man in our church whom we all knew fairly well. He was a good man so far as I knew, and he was a friend of my father's. One night he found his wife with another man. He shot that man and killed him. He then called and talked to my father, who was deeply grieved and encouraged him to turn himself in. Perhaps you can imagine the questions stirring in my teenage mind. How can a man murder someone? What kind of pain in the human heart drives him to do it?

The whole episode moved me to spend long hours pondering the human condition. I wanted to understand what drives behavior. I desired to find the keys to helping people with their inner challenges, with having good relationships and a heart of peace and faith, which I had learned from my father was the source of a happy life.

I was challenged and inspired in this fledgling search by what was going on in our society. I grew up during the 1960s and 1970s, a time when our culture was in upheaval. We often focus on the tearing of the social fabric during that time and the stunning political and social events that marked the age. Yet I wondered about what was happening to the human soul. What moved people to the kinds of violence we saw in those decades—assassinations, riots, home invasions, police brutality, and war? What vacuum in the heart drove the young to throw themselves into the excesses of the sexual revolution and embrace every perversion masquerading as pleasure? Why was this generation so eager to discard the ways of their ancestors and seek out novel alternatives to marriage, family, child-rearing, and relationships as a whole? Why were so many, particularly the young, in such torment of soul, in such agony of heart? All these questions filled my mind and stirred me even more fiercely in my desire to understand the inner life of human beings.

During high school, I enlisted in the US Army Reserve. Right after graduation, I attended boot camp and advanced infantry training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Then I made my way home to work and to try to save some money to attend college. All the usual questions about what I would do next faced me. I was fortunate. As these questions began to crescendo in my life, I received a golden opportunity. Just then, I came upon some news that would change the direction of my life.

Dr. Jerry Falwell, a courageous and outspoken pastor on our national scene, had founded Lynchburg Baptist College, which was renamed Liberty Baptist College in 1976. One of his convictions was that the children of pastors would attend the school with reduced tuition. This was a stunning act of generosity on his part and the school as a whole. For me, the son of a small-town pastor and one of eight children, the chance to go to college was like a gift from heaven.

I packed my bags and left for Virginia. The experience has shaped me ever since. I decided to major in pastoral ministry and minor in biblical Greek, later adding a double minor in counseling. Not only did I receive a fabulous education and build lifetime friendships at Liberty, but I also met the love of my life, Julie. We have lived a glorious adventure in the decades since, but it all began on the Liberty campus.

While driving a car, when we look in the rearview mirror, the scene is condensed. So it is with how we remember our lives. It all seems compacted somehow, even automatic.

I wanted to attend Dallas Theological Seminary for my graduate work, but I decided to remain at Liberty University and earn a master's in counseling. My questions about what drives human nature and how I could help to heal the souls of people fueled my studies. I later taught at Liberty. I started a counseling service called Light Counseling near the university and began to see

people get free from the inner bondages that held them. In time, I had the wonderful opportunity to earn my doctorate at the historic College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

The years that followed were busy, but I thrived on the ministry God was allowing me to have. I eventually taught thousands of students at Liberty. My life's passion was surfacing. We lived in a damaging, wounding world. Still, God loved people and was always reaching to them with compassion. In addition, His Scriptures and His ways held the keys for health in the human soul, for the relationships intended to make life full and rich and meaningful. These were the pillars of my work, as they are now.

God had plans for my life that would have overwhelmed me in my early days had I any hint of them. I had long dreamed of a worldwide association of counselors that would encourage a biblical approach to helping people get well. Amazingly, the day would come when I would lead the American Association of Christian Counselors, the largest and most diverse faith-based mental health organization in the world.

In telling you about my life, I yearn for you to see that I keenly feel the devastation of our modern world. As I've described, we are living at a time when souls are traumatized, when inner wounds torment millions, when suicide and addiction are rampant, and when hurting people hurt others through abuse and abandonment. The pandemic and modern-day experiences have only heightened the mental health crisis in our land. We are now witnessing a mental health disaster, especially among our youths. Answers exist. Healing, health, and happiness are to be had. There is hope in Christ! We need bold believers who ponder this moment in time, consider the future, and courageously storm into that future armed with the knowledge and skills their generation yearns for.

I want to encourage you about what is possible in our

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

generation. The truth of God's Word can save a society. It will simply take people with an uncommon level of devotion. People of faith. People of God. People who understand the sanctity of life, the divine purpose for every person, and the glory of the family as God has ordained it. If these types of people will make use of the moment we find ourselves in now, if we come together, stand together, and storm into our age with purpose, we can have an impact. Our country needs us to make a difference. Our children need it. The future of Christianity in America depends on it.

We have to know our times. We have to step into this moment in history, this graciously given reprieve. We have to consider the future. Then we need to take healing to our troubled generation.

If you like what you've read, you will love the book!
Purchase your copy today.

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TIM CLINTON, EdD, LPC, LMFT, is the president of The American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC), the largest and most diverse Christian counseling association in the world. He serves as the executive director of the Global Center for Mental Health, Addiction and Recovery at Liberty University, and he is the cohost of *Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk*, heard on over fourteen hundred radio outlets daily. Licensed as a professional counselor and a marriage and family therapist, Dr. Clinton is recognized as a world leader in mental health and relationship issues and spends much of his time working with Christian leaders and professional athletes. He has authored or edited nearly thirty books, including *Take It Back: Reclaiming Biblical Masculinity—The Heart and Strength of Being a Man*, out now. He has been married forty years to Julie, and together they have two children, Megan (married to Ben) and Zach (married to Evelyn), and a granddaughter, Olivia, who has stolen their hearts.



AMERICA IS AT A CROSSROADS.

The fight for our faith, family, and future is **NOT OPTIONAL.**

Anxiety, depression, and suicide are at all-time highs. Divorce is prevalent. Children are growing up without fathers in the home, and the family unit as a whole is suffering. Dr. Tim Clinton, one of America's leading voices on faith and mental health, sounds the call for people around the country to step into the moment and rise up to *focus on the future* of America.

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★ “*Focus on the Future* is a positive, hopeful message that is a pleasure to read and will motivate you to see good things in your family's future.”

—HON. MICHELE BACHMANN, Former Member, US House of Representatives

★ “Carrying the mantle of forerunners such as James Dobson, Tim Clinton delivers a Christian manifesto for the future that is both challenging and hopeful.”

—DR. TONY EVANS, President, The Urban Alternative; Senior Pastor, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship

★ “Tim's book will teach you how to speak truth boldly, trust God more deeply, and create a legacy of faith triumphant. It's a must-read for the days in which we live.”

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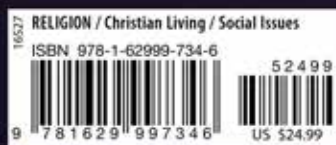
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THE FUTURE, ANCHORED IN CHANGE AND HOPE,
BELONGS TO THOSE WHO WILL STEP UP AND
INTO THE MOMENT...NOW.



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