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Brandt's "Parenting forward: How to raise children with justice, mercy, and kindness" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Brandt, C. W. (2019). *Parenting forward: How to raise children with justice, mercy, and kindness*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 176 pp. \$17.99

Cindy Wang Brandt is a blogger and the founder of an online parenting group called “Raising Children Unfundamentalist”. Her blog and podcast can be found at cindywangbrandt.com. Growing up in Taiwan, Brandt identified as a conservative evangelical and attended a missionary school. She attended Wheaton college and worked in missions after attending seminary. However, she transitioned to a more progressive faith before having two children of her own, and her parenting philosophies come from her more progressive viewpoints. Throughout this book, Brandt makes the argument that children need to be parented with autonomy and respect. She addresses many current conversations in our world, such as race, gender, inclusion, and the state of our physical world through the lens of parenting and her own personal experiences. There is no place for traditional hierarchy in Brandt’s parenting paradigm. Rather than using academic research as a foundation for her claims, she relies often on personal anecdote to come to her conclusions. A quick scan of her endnotes will reveal that any research material predominantly draws from blogs, newspapers, and websites to support her arguments.

In her chapter on parenting for imagination, Brandt states that more traditional Christian parenting requires obedient children. She then makes an argument that the bible is full of examples of children who are disobedient towards their parents and claims that even Jesus himself was disobedient to his parents when he was found at the temple in Luke 2:41-52 (pg. 50). She uses this passage to illustrate the need for children to have a voice and think on their own instead of being obedient. She also references Ezekiel 20:18-19 and states that children should not follow what their parents do as evidence that obedience is not something that should be taught. Both of these examples stretch the text and could be construed as eisegesis rather than exegesis. Furthermore, Brandt’s chapter on parenting for inclusion does not mention the biblical text at all. She argues that the church is homophobic and should look to science when deciding a stance on inclusion. Once again, her argument is rooted in anecdotal evidence and is not rooted in any academic research.

In conclusion, Brandt’s extensive use of popular level sources and her questionable exegesis of the biblical text weakens the claims of this book and contribution to the field as a whole.

Reviewer

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