

Appreciative Reflections on the Impact of “Family- Based Youth Ministry”

I first read *Family-Based Youth Ministry* by Mark DeVries when I was just a couple of years into ministry. As a 20-year-old student pastor, that book shaped my thinking in crucial ways. In those early days, I was well-intentioned, but I had in my immaturity developed a subtle bias against parents. I saw the problems with the parents, but I had thus far failed to see them as part of the solution. When I read these words, I was convicted: “There is no such thing as a successful youth ministry that isolates teenagers from the community of faith.” Twenty years later that message still shapes the way that I approach Next Generation ministry in the church. I’m grateful for the spark that Mark helped ignite (along with others) that has grown into a movement of churches who take seriously the call to connect the church and home for the glory of God and as conduits of the gospel.

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When you hear the words “Youth Ministry”, one of the first names that one thinks of is Mark DeVries. I can honestly say that for my life and the lives of many other youth ministers, few people have had the impact on us and on youth ministry over the last 20 years than Mark. I do not know Mark personally, but his books and his seminars have been a breath of fresh air to me and to my ministries at FBC, Houston, Tx. and Travis Avenue BC, Ft Worth, Tx. and now at Southwestern Seminary as a Professor of Youth Ministry. Thanks is not enough to convey my thoughts on Mark!

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In 1986 I co-authored a book called *Ministry with Youth and Their Parents*. But back then, trying to move youth ministry more in the direction of the family was like shouting on the beach during a hurricane. Then along came *Family-Based Youth Ministry* by Mark DeVries. That was the match that fell in the gasoline. This seminal book started the broader conversation that continues to grow today. A smartphone seems like a simple idea . . . unless no one has ever thought of a phone that could contain a powerful computer. True visionaries think thoughts others have not had. Some of the nuances of ministry with families came first from Mark. Those thoughts seem almost omnipresent now, but someone had to think them first. And Mark did.

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