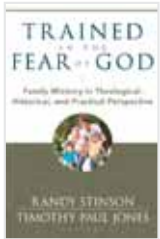


Literature



Trained in the Fear of God (Kregel 2011, \$26.99), Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, eds.

REVIEW BY
AARON CLINE HANBURY

Hopefully, no church leader claims a ministry philosophy of, “Yeah, well, we just hop on the bandwagon and hope it works out.” But it seems like that’s essentially what often happens. So when a movement starts talking about reaching specific groups in the church with specific methods, there is a tendency to think that it’s no more than a passing fad.

But occasionally, important emphases, for one reason or another, fade to the background in the life of the church. The new book *Trained in the Fear of God*, edited by Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, seeks to demonstrate that, though it faded during the past 40-50 years, family discipleship in the life of a local congregation is a theologically significant and historically important

component that the church needs to regain. Stinson is the dean of the School of Church Ministries at Southern Seminary, and Jones is associate professor of leadership and church ministry at SBTS and editor of *The Journal of Family Ministry*.

That a focus on family discipleship is not new is significant, as the church can look back to a heritage of men and women trying to faithfully practice Scriptural teachings in their churches and homes.

“To be trained in the fear of God was, at least in part, to be disciplined to live with reverence for an order that transcends immediate experience or comprehension,” writes Bryan Nelson and Jones in their introduction to *Trained in the Fear of God*, about how the earliest Christians perceived home-

based discipleship.

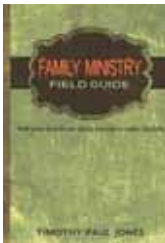
Trained in the Fear of God offers essays written by established scholars about the biblical-theological, historical and practical foundations of local church family ministry and discipleship. The book argues that family ministry in a local church is important because the Bible establishes the family as the primary unit of discipleship; church history provides a rich story of people who sought to implement the Bible’s teachings about the family in a local church context; and the church today should seek to follow the Bible’s teaching, learning from the history of Christianity.

Stinson and Jones structure the book in three sections, biblical-theological, historical and practical perspective, in order to show

how the importance of family ministry organically arises in Christian thought.

Throughout *Trained in the Fear of God*, Stinson and Jones maintain that, while family ministry is important for a faithful church, no ministry type is the foundation of the church.

“The gospel is what changes people — not programs or methods; not models or methods; but solely and only the gospel of Jesus Christ,” writes Nelson and Jones. “Every local church should be concerned first about how the gospel is portrayed, presented, and practiced in the congregation. This includes considering how local congregations teach on the subjects of marriage and parenting and how they encourage and minister to families” (emphasis original).



Family Ministry Field Guide: How the Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples (Wesleyan Publishing House 2011, \$17.99), Timothy Paul Jones

REVIEW BY
AARON CLINE HANBURY

Dinner at the Parr household has deteriorated into sheer pandemonium. The infant squeals in delight at the chaos as his two siblings engage in super-powered combat with each other. A frazzled mom stretches and strains unsuccessfully to restore order. What about Bob Parr, father and former ‘Mr. Incredible’? He stands to the side, physically present, relationally absent, and utterly uncertain as to what to do. ... Finally, his wife flings a frantic plea in his direction: ‘Bob! It’s time to engage!’” Timothy Paul Jones, associate professor of leadership and church ministry at Southern Seminary and editor of the *Journal of Family Ministry*, points to this example from the 2004 movie *The Incredibles* as an eerily accurate illustration of parents sitting in the pews of local

churches around the world.

It seems that far too many parents watch youth ministers and children’s directors “stretch and strain” to promote growth in youth and children in the church. But now pastors and churches around the world, like the thinly stretched Mrs. Parr, are calling parents to engage. But, like Bob Parr, these parents aren’t quite sure what to do.

In an effort to explain and then bridge this ominous gap, Jones, offers church leaders and parents a *Family Ministry Field Guide*.

Jones’ newest book flows from the premise that God designed the family to be the primary unit of discipleship. A nuts-and-bolts manual, Jones’ *Family Ministry Field Guide* shows pastors and church lay-workers what a theologically robust and historically grounded

family ministry looks like in a local congregation.

“God’s creation and humanity’s fall have positioned parents as providers and disciplinarians,” he writes. “Through redemption and consummation, parents are called to become disciple makers as well. Because God has chosen to place particular children in close proximity to us, these disciple-making processes should begin with our own children.

“The proclamation of the gospel that begins in our households should spill out beyond the confines of our homes, into our communities, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth,” Jones writes.

The church finds its place, then, as it equips parents to function as biblical disciplers of their children. So Jones sets himself to explaining

why churches need to equip families for discipleship and what that might look like in practice.

Complete with “sketch the situation” boxes to help readers think through current, potential and ideal characteristics of local church family ministry, Jones organizes *Family Ministry Field Guide* book into three major sections: the nature of the gap, the motivations for moving toward a “family equipping” ministry and the how-to for getting there.

Jones’ fast-paced, pithy writing presents the theologically significant issue of educating and nurturing children in the gospel in a highly practical, down-to-earth fashion. Readers will find *Family Ministry Field Guide* a helpful tract for developing a faithful, family-focused local church ethos.