

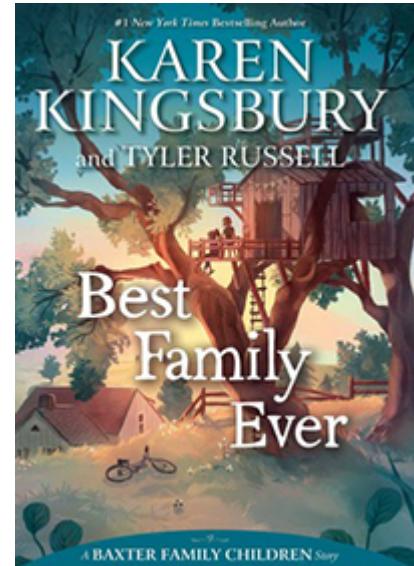
Review: Best Family Ever

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Best Family Ever

By Karen Kingsbury and Tyler Russell (Simon & Schuster)

Since 2002, adults have enjoyed Karen Kingsbury's novels about the Baxter family—their tragedies and triumphs, their heartbreak and hope—but mostly their love for each other and God. Yet in spite of more than 25 books, one question remains: What was it like growing up Baxter? Kingsbury and her son Tyler Russell begin answering in *Best Family Ever*.



Written primarily for girls in grades 3-7 but enjoyable for adult Kingsbury fans, the story introduces 13-year-old Brooke, 11-year-old Kari, 10-year-old Ashley, 8-year-old Erin, 6-year-old Luke and their parents Elizabeth and John. The kids all love being Baxter and often quote their stay-at-home mom and physician father, "Your best friends are the people around the dinner table."

Narrated by Ashley and Kari, a series of relatable events take the seven from snowflakes and valentines to soccer season, spring break and a tormenting fourth-grade boy. Oldest sister Brooke sets a high bar—perfect grades and perfect behavior. Kari is beautiful, kind and cautious. Ashley

enjoys art, writing, soccer but definitely not math. Quiet Erin likes doing things with their mom, while Luke majors in singing and fun.

After Ashley daydreams in class, fails to finish her math and lies about it, her parents point out Brooke's perfection. Then just when Ashley recovers from trying to be like Brooke, the family receives big news. Dr. Baxter has a great new job in Bloomington, Ind., but the move from Ann Arbor means leaving best friends, a beloved treehouse and the only home and church the children have known.

Scripture and wisdom sprinkle the pages of the novel that deals honestly with faith, hope, fears, sibling rivalry, parents who are almost-but-not-quite perfect and a family that sticks together no matter what. After all, Ashley decides, the Baxter's are the *Best Family Ever*.

Kathy Robinson Hillman, former president

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