

Families Finding Faith

by John Hattam

Warwick, England: Church Pastoral Aid Society, 2000. 48 pages

Reviewed by Augustus Lawrence

Pastor

South England Conference, British Union

Trans-European Division

This book review is limited to the strategy used by the author in his *Families Finding Faith* (CPAS, 2000) which can be considered a “how to do book” on family evangelism.

One of the many issues that challenge those who do family evangelism is put simply by John Hattam, “How could families and not just children be reached for God?” This is a very important topic, not only for those interested in family evangelism, but for the church as a whole. Given his many years of experience in family evangelism, Hattam sets out to provide a clear and concise strategy for evangelising non-Christian families. He argues that the key to evangelising parents and not just their children is for the church to pay keen attention to becoming relational in its evangelism to families.

Hattam brings many years of experience and scholarship. The book is simple in style yet clear and effective in getting across the author’s purpose. The information he shares has begun a thought process regarding my own personal perspective and has begun to challenge me professionally.

John Hattam uses three main approaches to accomplish his aim of helping churches to pay attention to relational evangelism, what he considers the starting point for evangelising families. Firstly, he provides the biblical basis which gives a sound foundation and encouragement for evangelising from a “relational” perspective. The point is that taking the gospel to families begins with the churchgoer who is intentional about the call for action. The churchgoer becomes intentionally relational with the aim to connect with people and meet them through friendship. Says Hattam, “People become Christians through knowing people who are Christians.”

Hattam’s second approach is his “how to” concept. He gives clear, simple and rather effective ways of making relational evangelism with families work. For Hattam, Christians building relationships with non-Christians is the platform from which non-Christian families are lead to find and discover Christ for themselves. For example, the group activity on how to make a start to reach families is effective because it begins with the people and challenges them to think relationally.

The third approach Hattam uses for relational evangelism is to give practical ideas which allow relationships to nurture and take root.

Even though this is a “how to do” book, the author forcefully and persuasively argues one vital conceptual point throughout: those who do family evangelism must give keen attention to relational evangelism if we want to be effective in evangelising families.

One of the strengths of the book is its simplicity and relevance to the issue of family evangelism in the context of families today. Another strength is the material is very easy to read. Chapters are short and concise. A weakness, in my view, is that Hattam does not give a clear explanation of what it actually means to be relational. Apart from his idea of connecting with families, being relational is to be understood by following the examples of Jesus. It is in the Gospels that Jesus shows what it actually means to be relational. There we see Jesus meeting people where they were. For example, in the encounter of Jesus and the woman at the well we are given one of many illustrations of how to be relational.

Families Finding Faith will undoubtedly be a powerful resource for those who are in the business of family evangelism. The author's call for attention to relational evangelism as the starting point for reaching families for God is something the church needs to take seriously.