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Larson and Keeleys' "Bridging theory and practice in children's spirituality" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Larson, M. L., Keeley, R. J. (Eds.). (2020). *Bridging theory and practice in children's spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 264 pp. \$17.99. ISBN 9780310104919

The general editors of *Bridging Theory and Practice in Children's Spirituality* are Mimi L. Larson and Robert J. Keeley. Larson is a visiting assistant professor of Christian formation and ministry at Wheaton College. She also serves "as the Children's Ministry Catalyzer for Faith Formation Ministries," which is a ministry for the Christian Reformed Church in North America (p. 251). Keeley is professor of education at Calvin University and visiting professor of Faith Formation and Discipleship at Calvin Theological Seminary. In addition, there are a number of authors that have contributed chapters to this book; however, they all share a common goal, which is to serve the church with a Christ-centered perspective on developing a child's faith (p. 18).

Larson and Keeley assert, that as a contributor it was not enough to merely right down one's academic findings, rather, each chapter was the result of listening to one another "as well as brining their own perspectives to these topics" (p. 18). As a result, "the ideas generated by these thinkers, especially in areas of ministry, need to get to practitioners" (p. 17). The book's thesis is to equip "ministry leaders as they nurture the faith of children" by bridging "the gap between theory and practice" (p. 243). It is the editor's prayer "that this book will equip those who work with children to serve them well and help them recognize their place in God's big story as beloved sons and daughters of God" (p. 18).

Larson and Keeley note that the content of the book generated from The Children's Spirituality Summit (p. 17). As a result, each chapter reflects "some of the conversations and presentations that took place at the sixth Summit," which was held in June 2018 in Nashville, Tennessee (p. 17). In *Children's Spirituality*, Larson and Keeley emphasize the importance of holding in tension the "strong research that challenges us to think well about these issues and the real-life, practical applications of ministry" (p. 247). Thus, the book explores various contexts, methods, and situations which influence a child's spiritual development.

This book is clear and well documented throughout with footnotes. Larson and Keeley have achieved their goal and provide a helpful resource for seminary students, parents, and children's ministry leaders of the church seeking to understand the theological nature of developing a child's spirituality.

Reviewer

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