

Liberty Theological Seminary

Book Critique: Family to Family

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Contemporary Evangelism
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By
Matthew McNutt

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Bibliographical Entry

Pipes, Jerry, PhD., and Victor Lee. *Family to Family: Leaving a Lasting Legacy*. Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1999.

Author Information

Dr. Jerry Pipes is a well known speaker and author. He is the president of Jerry Pipes Productions as well as the Team Leader of the Prayer and Spiritual Awakening Team at the North American Mission Board. During the 1990s he was a presenter in the Bush Administration's President's War on Drugs. Over 18 million copies of his four books, booklets and other training resources have been created and distributed. He completed his B.S. at Texas A&M University, his M.A. at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and his D.Min at Luther Rice Seminary. Dr. Pipes and his wife, Debra, have two children.

Victor Lee was the Minister of Single Adults and Evangelism at First Baptist Concord, in Knoxville, TN. He is also a well known author, having been writing for over thirty years at the time of publication in both journalism and books. He has written hundreds of articles for Christian websites and magazines. He has also been a columnist for Sports Spectrum magazine, a board member of Sports Outreach America, the International Sports Federation, and His Passion Ministries. He is known for his focus on discipleship, sports evangelism, singles ministry, purposeful family living, and evangelism strategy. He and his wife, Judy, have a daughter and three foster children.

Content Summary

Family to Family: Leaving a Lasting Legacy, by Dr. Jerry Pipes and Victor Lee, attempts to equip parents with the tools necessary to pass on faith, disciple, and train their children in the faith, becoming families who serve God together and are known for their love and dedication to

Christ both in their faith community and in their neighborhood, work place, and school.

One of the driving themes throughout the book is the claim that 88% of young people in general leave the church by the time they finish high school, while only 5% of young people in homes where faith is actively modeled and passed on by the parents end up leaving the church.¹ Consequently, the challenge addressed over the course of the book is, how do parents become the type of parents whose children fall on the side of the statistic that has them still pursuing faith after high school?

The authors begin by defining a healthy family and address the issue of busyness so many families in the United States are known for, as well as the serious repercussions involved. Essentially, their view is that a healthy family is one that spends quantity and quality time together.²

This time together can be as simple as having at least five meals per week together as a family, taking advantage of time in the car to talk and challenge one another, and showing up to each others' events and important moments. As a result, there are a great many opportunities for conversations based on faith, as well as opportunities for the children to see faith modeled in their parents. An important part of this quality and quantity of time is the passing on an understanding of who they are in Christ

A critical component in the process of passing the baton of faith involves the forming of a family mission statement. The reality is, every family has a mission statement of sorts, whether they realize it or not – through negligence parents can pass on a set of values that in essence

¹ Pipes, Jerry, PhD., and Victor Lee, *Family to Family: Leaving a Lasting Legacy*, (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1999), 1, 37, 50.

represents a family mission statement. Pipes and Lee instead challenge parents to be very intentional in forming a mission statement with the involvement of their children, giving ownership to all of them, and creating an environment where the family can pursue a direction together with intentionality.

The authors assert that there are two core values that should be included in the mission statement, based on Christ's mission; to seek and to save.³ They then walk the reader through the process of actually forming a mission statement.

From there, they move on to the topic of passing the baton, or passing on faith to the children. They stress the role of parents in the faith formation of children; the reality is, for the most part young people tend to emulate the faith of their parents. Essentially, they will mirror what their parents do, not necessarily what their parents say. As terrifying as they may be for some, they reassure the reader with comments like this one, "God would never command you to do what He has not empowered you to do."⁴

Included are resources for assessing the faith of ones children, leading them to the Lord, and mentoring them in the development of their walk with God. Throughout there are invaluable lists of critical scriptures in bringing about understanding about salvation, God, Christ, and repenting of sin.

From there, the authors spend the latter half of the book discussing ways families can do outreach together in their communities, workplaces, schools, sports and other environments. There are a wealth of ideas, resources, tools from various sources and more provided as ways to

² Ibid., 11.

³ Ibid., 27.

live out the essentials of Christ's mission, to seek and to save.

Evaluation

The authors do achieve their purpose in writing this book; they want readers to understand the critical role parents play in the faith development of their children. This message comes through loudly, and they follow it with a thorough discussion on how parents can do so effectively. With more and more research currently confirming the claims they made at the time of the writing of this book, there is no doubt that the theme is convincing. For the most part the book stays focused on this theme, although it does seem to wander from it during some of the later portions of the book when the focus seem to shift to more of an outreach in general discussion.

What is unique about the book, and allows it to stand out from other current resources, like Kenda Creasy Dean's *Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church*, which explores the results of Christian Smith's research on adolescent faith in America, is that Pipes and Lee give very tangible guidance and practical ideas for how parents can model and pass on faith to their children. Kenda Creasy Dean does an amazing job of discussing the problems of adolescent faith in America, and the impact parents have played in that, but gives little to no guidance on how parents can transfer faith to their children.

For the most parts the authors' arguments are logical and well supported, however, it was troubling to see their use of the 88% statistic. Most resources out there would put the number of teens walking away from the faith at a lower percentage than that. Granted, regardless of the source, the percentage is higher than anyone would want to see, however it seemed in some ways to be a bit alarmist to use a statistic from the upper range of research out there, and it was frustrating as a reader to not see that statistic's source cited until the third time it was mentioned,

⁴ Ibid., 43.

which was close to half way through the book.⁵ It was also surprising and somewhat troubling to read in the footnotes that while the 88% was based on published research, the claim that only 5% would walk away from the faith if the models in the book were followed was based on Proverbs 22:6 and Dr. Pipes experience – both of which have value, but should not be cited in this way. On the other hand, it would seem that Dr. Pipes has revised some of his views on this, as his website includes a 70-75% figure instead of the 88% in the book description.⁶

A second criticism would be the later third of the book. The first three chapters, or two thirds of the book, are well written and on target. With thorough discussions and guidance on the need for family faith practices and great insight on how to make that happen, the first three chapters are a must read for parents. However, chapter four in particular, and five and six in general, seem almost overwhelming in the amount of lists, models, and ideas presented. While the underlying goal is to provide ways for families to live out the great commission, it is easy to lose sight that the target audience is parents as various models and ideas are listed one after the other. It may have been more effective to focus in on a few and provide more instruction rather than including as many as possible.

In conclusion, *Family to Family* is a well written book, a strong resource for parents and a great tool for pastors to pass along to families, as well as to help instruct and shape their pastoral teaching and preaching on the subject of faith transmission to children. Churches need to be more aware of the primary role that parents play in the reaching of young people, and as such, resource parents in a way that will help them to model the faith they would like to see in their children.

⁵ Ibid., 50.

⁶ <http://jerrypipesproductions.com/jerrys-resources/>