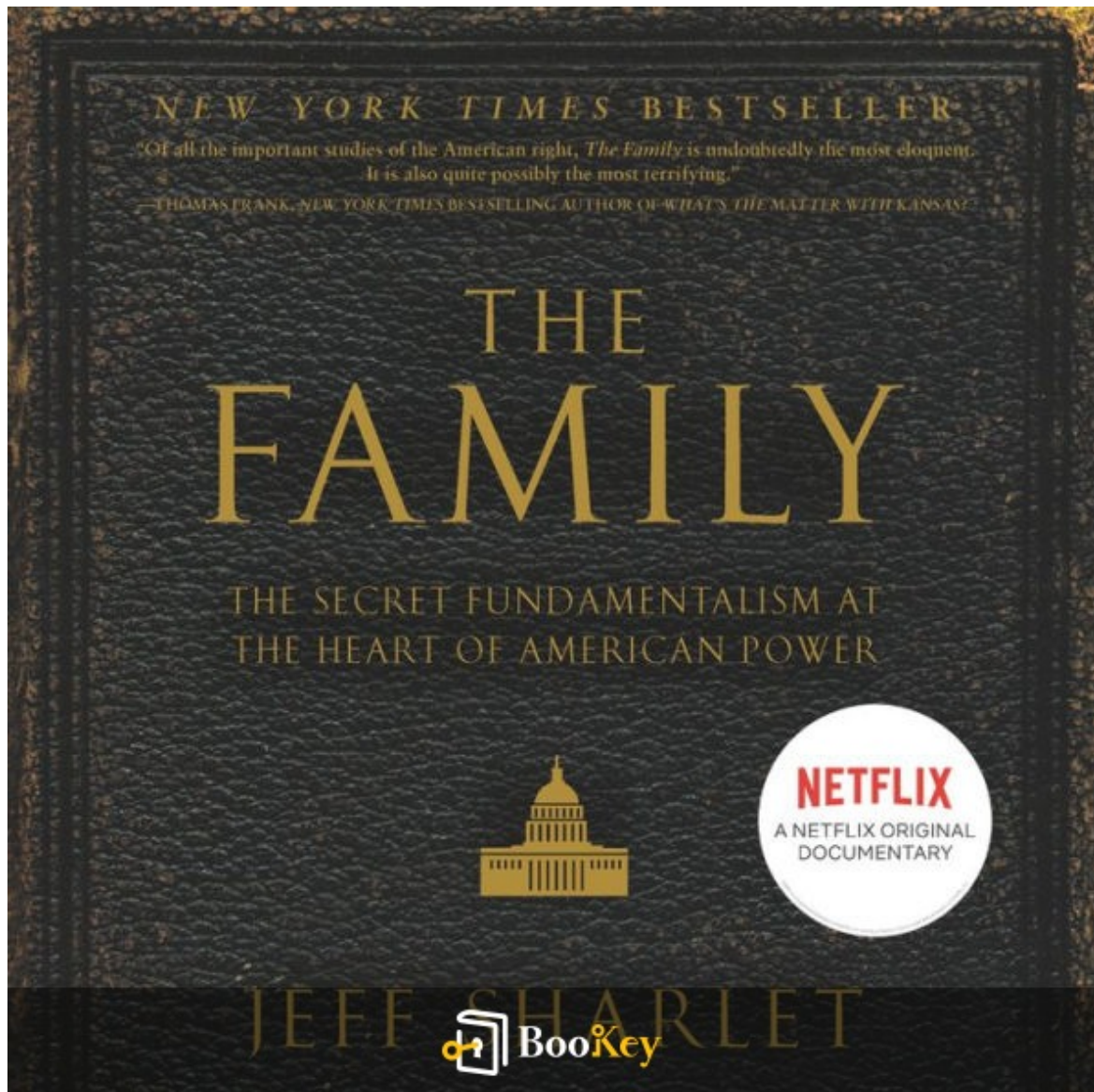


# The Family PDF

Jeff Sharlet, Jeremy Guskin



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# About the book

## Overview of The Family: A Shadowy Influence in Politics

Despite their claims of being merely a circle of friends, they manage to distribute millions through tax-exempt entities. While they profess a disdain for political involvement, members of Congress from both sides of the aisle regard them as the most potent religious group within Washington's influence. Interestingly, they identify not as Christians but as believers, a distinction that raises eyebrows.

## The National Prayer Breakfast: A Mask for Elitism

Since 1953, the Family has secretly organized the National Prayer Breakfast, operating as an exclusive network that champions a form of religion intertwined with power—a religion catering to the elite. Their ideology is succinctly summarized as "Jesus plus nothing," and their operations are characterized by clandestine diplomacy.

## A Global Impact: More Than Just Faith

The Family's narrative reveals a fusion of free-market fundamentalism and a drive for global dominance, demonstrating how their belief system has woven itself into the political fabric around the world.

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# The Family Summary

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# Who should read this book **The Family**

"The Family" by Jeff Sharlet and Jeremy Guskin is essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the intersection of religion and politics in America. It is particularly valuable for scholars of political science, sociology, and religious studies, as well as activists and advocates concerned about the influence of religious organizations on government policies. Additionally, readers interested in contemporary American history, secret societies, and the dynamics of power and privilege will find the book's insider perspective and investigative approach both enlightening and thought-provoking. Ultimately, it appeals to a broad audience that seeks to comprehend the undercurrents shaping the nation's political landscape.

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# Key insights of The Family in table format

Chapter/Section	Summary
Introduction	Introduces the concept of 'The Family', a secretive network of Christian elites in Washington D.C., and how their influence extends into politics.
Chapter 1: The Family's Origins	Explores the historical roots of The Family, detailing its founding and its growth in American politics.
Chapter 2: The Power of Prayer	Examines the role of prayer as a unifying force within The Family and how it is utilized to manipulate political power.
Chapter 3: Political Connections	Discusses the connections between The Family and significant political figures, including both domestic and international leaders.
Chapter 4: The Family's Ideology	Analyzes the theological beliefs that underpin The Family's actions and their interpretation of Christianity.
Chapter 5: Influence and Covert Operations	Details the behind-the-scenes efforts of The Family to influence legislation and public policy without public acknowledgement.
Chapter 6: The International Reach	Expands on The Family's global influence, including its missions and partnerships in other countries.
Chapter 7: Controversies and Scandals	Addresses various scandals and public criticisms that have surrounded members of The Family and its activities.



<b>Chapter/Section</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Conclusion: The Legacy of The Family	Provides an overall assessment of The Family's impact on American society and politics, and reflections on its future.

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# The Family Summary Chapter List

1. Understanding the Origins and Influence of 'The Family'
2. Exploring the Secretive Nature of the Fellowship Organization
3. The Role of Religion in Political Power Dynamics
4. Key Figures Shaping 'The Family's' Agenda
5. Criticism and Controversies Surrounding 'The Family'
6. The Lasting Impact of 'The Family' on Modern Society

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# 1. Understanding the Origins and Influence of 'The Family'

"The Family" by Jeff Sharlet and Jeremy Guskin delves into the enigmatic and powerful Christian network known as the Fellowship, often referred to as 'The Family.' Understanding the origins and influence of this organization requires a look at its beginnings in the early 20th century. Founded by Abraham Vereide, a charismatic preacher and businessman, the Fellowship was established with the aim of fostering significant political connections among Christian leaders in the United States and around the world.

Vereide believed in cultivating relationships to achieve his vision of a Christian-led society, eschewing traditional church structures in favor of intimate, secretive gatherings focused on influence rather than overt evangelism. This approach set the tone for the Fellowship's operations, emphasizing personal relationships and a philosophy that sees power as a divine element of God's plan.

Over the decades, the Fellowship expanded its reach significantly. Its blend of religion and politics allowed it to embed itself within the highest levels of government, particularly during the Cold War era, when religious language was increasingly woven into national discourse. The organization was adept at securing connections with influential political figures through retreats, prayer breakfasts, and discreet meetings, positioning itself as a



behind-the-scenes player in American politics.

The Family crafts its influence through a unique model characterized by exclusivity and secrecy, which facilitates an environment where direct accountability and public scrutiny are minimized. Members believe they are called to enact God's will in governance, which can lead to a controversial worldview that prioritizes the organization's interests above traditional democratic processes.

Critics argue this secretive framework leads to an adverse impact on democracy by undermining transparency and fostering an elitist mentality among leaders. As the Fellowship continues to influence political agendas and social policies, understanding its origins sheds light on how religious ideologies can shape governance—often without public awareness or consent. The network's historical context illustrates a persistent tension within American society between religious conviction and political power, highlighting the enduring impact of The Family on modern governance.

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## 2. Exploring the Secretive Nature of the Fellowship Organization

The Family, also known as the Fellowship, operates under a veil of secrecy that sets it apart from many other organizations. This clandestine nature is a vital aspect of its identity, allowing it to exert influence behind the scenes while maintaining a facade of benignity. At its core, the Fellowship differs from traditional religious institutions; it shuns the public eye and overt displays of faith, emphasizing a personal and private relationship with God among its members.

The organization's origins can be traced back to the early 20th century, founded by Abraham Vereide, who sought to create a network of powerful political and business leaders grounded in Christian values. This desire to integrate a form of Christianity into governance led to the establishment of a secretive fraternity that has attracted influential figures from both political and social spheres. Unlike mainstream religious groups that actively evangelize, the Fellowship intentionally maintains a low profile, aimed more at cultivating relationships with policymakers than at spreading church doctrine.

Much of The Family's operational strategy revolves around discretion. Meetings are often held in private settings, away from media glare, allowing contributions and discussions to remain unknown to the public. Members



value confidentiality, which fosters a sense of trust and camaraderie among them. This secrecy not only helps shield the organization from scrutiny but also enables powerful individuals to navigate political and legislative landscapes with minimal accountability, presenting a troubling dynamic between faith and governance.

The group's enigmatic presence is included in their choice of language, often adopting ambiguous terminology that obscures their true intentions and operations. References to "Christian fellowship" and "servant leadership" are frequently employed, creating an impression of altruism while masking deeper political ambitions. Members are taught to view themselves as chosen by God to effect change, a belief that fuels their commitment to influence policies in ways that align with their interpretations of Christian values.

Furthermore, The Family's approach to networking exemplifies its secretive nature. By infiltrating political circles across the globe, it forms alliances with those in power who share or can be swayed to adopt its worldview. This expansive network of influence often prioritizes personal relationships over transparency or democratic engagement, raising critical questions about accountability within the political arena.

In many ways, the secrecy surrounding The Family acts as both its strength

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and its weakness. While it allows the organization to work behind the scenes, facilitating unchallenged advancements in policy and governance, it also invites skepticism and criticism. As observers and critics attempt to unpack the extent of The Family's influence, the lack of available information fuels conspiracy theories and distrust among the broader public.

In exploring the secretive nature of the Fellowship, it becomes clear that its operations represent a unique intersection of faith, politics, and power. The implications of such a clandestine organization operating in the shadows of political decision-making underscore the need for greater awareness and scrutiny regarding the influence of faith-based groups on public policy.

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### 3. The Role of Religion in Political Power Dynamics

The Family, a secretive and influential organization, wields its power through a unique intertwining of religion and political influence, demonstrating how faith can be used as a political tool. Members of The Family, encompassing a diverse group of politicians, businessmen, and religious leaders, view Christianity not merely as a religion but as a platform for political action and societal change. This philosophy is rooted in the belief that the divine ordains leaders who will implement their values and ideals in governance.

At the core of The Family's strategy is the assertion that political power should be understood as a divine calling. They believe that true believers in Christ are chosen to lead, suggesting a hierarchical view where civil authority resonates with divine authority. This perspective can often lead to a troubling conflation of nationalism and faith, where political decisions are framed as extensions of biblical mandate. Members often invoke a sense of spiritual warfare, suggesting that political opponents are not merely rivals but adversaries of a divinely sanctioned mission.

The Family operates under a veil of secrecy, fostering a culture where behind-the-scenes meetings and undisclosed interactions become the norm. This clandestine nature allows its members to influence political decisions

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without public scrutiny, often swaying policy in ways that align with their religious beliefs. For example, the organization's emphasis on prosperity gospel can be seen in their push for policies that favor business interests under the guise of promoting 'Christian stewardship'.

Religion, within the context of The Family, serves as both a unifying force among its members and a method for engaging with wider political networks. The organization promotes the idea that members are part of a divine plan, creating a strong sense of loyalty and commitment. The dynamics of power within The Family often reflect a paternalistic view of leadership, where leaders are expected to exercise authority over subordinates, paralleling a biblical model of leadership that adheres to submission and authority.

Furthermore, The Family's integration of prayer and religious ritual into political gatherings emphasizes the profound connection between their faith and their political agendas. These rituals are not just spiritual practices but are also strategic, intended to galvanize support and solidify alliances. This entanglement of faith and politics raises important questions about the separation of church and state and the potential for religious beliefs to shape political outcomes in profound and often unexamined ways.

In summary, The Family illustrates a complex interplay between religion

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and political power within modern society. By framing political engagement as a sacred duty and intertwining faith with governance, The Family's influence extends beyond mere political lobbying, positioning religion as a critical element in shaping power dynamics. This orientation not only affects the members' political strategies but significantly impacts broader societal attitudes towards governance, loyalty, and authority.

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## 4. Key Figures Shaping 'The Family's' Agenda

Key figures within 'The Family'—a highly secretive organization that wields significant influence in American politics—have profoundly shaped its agenda, driving the organization's intertwining of religion and politics over decades. Among these figures, one of the most prominent is Doug Coe, who served as the leader of the Fellowship Foundation, the key arm of The Family. Coe believed in a unique form of politics steeped in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which he felt transcended traditional party politics. His leadership was characterized by a remarkable ability to cultivate personal relationships with powerful political leaders, helping to spread the Fellowship's influence not just in the U.S., but internationally as well.

Another significant figure is Abraham Vereide, the founder of The Family in the 1930s, who envisioned a community of powerful Christian leaders operating outside public scrutiny. Vereide's original framework focused on forming a brotherhood among the elite, rooted in a fundamentalist interpretation of Christianity, where business and political leaders gathered secretly to forge bonds that supported their mutual interests, often under the guise of prayer and fellowship. This model has persisted through the years, allowing The Family to quietly maintain its grip on influential sectors of society.

In modern times, individuals like Tim Johnson and Gina Smith have played

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crucial roles in keeping The Family's agenda alive. Their focus on political outreach and influence has ensured that the organization continues to connect with leaders in Congress and beyond, particularly among conservative circles. This approach aligns with the Family's mission to foster a global network of faith-based power that prioritizes their version of Christian dominion—often at the expense of inclusive policies.

Moreover, many prominent U.S. Presidents have been shaped by their affiliation or connections to The Family, with figures such as Ronald Reagan and more recently, members of the Trump administration, engaging with its doctrines and networks. Their engagement has not only provided political cover for the organization but also reinforced its belief in the idea of a 'Christian nation' that serves to validate the Fellowship's objectives.

The significance of these key figures cannot be overstated; through their leadership, personal charisma, and networking strategies, they have perpetuated an ideology that blends faith with political authority—nearly cloaking the activities of The Family in mystery while adapting their influence to the changing political landscape. As such, their actions and beliefs have solidified a unique stance that prioritizes elite cohesion and religious homogeneity in American policy, deeply influencing modern governance and societal norms.

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## 5. Criticism and Controversies Surrounding 'The Family'

Criticism and controversies surrounding 'The Family,' also known as the Fellowship, are prevalent, given its secretive operations and significant influence on political and social dynamics. Critics argue that the organization's practices undermine democratic principles and promote an insidious form of political power that prioritizes its agenda over public interest. Many point out that the Fellowship operates behind closed doors, often convening powerful elites outside the scrutiny of the media and public discourse.

One of the central criticisms is about its blend of evangelical Christianity with political and corporate interests. Detractors suggest that this blend creates an environment where wealthy and influential individuals can manipulate political agendas in line with their religious beliefs, often sidelining broader democratic processes. This has been particularly evident in how 'The Family' nurtures relationships with political figures across the spectrum, from conservatives to liberals, making its influence pervasive yet invisible.

The organization's practices have also sparked concerns about accountability and transparency. Critics argue that the secretive nature of 'The Family' fosters a culture where accountability is minimal, allowing members to



operate outside conventional moral and ethical guidelines. This lack of transparency raises alarms regarding potential conflicts of interest, particularly when its members are involved in legislative processes or public policy decisions. As a result, there is a growing fear that the organization might prioritize the interests of a select few over the broader public good, which can lead to policies that favor private power rather than citizen welfare.

Moreover, the Family has been accused of promoting Christian nationalism, leading to further divisiveness in an already polarized society. Many critics assert that this ideology intertwines religious beliefs with national identity, which can alienate minority groups and contribute to a narrative that marginalizes those who do not conform to a specific religious or political ideology. This aspect has ignited debates about the role of religion in governance and raised questions about the appropriate limits of religious influence in public life.

Public reaction to 'The Family' has been diverse. While some lauded the organization's ability to bring together influential leaders for what they deem noble causes, others express alarm at its capacity to maneuver legislation and policy-making processes with little public awareness. Freely mixing faith with influence, critics contend, poses a threat to the secular foundations of government and highlights the troubling potential for a theocratic



undercurrent in American politics.

In summary, the controversies surrounding 'The Family' are multifaceted, involving concerns about its secrecy, its blending of religion and politics, the lack of accountability, and its potential to foster an exclusionary national identity. These issues feed into broader societal debates about the role of faith in public life and the implications of hidden power structures within governance.

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## 6. The Lasting Impact of 'The Family' on Modern Society

The Family, formally known as the Fellowship Foundation, has left an indelible mark on modern society, particularly in the intersection of religion and politics. This influence can be observed through various dimensions, including policy formation, social movements, and the climate of political discourse.

One of the most profound impacts of The Family has been its role in shaping the political landscape, particularly in the United States. By facilitating networks that connect influential political leaders with evangelical Christians, The Family has significantly amplified the voice of religious conservatives in American politics. The organization's ability to forge relationships that transcend party lines has resulted in a unique fusion of faith and governance, often prioritizing a Christian agenda within policy discussions. This melding of religion with statecraft raises essential questions about the separation of church and state, and its implications on legislative outcomes.

Moreover, The Family's clandestine approach to power and influence has fostered a culture of secrecy that extends into public office. This has led to concerns regarding accountability and transparency. As some members of The Family have occupied high-ranking government positions, the



organization has enabled a form of soft power that operates behind the scenes, subtly steering national policies without public scrutiny. This has added to a sense of distrust toward both religious institutions and governmental entities, as citizens grapple with the understanding of who truly holds power in policy-making processes.

In addition to the political ramifications, The Family has also profoundly influenced social movements, particularly those that align with conservative Christian values. The organization's reach extends to grassroots efforts aimed at promoting traditional family structures and opposing progressive social policies. These initiatives often mobilize vast networks of religious individuals and organizations, leading to a sustained impact on issues such as marriage, education, and reproductive rights. The resonance of these movements speaks to The Family's capacity to frame social discourse around its ideological beliefs, thus shaping public opinion and cultural norms.

Furthermore, the legacy of The Family is evident in the ideological battle lines drawn within modern American society. The organization's approach to evangelicalism creates a dichotomy between secular and religious perspectives that complicates national conversations about morality, ethics, and justice. As members of The Family advocate for policies that reflect their beliefs, it leads to polarization, with each side advocating vehemently

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for their vision of the country's moral compass. This division creates challenges for dialogue and compromise, ultimately affecting the ability of society to address pressing issues collectively.

Overall, The Family's influence resonates not only through the policies and social changes it has enacted but also in the broader cultural and ideological frameworks it has helped shape. Its lasting impact serves as a reminder of the power of organized faith in modern governance and a testament to the ongoing intertwining of religion and politics in American life. As modern society continues to navigate these complexities, understanding The Family's operations and implications becomes ever more critical for fostering a more informed and engaged populace.

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## 5 Key Quotes of The Family

1. "Power without accountability is a dangerous game, often cloaked in the guise of faith and family."
2. "In the darkest corners of leadership, the Family weaves a narrative that intertwines divine purpose with political ambition."
3. "True faith should inspire humility and service, not domination and secrecy."
4. "The bonds of brotherhood can either elevate us to great heights or drag us into the depths of moral ambiguity."
5. "Understanding the Family means grappling with the complex interplay of faith, power, and the pursuit of influence."

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