BOOK REVIEW

Diana R. Garland. *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide.* 2nd ed. Downers Grove IL: IVP Academic, 2012. Pp.656. Hbk. ISBN-13: 978-0-8308-3971-1.

The release of the second edition of this text is a testament to the fact that for over a decade *Family Ministry* has been both a standard introductory text on the subject as well as a handy desk reference for many ministry practitioners. Indeed, while other texts address aspects of this vital topic (i.e., Trevecca Okholm, *Kingdom Family: Re-envisioning God's Plan for Marriage and Family.* Cascade, 2012; Andrew Weaver et al. *Counseling Families across the Stages of Life: Handbook for Pastors and Other Helping Professionals.* Abingdon, 2002) few, if any, are as broad in scope as Garland's *Family Ministry*. Given the significance of this text, this review highlights both its strengths and topics meriting further reflection and development.

Garland employs four themes to organize this edition: "The Context of Family Ministry," "Family Formation," "The Processes of Family Life," and "Leading Family Ministry." The five chapters in the first section, "The Context of Family Ministry," reflect on the family in historical, sociological, and biblical-theological perspective as well as define the author's agenda for family ministry. Chapter 1 provides a brief socioeconomic history of the Western family, and is for the most part relevant to the Canadian experience. Indeed, even the brief section on slavery is worth reading for its historical insights and as a lens on how families are both self-defining and socially defined entities. Chapter 2 highlights key sociological perspectives on the family. Particularly helpful are the author's reflections on the definition of family, which invite the reader to look beyond the question of family structure and to consider the functions that families fulfill.

Canadian readers, however, will want to supplement Garland's reflections with data from relevant Canadian sources such as *Families Count—Profiling Canada's Families IV* (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2010. Online: http://www. vanierinstitute. ca/publications).

Chapter 3 offers the reader a brief summary of the history of Christian thought with respect to marriage and family. Similarly, chapter 4 invites the reader to reflect on the nature of family ministry in ways that are inclusive and supportive of households and to reflect on the relationship between family households and the household of faith. Chapter 5 both builds on the first four chapters and outlines the author's definition of family ministry. While the use of biblical-theological themes serves to demonstrate the difference between family ministry and a church-based mental health ministry, readers with a background in Christian education will note that Garland's vision does not explicitly speak to the role of the family in the Christian discipleship of children. Practitioners interested in this dimension of family life will need to utilize other resources (i.e., Okholm, 2012).

The second section, "Family Formation," invites the reader to reflect on the ways families come into being and are defined. Chapter 6 utilizes an extended case study of an atypical household to reflect on the nature of family relationships before proceeding to discuss various types of family relationships (i.e., couples, parents, siblings, children, older members). The ministry-based reader who may be unfamiliar with the family literature is likely to appreciate chapter 7, as it provides a valuable summary of the processes by which families form, are maintained, and develop, while at the same time retaining an objectivity that allows the author to highlight some important limitations of the developmental perspective. Equally beneficial are Garland's reflections on the covenantal nature of marriage and family and her reflections on divorce.

Chapter 8 is a helpful reminder that families do not exist in isolation but rather within social networks that play a vital role within the life of the family. This discussion sets the stage for later reflections on the role of the church in the lives of families. Included in this chapter is an extended discussion on the nature

of adaptation and stress and the health promoting potential of social networks.

Chapter 9 reflects on the role of culture in families. An important dimension of this chapter is the author's discussion of the unique culture of each family grouping. This discussion highlights the fact that individual families develop ways of acting that define them, and includes extended discussions on family identity and family stories. In terms of specific cultures, Garland's reflections on African-American and Latino family life illustrate the influence of broader cultural realities on families. That being said, one wonders why other cultural groups that play a significant role in the American context are not included: i.e., First Nations and Asian cultures. For this reason, anyone ministering in a multicultural context needs to research those cultural groups present in their community.

The third section, "The Processes of Family Life," invites the reader to reflect on the roles of communication, conflict and anger, forgiveness and repentance, and intimacy (chapter 10); gender roles, the use of power, discipline, and family violence (chapter 11); and, fostering faith development within households (chapter 12). The separation of "conflict and anger" (i.e., a response to a particular circumstance that is designed to repair the situation) from "family violence" (i.e., a pattern of behavior designed to control others) is a helpful reminder not to confuse these phenomena. Garland's biblical-theological reflections on gender roles and the use of power within families invite reflection on the ways in which the Scriptures focus on the processes of interpersonal relationships. The gem in the third section is Garland's reflections on ways to encourage and support families as they seek to live out their faith (chapter 12). Indeed, this chapter serves as a helpful companion to the material contained in the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's report *Hemorrhaging Faith* as it provides concrete examples of family activities that support the development of an active faith in the lives of children and teens (James Penner et al., *Hemorrhaging Faith: Why and When Canadian Young Adults Are Leaving, Staying and Returning to the Church*. Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 2012).

The final section of the book, "Leading Family Ministry,"

provides the reader with tools for developing a family ministry program within their local church. Chapter 13 expands on and develops the theme that family ministry occurs within the context of the life of the congregation. Thus, the author demonstrates that this approach is not something added onto a full ministry agenda but is rather an essential element requiring intentional leadership as it is woven into the church's worship, education, care, and administrative functions. In chapter 14 Garland outlines the first step for congregations wishing to refine and focus their family ministry efforts: i.e., assessment of needs. Here Garland's experience assessing congregations is evident as she outlines the processes and types of data that contribute to developing a clear assessment of the needs of a congregation or its community. Chapter 15 moves the discussion forward as the author reflects on strategic planning process, the bases for effective evaluation, prioritizing possibilities, planning and implementing new initiatives, and planning for future evaluation. Finally, chapter 16 offers a succinct summary of many of the initiatives a church might include within its family ministry program.

In conclusion, the second edition of Garland's *Family Ministry* has retained the best of the first edition while at the same time revising and expanding themes that merited further attention. In the process Garland has produced a solid text that invites singles, couples, families, and churches to experience what it means to belong to the household of faith. While there are some identifiable shortcomings these can be readily addressed through the use of supplemental resources. As a result, it is safe to say that Garland's text will continue to function as a vital reference and guide for those who wish to minister to and with families.

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