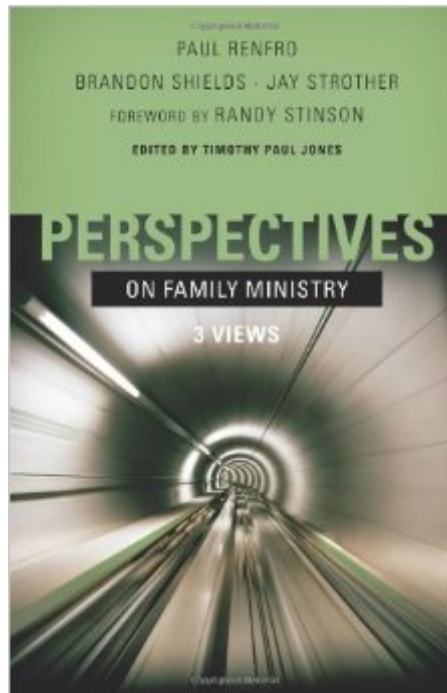


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# Perspectives On Family Ministry: Three Views



## Synopsis

In *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, Timothy Paul Jones makes the case that every church is called to some form of family ministry—but what he means by "family ministry" isn't simply one more program to add to an already-packed schedule! According to Jones, the most effective family ministries involve refocusing every church process to engage parents in the process of discipling their children and to draw family members together instead of pulling them apart. Jones sets the stage with introductory chapters on the historical contexts and foundations of family ministry. Then, three effective practitioners show clearly how your church can make the transition to family ministry. Paul Renfro (pastor of discipleship at Grace Family Baptist Church in Spring, Texas) writes in favor of Family-Integrated Ministry, where the emphasis is on intergenerational discipleship. Brandon Shields (minister to high school students at Highview Baptist Church, a multi-site megachurch in Kentucky and Indiana) supports Family-Based Ministry—a ministry that organizes programs according to ages and interests but also develops intentional activities and training events to bring families together. Jay Strother (minister to emerging generations at Brentwood Baptist Church in Tennessee) prefers Family-Equipping Ministry, maintaining age-organized ministry while reorganizing the congregation to call parents to become active partners in the discipleship of their children.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

CONTENT "Perspectives on Family Ministry," by Paul Renfro, Brandon Shields, and Jay Strother, is a cordial debate contrasting three models of ministry - family-integrated, family-based, and family-equipping. The Perspectives series mirrors the format of the similar Counterpoint series by Zondervan, but with a Baptist publisher and Baptist contributors. Part one, "Why Every Church Needs Family Ministry," addresses the importance of parenting, a brief review of the development of the history of youth ministry, a definition of family ministry, and an overview of the methodological distinctives of the three views. It defines family ministry as "the process of intentionally and persistently realigning a congregation's proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as the person primarily responsible for the discipleship of their children" (Jones 40). Some of their stated assumptions are that "Scripture is the supreme and sufficient standard for how to do ministry," "God has called parents-and especially fathers - to take personal responsibility for the Christian formation of their children," and "The generations need one another." Part two, "How Churches are Doing Family Ministry," describes in detail what each model looks like and explains its theological or practical basis. Each contributor has about 25 pages to define and defend his model, which is followed by a 10-15 page response section by the other contributors, which is followed by an 8 page final defense by the original contributor. Family-integrated ministry is defined by its integration of all age groups in worship and teaching and its rejection of age-segregated ministry.

Having just finished reading this book, I was satisfied to find that all three writers in the discussion, Paul Renfro, Brandon Shields and Jay Strother, all presented fair and comprehensive arguments for differing models of what family ministry should be. Yet at the same time, I felt that so much more could have been said and discussed about the issue. There's still plenty of good discussions, responses, and rebuttals, though, to make this a fascinating read. I thought that Paul Renfro opened up with an excellent presentation and defense of the Family-Integrated model, and indeed there is much good that can be said of this structure of worship. Yet at the same time, as the counter-discussions dig into this model (namely Brandon Shield's counter) the arguments strike that this model doesn't address the community at large, or fractured families. There might be something to this, in the fact that there can be a niche quality some family-integrated churches. Don't get me wrong: as someone personally with a large family, it can be wonderful to be a part of a congregation that is largely family focused and oriented. But at the same time, in this day and culture of fragmented families, the counter-arguments seem to challenge if the family-integrated model does the most to reach those alienated demographics (such as fractured families, singles, etc). Brandon

Shields presents the Family-Based Ministry model, one seemingly more culturally emersed (and at the same time, criticized by some for being too much of the culture.) I did find it commendable that Shield's took time to dig in with a critical view of some of the earlier research as to why children are leaving the church (p.

I have been doing youth ministry in some form or another for around 10 years. Through this time I have vacillated between several different philosophies of ministry. I began as a lone-ranger save the kids from their stupid parents type of mentality. That view did not last long. Frankly, either that view had to go or I did. I'm glad it was the former. (Well, actually it was both because I did leave my first position as youth pastor during this time). After my foray into ministry as the self-proclaimed messiah of students I quickly learned the importance of parents. I discovered on my own that parents have a more lasting influence on their children than I ever would. And this was the case whether the parents were the reincarnation of Hitler or the Apostle Paul. Parents are typically the primary influencers of their children whether for good or ill. Once I made this discovery through experience I soon found that it is not only experience that teaches this but Scripture too. I found myself studying many books on how to minister to the family and the teenagers. I began trying to implement some of these programs but oddly enough found much resistance. I knew that things needed to change. I knew that parents needed to have a vital role but I was not sure what that was supposed to look like. Riding in on his white horse was Voddie Baucham and his book Family-Driven Faith. This was what I was looking for. This reinforced my growing belief that parents are the primary disciple makers of their children. But it called for some pretty radical changes. One of which would eventually be my resignation because apparently I was serving in an unbiblical position as a youth pastor.

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