



*Family Therapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal (Second Edition)*  
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*“Yarhouse and Sells have created a masterpiece work analyzing approaches to family therapies. This is going to be a new classic, matching the accomplishment of Jones and Butman’s analysis of psychotherapies in their book, Modern Psychotherapies.”*

—Everett L. Worthington Jr.,  
 professor of psychology,  
 Virginia Commonwealth  
 University

## “A Masterpiece Work”

This is the second edition of *Family Therapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal*. We never imagined that marriage and family, both in regard to research content and social context, would expand and change as much as it has in the past eight years. While the first edition of this book has made a significant contribution in the education of family clinicians—particularly within the Christian faith community—this edition provides us opportunity for an update, a chance to think again of our understanding of marriages and families and how the mental health professions and the church become trained to conduct intervention. It also provides us opportunity to address how the church and the community of Christian counselors might respond to the rapid shifts in social attitudes and behaviors pertaining to marriage and family structures and perspectives.

We have taken what was and remains needed for the training of family counselors, psychologists, and other mental health professionals and added more of the twenty-first century to the text. While updating every chapter with relevant research findings, we have added two chapters—one addressing cohabitation and the other focusing on LGBT+ marriage and family formation. The tone and tenor in which Christian mental health professionals address the complexity of family relationships have a significant impact on how faith is understood within the culture, and how individuals, couples, and families seeking to understand their experience and create narratives to direct their lives can do so with integrity is the clinician’s challenge.

We know so many people in our field who have expressed that there was a need for a resource for Christians engaged in family therapy/counseling/ministry. Despite the many books on theories of family therapy, how to conduct family therapy, and so on, we could not find one that engaged the various models of family therapy from a Christian worldview. We came together to discuss this and both felt a desire to take on what is really a monumental task. We wrote this book in part to sort out how we think about family therapy as Christians and to provide a framework for Christians entering the field who might want some ideas for critical engagement and practical applications. Rather than creating a radically new model of family therapy, we draw attention to what theorists have gotten right and how their insights can be understood and acknowledged while relying more on a Christian view of the person and the family.

To do this, we took several steps. The first was to explore what we know about families from Scripture. Although we might think that families in the Bible would be exemplary in their functioning, we quickly learned that they are often a mess. What we found were not examples of ideal relationships but of ways in which God in his sovereignty uses all kinds of people and families to fulfill his purposes. We also learned that the Bible is not a family therapy sourcebook. Rather, we can find in Scripture broad principles that contribute to our

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## BOOK EXCERPT

**Mark A. Yarhouse** (PsyD, Wheaton College) is the Hughes Endowed Chair and professor of psychology at Regent University where he directs the Institute for the Study of Sexual Identity and is a core faculty member in the doctoral program in clinical psychology. A licensed clinical psychologist, he practices privately in the Virginia Beach area, providing individual, couples, family, and group counseling.

**James N. Sells** (PhD, University of Southern California) is professor of counseling and director of the PhD program in counselor education and supervision at Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia, where he has taught since 2005. He has served on the faculties of Northern Illinois University and West Texas A&M University, and he is also a licensed psychologist. He is the coauthor of *Counseling Couples in Conflict* and *Family Therapies*.

understanding of family relationships. Our next step was to reflect on ways in which the church has historically approached family ministry and how this relates to the emergence of the profession of family therapy. An additional step involved reflecting on the most influential first-generation models of family therapy and engaging these models as Christians. We then wanted to look at the practical outworking of that engagement in key areas that affect families today.

The book is intended for a broad audience. We would like to see it help students and clinicians in the mental health fields (e.g., psychology, counseling, social work, marriage and family therapy), pastoral care staff and local pastors, and youth ministry leaders who work with families.

– Taken from the preface

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