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Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research and Applications

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Description: This pacesetting text considers a wide variety of topics related to the spiritual development of children. The chapters grew out of presentations at the first major conference to consider these important topics from a distinctly Christian perspective. The first section considers the important task of defining spirituality and summarizes some views of the spirituality of children, as reflected in history, theology and the Bible. Social influences on children's spirituality are considered, as well as how brain activity relates to spiritual experiences. The second major section highlights children's spirituality in the home. Here the development of the concept of God is considered, as well as how parents and children work together to construct understandings of spirituality. A third section reflects upon the spirituality of children in the church, including alternative perspectives of how spiritual growth and experience are best encouraged in that setting. The distinctive aspects of African American children and Latino children's spirituality are given careful attention. Schools and other settings are examined in the fourth section of the book, with an emphasis upon moral learning, encouraging faith development with preschoolers, how spirituality helps children cope with serious medical conditions and the stresses related to being children of missionaries, and best practices in reaching inner city children. The book concludes with a chapter that examines how Christians' views of children's spirituality are changing, and anticipates a follow up conference in the near future. Endorsements: ""Here are essays on young people that tell of their various ways of seeking God's presence in their ongoing lives--an aspect of faith observed and discussed with intelligence and sensitivity. Here is a book many of us will greatly value--its wisdom an important presence in our effort to understand children."" --Dr. Robert Coles, Professor of Psychiatry and Medical Humanities at Harvard Medical School, and author of The Spiritual Life of Children ""This extraordinary book is a must read for all who teach and practice religious education. It gathers, with breadth and depth, the best current research from an exploding renewal in the study of the spirituality and religious development of children. Teachers, students, and scholars dedicated to understanding and nurturing our children's growth in faith will find this rich volume indispensable."" --James W. Fowler, author of Stages of Faith and C.H. Candler Professor of Theology and Human Development Director, The Center for Ethics, Emory University ""Written in the best of the Evangelical tradition, Children's Spirituality is a must read for all those interested in children, the spiritual life, and Christian formation. Descriptive phrases include: well conceived and edited, clearly written and well documented, thorough and all-encompassing, academically sound and popular, combining research and practical application."" --The Rev. Dr. John Westerhoff, formerly Professor of Theology and Christian Nurture at Duke University, he is Theologian-in-Residence at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Atlanta, Georgia About the Contributor(s): Donald Ratcliff is Professor of Psychology at Vanguard University. He received his Ph.D. in educational psychology from the University of Georgia. He has studied children's spiritual development for more than 25 years and has edited several books related to this topic, including the 'Handbook of Children's Religious Education' and the 'Handbook of Preschool Religious Education.' He is also the editor or coauthor of six other books and more than two dozen journal articles and book chapters.

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