

# Preface

*Ministering Spiritually to Families* is designed to serve as an academic textbook and counseling resource book that draws together writers that have served as specialists, usually both as academics and practitioners, in helping families thrive. The role of spirituality in strengthening families is one of the most understudied aspects of counseling. As a result, many psychologists and family counselors have little understanding of the place of faith in strengthening families. Moreover, they often possess stereotypes about religious people. This is especially true of counselors who are not people of faith themselves. Some family therapists view people of faith as too idealist, overly focused on right and wrong, and even as prudes.

For counselors that are Christian or of another faith, *Ministering Spiritually to Families* will help them substantially enhance his or her effectiveness in helping families across a number of different age groups and situations. For those others who are not faith-oriented, it will help them to understand, respect, and guide those who are believers. Recent Gallup polls indicate that the vast majority of Americans identify themselves as Christian and most of them view their faith as quite important in their lives. With these statistics in mind, it is of utmost importance for counselors to be able to relate with these individuals.

There are certain books that deal with the issue of ministering spiritually to families. Nearly all of them, however, suffer from one of three weaknesses. First, often they are dated. Second, they do not look at the issue of ministering spiritually to families in a way that combines the academic and the practical, that is so important to maximize the efficacy of a book. Third, they examine families at a very narrow and specific level. Regarding the final shortcoming, most books examine families with a focus either at the pre-marital timeframe, or address marital quality, or raising children. Almost none of them address all three spheres. *Ministering Spiritually to Families* is designed to help families at all stages of the life-course.

- In addition, few books offer the perspective of how children influence parents and that what constitutes an effective parent changes over the life course. Not only do the writers and editors who put together this book intend to use it in their university classrooms, but they also expect that academics, those in ministry, and families will desire to draw from the knowledge and wisdom contained in its pages.

All in all, the book, *Ministering Spiritually to Families*, is a source that can aid in the development of family ties over a large span of the life-course. It will be a tremendous resource for academics and practitioners desiring to help people believe for the right future spouse, during the process of marriage, and during the rather long span of time that they are raising children. It is a book that covers a wide range of topics, many of which are scarcely ever addressed in one volume with any real depth. In this way, this book functions to help families everywhere apply the deep but simple truths of the Bible that will make families healthier and happier.



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Jeynes, W.; Martinez, E. (Eds.)

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