

Book Reviews



The book reviews submitted offer a critique of some of the latest family ministry titles. If you would like to see a title reviewed in the future, please submit at least two copies of either the book or galley copy (Publisher's PDF proof is acceptable if not yet published or to galley stage).



The DNA of D6: Building Blocks of Generational Discipleship. By Ron Hunter Jr. Nashville, Tennessee: Randall House. 2015. 144 pp. \$14.99. paper.

Review by Daniel Edwards, Lead Pastor at Faith Church in Chandler, Indiana. Daniel also serves as the Promotional Director for the Indiana State Association of Free Will Baptists.

Anyone who has heard Ron Hunter speak of Generational Discipleship has likely picked up on his passion for this subject. Anyone who reads *The DNA of D6* will as well. It is clear from the beginning of the book that this is very personal work. Matt Markins' preface confirms the investment that Ron Hunter has made in the generational discipleship and family ministry movements. However, this is no manifesto. As personal as *The DNA of D6* is to Hunter, the better adjective to describe this work is practical. The material is communicated for the purpose of application and the content, strategies, and even the analogies serve that purpose. *The DNA of D6* achieves a high level of practicality by addressing churches of all shapes, establishing a biblical basis, driving home the end goal, building concrete action steps, and encouraging leaders past the challenges and hurdles they face. These components build a strong guide for leaders looking to shift their organization's strategy toward discipling the next generation within the family.

Chapters entitled "Staffing for A D6 Church" and "The Unseen Staff Member" might give the impression that Hunter has written to a narrow demographic of churches, but churches of every size will appreciate Hunter's approach in addressing all churches. The chapter on staffing makes it clear that the staff may be paid hires or a volunteer team, but the principles and strategy are the same. The unseen staff member is *Spoiler Alert* actually curriculum. The idea is curriculum can serve as an unseen (and relatively unpaid) staff member. Not only does this book prove to be practical to churches of all budget and team sizes, it also speaks to churches at any point on the generational discipleship spectrum. A church leader need not be an early adopter of the family ministry model or even use D6's cur-

riculum to gain insights from Hunter on leading their church to follow the call of discipleship within family units. A commitment to help churches and leaders start where they are and head in the right direction is further demonstrated in the free use of a *DNA of D6 Generational Discipleship Assessment* tool that the book points to in the first chapter. Any church and every leader can find their place on the spectrum and follow the insights in the book to lead their church, big or small/multi-staff to bi-vocational pastor, in the direction of families discipling their own children.

With helps to establish where each reader might find themselves or their church and an obvious direction introduced early in the text, the author then establishes a biblical basis for the generational discipleship model. Since D6 stands for Deuteronomy 6, the reader will not be surprised that this passage is the launching point. Yet, Hunter establishes that Deuteronomy 6 is not merely a proof text. Deuteronomy 6 serves as the thesis for the strategy, but the movement is not short on passages for inspiration and instruction. Covering Genesis to Revelation positive and negative examples are sighted, commands and exhortations to parents are pointed out, and principles of influence stewardship are underscored. The chapter heading “D6 Goes Beyond Deuteronomy 6” is fitting. Readers will gain the sense that Moses would not have been the only biblical author or character that could join the D6 Conference Speaker lineup. Joshua, Hezekiah, John the Baptist, and Paul all influenced parents to disciple their children. Also helpful are relationships in Scripture that point the reader to good and bad examples of character traits and flaws being passed down from grandfather to father to son. The commands and principles covered are illustrated well in three generation families such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the New Testament, Paul reminds Timothy that the influence of his grandmother and mother had a great impact on him.

While the direction was pointed out early, the destination is made plain when Hunter drives home the end goal of raising children who have a Biblical Worldview. The goal is for the next generation to carry with them an unconscious intellect or a second nature response in making decisions, handling emotions, and thinking on issues. Hunter makes the analogy of a battleship that is built for war by being equipped not for defense but for a posture of offense. He argues that the best defense for parents is a strong offense, so the goal should be to “launch” kids out ready to do battle in

the fields of apologetics, ethics, and theology. To arrive at that destination, the author argues that parents must go beyond teaching their children the names of the biblical patriarchs and the details of the narrative to get to the concepts of Scripture and the experience of application. Families must dive through the who and the what and reach the depth of the why and how. The author does not take a shortcut or call for parents and teachers to bypass the surface facts and figures, but rather calls them to go through them and beyond. Using Bloom's Taxonomy as a guide, *The DNA of D6* shows stair steps to take in reaching the goal of teaching and discipleship.

At the end of the book, a very useful analogy is given to help parents take this dive into deeper conversations. In the setting of a vacation to the beach there are opportunities to build sand castles, do some snorkeling, or go scuba diving. Sand castles are built on the surface. This is where most people stay. Snorkeling stays near the surface and takes periodic and short plunges. Scuba Diving goes deep and stays deep to explore where very few go. To reach the goal of the Biblical Worldview, a battleship ready to be launched out, it will take some deep dives into the concepts and principles of Scripture.

True to the practical nature of the book, concrete next actions steps for churches are covered in the remainder. From the larger perspective of church organization and leadership strategy to the more specific area of types and functions for small groups, the steps are specific and helpful. Hunter points to the need for churches to rethink placing youth ministry on the outside of the larger body's strategy and methodology. Putting the youth ministry outside of the main life of the body and then expecting those students to seamlessly transition back into life in the church is short sighted and ill conceived. Not surprisingly, Hunter recommends using curriculum to align all of the ministries in one direction and all on one subject. While Hunter leads a publishing house and it's no surprise he recommends the use of curriculum that puts all ages on the same page each week, his argument is strong. Especially considering the conversations among families and most importantly between parents and children that this strategy will foster. The argument of D6 is when all groups are already on the same subject, the parents and mentors are well equipped to take the conversations deeper and live out the call of Deuteronomy 6 to talk of the things of the Lord as they walk by the way, sit down to eat, and lay down to sleep.

Ron Hunter is undaunted to cover one of the most personal reasons that some struggle with generational discipleship. Though subject matter is difficult, Hunter addresses the reason that many church leaders struggle to champion the generational discipleship, the subject of prodigal sons and daughters among their own families. *The DNA of D6* wades into the pain these leaders face. Recognizing the integrity that pushes leaders to refrain from calling their people to something they have not lived themselves, the text assures them that it is not hypocrisy to help parents achieve what the leaders dream of for their own families. In addition to covering this personal hurdle that many leaders have to overcome, the book closes with encouragement and advice to persist through the challenge that all leaders face: Changing their organization's culture. There is no glibness here. While *The DNA of D6* definitely lifts up an ideal that will be difficult to achieve, the closing words are realistic about the fact that this shift will take time. Patience, collaboration, and leadership are required to make any change and the same holds true for a church that moves to effective generational discipleship. Hunter does not call ministers to implement a new program and consider their work done. He pleads with leaders to steward their influence, cautions them against groupthink, and advises translating the concepts into the context of their church's strengths and weaknesses.

Hunter is passionate about generational discipleship and churches that are helping families disciple their kids. This passion for the discipleship a new generation of believers has produced a book to help these churches align their ministry with families. Leaders of churches of all shapes and on all points of the discipleship journey will find this short book to be a very practical guide, directing them toward the goal of launching out young adults armed with a biblical worldview and ready to change the world.

I would heartily recommend *The DNA of D6* to any parent or Church leader looking to incorporate this generational discipleship model into their church and home. The easy reading and practical nature make it a good fit for anyone needing a primer on the D6 model of family ministry. I believe D6 churches would greatly benefit from taking their leadership and ministry teams through the book together for discussion and application.



Adoptive youth ministry: Integrating emerging generations into the family of faith. By Chap Clark. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics. 2016. 400 pp. \$34.99. hardcover.

Review by Colleen Derr, Associate Professor of Congregational Formation and Christian Ministries, Wesley Seminary, Marion, Indiana.

In *Adoptive Youth Ministry: Integrating Emerging Generations into the Family of Faith*, Clark calls the reader to envision the church community as a family with youth playing a critical and unique role in the family. He clarifies that adoptive youth ministry is not adoption in terms of assimilating teens into this family in which they give-up their own identity, but rather adopting them into the family involves making room for them, welcoming them, and recognizing the value they bring. Clark suggests: “Guiding this strategy is the philosophy that a person needs to be ‘in’ Christian family-like community in order to be ‘in Christ’” (19). He argues that the church is in need of this new, adoptive, approach to youth ministry due to three compelling realities: “we are ‘losing’ kids once they leave our ministry programs, there is a growing number of young people who have ‘written off’ ‘traditional’ faith’, and the drastic changes in the world the past few years must impact ‘how we do ministry’ and ‘who we do ministry with’” (6-7).

The text is divided into four sections that address the context, the call, the practice, and the skills of adoptive youth ministry. There are 24 contributing authors, experts in the specific field they address based on research and experience. Section one, “The Context of Adoptive Youth Ministry,” addresses the developmental realities of adolescents with Steven Bonner offering a new way to look at adolescent development that impacts how we relate and respond. He suggests that today’s adolescents are experiencing delayed cognitive development and extended mid-adolescence both of which are directly impacted by the lack of adult relationships. His research and experience indicate that adolescents need “loving and sacrificial” relationships with adults who are “theologically grounded and prophetically positioned” (38). Marv Penner provides insights from research

and personal experience on the wounded and broken adolescents in our communities and how we can welcome them into our ministries. He posits we must recognize that the adolescent's pain is real. Adolescents are in search of their identity and often circumstances and external forces forge a false and hurtful one. The church family offers a place where: "Young people who see themselves as outcasts, losers, or undesirable are invited into a community where they are welcomed and invited to participate" (50). The result is an "assurance that they belong" (50) and an opportunity to form a healthy identity in Christ through Christian family. In the fourth chapter Bradley Howell explores the expectations and opportunities for technology's role in ministry and concludes that adolescents need adults who are willing to join them in their online world, understand the online world from their point of view, and extend grace in the digital world (58). Craig Detweiler, in the first section's closing chapter, argues that "pop culture burrows into teens' hearts and minds in ways that sermons or Sunday school may never touch" (69) and suggests that connections are best made through observing what they watch and engaging in "emphatic listening" (69). Clark launches the section with a call to move away from ministry as an institution or program with defined structures, to view it rather as an organism—a family—that is adaptable. He provides the "Strategic Adoptive Ministry Funnel" as a guide for moving new participants into full members of the family (19-20). The stages of the funnel include outreach, welcoming, engaging, diverse relationships, and finally adoption.

Section two explores the "The Call of Adoptive Youth Ministry" to be reflective, ongoing, and communal. Almeda Wright contends the church community should offer youth a paradigm for faith that includes orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and critical, communal reflection (87). "Reflective youth ministry" she advises should focus on "nurturing young people to reflect the image and life of Jesus Christ and to think deeply or reflect on what it means to be a follower of Christ today" (90). A variety of authors argue that adoptive youth ministry must embrace thinking practically theologically, ecclesialogically, critically, globally, and long term. Adoptive youth ministry, Michael MacEntyre argues, must be practical theologically in that it must value humanity's story as well as God's and seek reconciliation with God and others (114). Walt Mueller continues this focus on reconciliation and community compelling the reader to gain an awareness to the

current reality of youth culture, recognize that ministry to adolescents is a cross-cultural experience, contextualize ministry to the adolescent's world. The ninth chapter moves the reader beyond cultural recognition, practical theology, and reflective ministry to seeing teens as "reservoirs" rather than "receivers" (138). Mark Cannister contends that teens have something to offer now, not just something to receive and identifies specific ways we can embrace teens in making connections and contributions to the faith community. Allen Jackson offers five things teens need from the faith community: "A creed to believe in," "a community to belong to," "a call to live out," "a hope to build on," and "a world to share" (163) and concludes that the means to achieving all of these are intergenerational, authentic relationships.

The practice of adoptive youth ministry is the focus of the third section with chapter topics that include how to create a welcoming space and a culture where questions are welcome. Pamela Erwin provides three theological arguments for creating a welcoming space: "God's invitation includes 'whosoever will' into a relationship with Him and His people" {, "the reign of God extends beyond the doors of the local church," and "youth ministries are 'launching pads' not the destination" (200). She further encourages the reader to embrace a culture of Shalom—"generous hospitality" (203). Kara Powell and Brad Griffin share that the results of a longitudinal study on the faith of young adults suggest a significant number (70% in their study) of students have doubts about their faith, but less than half of those feel free to ask questions within their ministry settings to clarify those doubts (223). Safety and support are necessary ingredients in helping a teen navigate these doubts, and an adoptive community of faith is an ideal place to create safe relationships, space for questioning, and support for seeking. Spiritual formation with adolescents as well as the unique call to middle school ministry, urban, multi-ethnic, and Latin-American settings are additional topics covered in this third section. Tony Jones suggests that spiritual formation is "a matter of time," and that adolescents need spiritual experiences in order to experience spiritual formation: "Spiritual formation happens, guided by the Holy Spirit, when we attend to the needs of the adolescents in our care and when we provide ways for them to develop that they can handle" (220). Heather Flies identifies the unique impact of adoptive ministry on middle school students and

provides specific practices to engage. Daniel White Hodge contends that urban and multi-ethnic contexts are the near future reality in youth ministry and compels the reader to understand and engage them.

The text concludes with five contributions related to the skills necessary for leading an adoptive youth ministry. These include the leadership qualities, communication skills, approach to teaching, strategy and structures that contribute, and the integration of youth ministry to the church. Leaders in adoptive youth ministry recognize their valuable role as a “bridge between the abandoned world of adolescence and the family of God” (287) and the need for volunteers and staff that model and embrace an adoptive ministry philosophy. Duffy Robbins identifies three key principles in adoptive communication. The communication of adoption: “respects the power of words” (293), “respects the power of context” (295), and “takes initiative” (296). The chapter on teaching in adoptive youth ministry answers the questions of who, when, where, and how with an emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. Steven Argue examines how adoptive youth ministry calls for us to rethink our strategies and ministry structures with a primary focus on the youth pastor’s role and youth ministry’s place in the community of faith. April Diaz carries this concept of reimagining strategies and structures further as she looks beyond the youth pastor’s role in adoptive youth ministry to all those now involved due to the integration of youth in the broader scope of the church community.

Clark acknowledges that no single chapter details “how” to do adoptive ministry, but each chapter “offers a specific strategy and theology for connecting the young into the larger faith community” (8). Although each chapter is written by a different author/authors and the focus of the chapter is based on his/her personal field of research and experience, Clark weaves them together into a cohesive anthology that supports his proposed adoptive youth ministry model. The audience for the text is primarily youth pastors, leaders, directors, and volunteers although those in the “shoulder” ministries such as children, young adult, and family would also benefit. In addition, it would be a helpful read for lead pastors and other ministry leaders as the adoptive model would require church-wide acceptance in order to succeed. It is also a book that would serve well as a text for youth specific and general ministry courses as it offers not just a new model for youth ministry, but also a new approach to church-wide

ministry and a new way to view intergenerational ministry. The critique of the text is that those not interested in pursuing the adoptive youth ministry model as defined in the introduction and opening chapter may miss significant contributions to the broader youth ministry field offered in the following chapters. Although these chapters support adoptive youth ministry, they offer insights independent of the adoptive model. While there is value in the concept of adoptive youth ministry, the contributions from the supporting chapters are broader in scope and potential impact than a single model.



Building Your Volunteer Team: A 30-Day Change Project for Youth Ministry. By Mark DeVries and Nate Stratman. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 2015. 155 pp. \$16.00. paper.

Review by Randall Wright, Church Planter in McKinney, Texas where he pastors the Clearview Mission.

Whether a pastor or youth leader is familiar with Mark DeVries and Nate Stratman's previous writings or not; they would likely benefit from their latest work, *Building Your Volunteer Team*. A project published by InterVarsity Press and released in 2015, the book is subtitled *A 30-Day Change Project for Youth Ministry*. However, do not let the title fool you. The book reaches far beyond the realm of youth ministry. *Building Your Volunteer Team* addresses head-on one of the greatest challenges facing today's ministry leaders, developing a strong volunteer team. Both larger and smaller churches, rural and suburban ministries, churches led by a single pastor and multi-staffed congregations, face the need for more volunteers. Those engaged in church ministry rarely if ever hear the words, "we have more volunteers than we can use." Conversely, ministry conversations frequently revolve around how to "get enough workers" to make things flow more smoothly. In this book, DeVries & Stratman offer practical insights that will help with the volunteer gap.

Building Your Volunteer Team is structured around the belief that many churches need significant change when it comes to recruiting volunteers.

The authors' guiding presupposition is that we often find ourselves "stuck" in certain areas of ministry, unsure of how to facilitate necessary change. This book proposes that those serving in ministry usually have at least one thing in common, they are interested in change. However, much of the effort spent in ministry is in maintaining current systems and never changing them.

In establishing the need for change, DeVries & Stratman offer disturbing insight into common processes of volunteer recruitment. Findings based upon a recent research project revealed that less than one third of professional youth workers experience success in recruiting volunteers. Further investigation revealed that most of these did not have an effective system in place to help. Quoting Peter Drucker, the authors' suggest that 80-90 percent of actions in ministry are not changing anything, they merely maintain a ministry's current trajectory. As a result, for exponential change to occur, focus must shift from sustaining a single area of ministry to the development of new strategies. New strategies, however, can only be developed by new ways of thinking. DeVries and Stratman seek to provide in *A 30-Day Change Project* an avenue for the new ways of thinking and new strategy that is necessary for ministry change.

DeVries and Stratman approach is a simple step by step process, whereby they encourage those who are in need of volunteers to follow this plan over the course of 30 days. This process is described as a "recipe," "blueprint," "action plan," and a 30-day "boot camp" for those who need to create rapid change in their organization. While the process DeVries and Stratman outline can be described as simple, it also appears to be very thorough and spiritually focused. Thorough, in that they provides a daily action plan, steps to take each day for the duration of the Change Project. DeVries and Stratman also appeal to readers to take this journey with two other people, partners. These partners help create motivation and accountability. The approach also provides helpful insights in evaluating previous methods or ideology while simultaneously offering new ways of thinking about the recruiting process. The plan is also spiritual, in that it recognizes and reminds readers that ministries too often overly revolve around the leader. DeVries and Stratman seek to offset this by stressing a process that emphasizes a "rhythm" that will lead to focus and dependence on the powerful work of the Spirit. The priority of seeking to make this

process a spiritual exercise is further supported by the role that the “partners” play. They are prayer partners that the minister is encouraged to regularly meet with and update throughout the recruiting process. Through weekly updates covering the previous week’s efforts and through sharing items to pray about during the upcoming week, the prayer partners are important spiritual partners encouraging and assisting the minister seeking to implement change.

The “rhythm” that DeVries and Stratman speak of consists of breaking the 30-day plan into weekly segments that offer different tasks for each day, while also incorporating certain repetitive actions or days throughout the four weeks. Each week contains what I would classify as *prepare, work, and rest*. The week is broken down into five days of activity, tasks, and duties. Each of these days contain recruiting concepts that will help to initiate change in process. Every day concludes with a mission to accomplish for that day. These five days are sandwiched between what DeVries and Stratman call a “Balcony” day at the front of the week and a “Reflection” Day at the end of the week. While these days do not have significant tasks assigned to them, they do provide significant benefits. Balcony days are designed to provide an opportunity for the minister to gain weekly clarity along this journey. According to DeVries, this day allows one time to work not just *in* the project and ministry but rather work *on* the project or *on* their ministry; a thirty-thousand-foot view from above, as he describes it. Reflection day follows the five days of directed tasks. This day provides an opportunity for Sabbath. A day designed to rest and allow God to do His work, recognizing that we are not in control. This day also is designed to create time for thinking through your meetings and time with your prayer partners. This idea of “rhythm” aptly describes the weekly process. DeVries and Stratman make a convincing case that structuring rhythm into the process will help easily “move” an individual toward the necessary change in recruiting.

Another benefit one will find by acquiring *Building Your Volunteer Team* is the resources that DeVries and Stratman makes available through throughout the book and the related ministry website, ministryarchetecteds.com. Anyone who has spent time recruiting volunteers understands the additional challenges often associated with creating a quality volunteer ministry. There are the initial letters that may be sent out in the recruiting

process. Then those who are responsible for building a volunteer base are inevitably going to be called upon to create and then communicate the expectations that are associated with a place of responsibility. This requires defining the roles of multiple levels of ministry involvement, and possibly being the voice to communicate the need for volunteer background checks. The amount of information to create and communicate can be overwhelming, if left to figure it out on one's own. Thankfully, DeVries and Stratman provide sample communication tools to assist in both instruction and in improving your recruiting process. There are sample email templates to previous workers and prospective volunteers. They even provide eight (8) different suggested phone conversations that you can use in a sequential and progressive attempt at recruiting an individual to serve in an area of ministry. *Building Your Volunteer Team*, is filled with helpful information and resources from beginning to end. In addition to the sample templates and communication resources that are a part of the body of the book, DeVries and Stratman offer additional resources in the Appendices of the book. Offering sample youth calendars and Surveys to review and plan for major youth events and additional areas of improvement.

Overall, DeVries and Stratman have provided an excellent resource for those who have been given the task of staffing a volunteer ministry. Although the book is a quick and easy read, it provides tremendous encouragement and thought provoking material to challenge readers stuck in the way things have always been done. Reminding readers of what really matters in volunteer ministry this book is truly a practical step by step guide that offers simple and doable tasks.

I suppose the last positive element of the book is found on the back cover—a money back guarantee! According to the authors, “If you work this 30-day process for one to two hours a day, six days a week, for 30 days and it does not create significant change in your ministry, Ministry Architects will gladly refund the cost of the book and offer a credit of \$20 toward any downloadable resource in our online store.” It appears that those who are in need of either some help in creating a strategy to enlist more and better volunteers or finding a new way to think about volunteer ministry have nothing to lose by purchasing *Building Your Volunteer Team*; and quite possibly may have the opportunity of obtaining both or in the worst case scenario simply enjoying \$20.00 worth of free ministry resources!