WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT …

THINK ORANGE

Reggie Joiner’s ideas in Think Orange will empower and motivate Christian leaders around the world to rethink how the church and families can and should function together.

—Craig Groeschel, pastor of LifeChurch.tv and author of It: How Churches and Leaders Can Get It and Keep It

As one of the founders of North Point Community Church and a proven innovator in family ministry, Reggie Joiner is in a terrific position to offer insight into how the church can align its strategy with families for the benefit of preschoolers, children, and teenagers.

—Dr. John C. Maxwell, best-selling author of The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership

For those of us who are passionate about the potential of the church and the importance of the family, this book offers a critical and refreshing perspective. That is a rare combination. Reggie helps us consider how the integration of these two organisms can be leveraged in powerful ways to reach the next generation.

—Nancy Ortberg, author of Unleashing the Power of Rubber Bands: Lessons in Non-Linear Leadership

If there is an institution that can bring American families back together, it’s the church. The infrastructure is there, the heart and the will. What we need, then, is a plan. If churches and families practiced the ideas in this book, our entire culture could be regenerated.

—Donald Miller, author of Blue Like Jazz and To Own a Dragon

This is a must-read for every church leader wrestling with the number of students walking away from their faith at age eighteen. It’s time to close the back door! Reggie’s fresh and unique approach is just what we all need to strategically partner with parents.

—Sue Miller, former director of Promiseland at Willow Creek Community Church

Reading this book is like having coffee with Reggie. It’s warm, friendly, thought-provoking, and fun! You won’t want to miss this conversation!

—Christine Yount Jones, executive editor of Children’s Ministry Magazine
THINK ORANGE

IMAGINE THE IMPACT WHEN CHURCH AND FAMILY COLLIDE ...

REGGIE JOINER
DEDICATION

This book is mostly dedicated to
My wife, Debbie
The only one in my family, or on the planet,
who has chosen to live with me the rest of my life.

But it also dedicated to
My children: Reggie Paul, Hannah, Sarah, and Rebekah
They have all worked hard and patiently to raise a father.

My parents, Rufus and Dee
They have believed in God and me for as long as I can remember.

My brother, Jimmy
He still believes in God, even though I have been in ministry most of his life.

My mother-in-law, Betty Dean
She raised my wife to love God and her family.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to those on the reThink staff
who are advocates of these principles every day.

Thanks to those on the Family Ministry staff
of North Point Community Church
who lived these principles for over a decade.

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who champion this cause by investing in the lives of kids, teenagers, and families every week on the front lines of ministry.

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FOREWORD

When we started North Point Community Church in 1995, many of our staff and core volunteer leaders were parents with young children. The idea of partnering with the family seemed natural. We were church leaders and we were parents. In a way, what we were attempting to build was for our own families and the futures of our own kids. Reggie Joiner took on the responsibility of creating those environments for families.

When I was asked to write this, I thought of the ways we still benefit from his time at North Point as our director of family ministry. Elementary-age kids insist their parents get them to church on Sunday mornings because they don’t want to miss their small groups. Hundreds of high school students serve in ministry areas on Sunday mornings and then drive back to church on Sunday afternoons for their own worship, teaching, and small-group time. Reggie’s fingerprints are all over these environments.

Reggie believed from the beginning that we needed to come alongside parents in their efforts to grow their children spiritually. He knew the environments we established for kids were crucial, but that our influence was limited. We only have about forty hours a year with their kids. At the same time, he knew that parents’ influence was also limited and that other adult voices were needed in the lives of their kids.

For ten years at North Point and now through the reThink Group, Reggie continues to change the way thousands of church leaders interface with families. Through his newest contribution, Think Orange, you have the opportunity to “pick his brain.” In the pages that follow, he shares everything he’s learned about how to do church, how to do family, and, most importantly, how to do them together.

In Think Orange, Reggie argues convincingly that developing a strategy to maximize the influence of both the church and parents is not only effective, but also scriptural. As you work your way through this book, pay attention to what Moses said to parents and leaders at a turning point in Hebrew culture. Imagine
Nehemiah touring the broken walls of Jerusalem as he developed a systematic plan to rebuild a nation’s faith. These narratives, along with others scattered throughout the book, make it clear that God not only calls us as leaders to grow our people spiritually, but He also calls us to lead strategically.

*Think Orange* is not just another model or formula. It’s a paradigm shift. It is a brand-new approach to capturing the hearts and imaginations of this generation’s parents and kids. And from fourteen years of experience, I know it can make a huge difference in the dynamic of any local church. So find a comfortable place to read and a couple of fresh highlighters, and prepare to learn!

*Andy Stanley*
Part One
Two Influences

Two combined influences make a greater impact than just two influences.
Church + Family

= ORANGE

2 Combined Influences Make a Greater Impact Than Just 2 Influences
PLEASE READ THIS FIRST

It’s okay to disagree with me.

I even disagree with myself quite often. I hear myself say something and think, “I’m not sure that’s right ... I’ll have to come back to that later and examine it more closely.” I’m not making excuses, just suggesting that a certain process energizes my creativity and thinking. I have been tentative about writing this book because I am sure I will pick it up as soon as it is released and disagree with parts of it. But that’s okay. If I am personally a work in progress, then my personal work is progressing. How many people in their forties agree with what they said in their twenties? I am not trying to write something down that can never be challenged or that stands the long test of time. I am not trying to be Moses, Paul, or even one of the minor prophets. This is not intended to be infallible and inerrant. I just hope to continue a conversation that I believe is worth a thoughtful dialogue. Let me tell you what this book is not:

- the answer
- always right
- theologically profound
- deep
- the final thoughts on any issue

If some guy holds this book up and suggests that it is the solution for the complexity of issues facing this generation, please hit him with it.

At times it may seem oversimplified, overstated, shallow, idealistic, sarcastic.

(By the way, if you struggle with sarcasm or have a difficult time telling when someone is sincere, this may be a frustrating experience for you.)
Also it’s important to note that any inconsistencies or irreverence you may perceive in reading this book do not represent the publisher’s thoughts or, in some cases, even my own.

This book is simply the attempt of a pastor/dad to explain why it is important for churches and families to work together to impact kids.

Smarter leaders than me have spent their lifetimes speaking to issues related to the church and family. They are all my heroes, and this list is not necessarily in any order:

Andy Stanley
Billy Graham
Mother Teresa
Bill Hybels
James Dobson
Sue Miller
George Barna
John Trent
Gary Smalley
Barbara Bush
Bill Bright
Martin Luther King Jr.
Howard Hendricks
Jeff Foxworthy
Bill Cosby

A host of people helping in this cause are younger than I am, but I chose to include only those who are older than me because it makes me feel better.

I started working as a full-time student pastor when I was nineteen. I don’t think I would have hired me, but some compassionate leaders believed in my potential. Later, I was one of the founding staff members at North Point Community Church, where I served as the executive director of Family Ministries for over a decade. A few years ago, I started an amazing adventure with a nonprofit ministry I founded called the reThink Group. It is a team of innovative writers, thinkers, planners, creators, and doers who are devoted to influencing those who influence the next generation.
I am extremely grateful for their investment in this project. The mission this book describes is why we do what we do. Every day I am thankful that I have been a part of incredible ministries and learned from amazing leaders. I will often use the word we in this book when speaking from the author’s perspective. When I do, I am usually referring to those who work with me on the reThink team, along with a handful of other key Orange thinkers who serve on our board or informal advisory teams. They have all challenged me to love the church and to fight for the family.

*Think Orange* is our effort to get a lot of smart leaders to start thinking about some of the same things.

If you’re a sports enthusiast, you may have to get over the color implications as they relate to your favorite team. The color orange may represent something you loyally support or maybe even adamantly oppose. Try to remember this is much bigger than football or basketball or hockey. Okay, maybe not. But it is very, very different.

If you just don’t think you look good in orange, that’s also okay. The right shade of orange can go with blue, brown, black, green ... you don’t have to cover yourself in orange to make an orange statement. But then again, if you feel really passionate about it, why not?

What if every time you saw the color orange you thought about the changes that need to happen to reach the next generation?

What if the blending of red and yellow always reminds you of the importance of partnering with each other and especially with the *family*?

What if whenever you came across something orange you thought about leaders who are investing their lives to influence kids and teenagers?

We picked a color because it seemed like a great way to remember the cause. And we picked orange.

We believe in churches. Or at least in the churches who believe Jesus is who He said He was and that what the Bible says is true is true. Multiple expressions of the church are important in communicating God’s story to a diverse culture.
Some leaders suggest that institutional churches can never be relational, that traditional churches can never be relevant, that megachurches can never be intimate, that attractional churches are not missional, that missional churches don’t draw people, that emergent churches never teach anything substantial, that seeker churches don’t have depth, and that organic churches don’t have any direction.

We love to neatly package another leader’s style of church into a box and label it irregular or defective. We accuse the church we abandoned and defend the version we have customized.

No one is more opinionated about church models than I am. Throughout my life, I have realized God is doing something in a lot of different styles of church. We need to be careful about demonizing those who don’t practice church the way we do, and learn from every version of church whose mission is to lead people into a better and more authentic relationship with Jesus Christ. God is a lot bigger than our definitions or labels, and I am sure He is not worried about how your church compares to the one down the road.

I believe some important things unite most of us—things like Jesus, our mission, and the value of the church and the family. I hope whatever version of church you are leading (or for those of you who are organic, whatever nonversion of church you are not leading), that you are willing to rethink how your church partners with and influences families.

If you are institutional, it can create more stability. If you are attractional, it could make you more relevant. If you are emergent, it will create a meaningful dialogue. If you are missional, it helps build a bridge to community. If you are traditional, it can reclaim your heritage. If you are nondenominational, it will give you the flexibility to adapt.

Okay, I’m kind of kidding. But one effect crosses all these expressions: Partnering with the family may give you greater influence in the spiritual direction of the next generation.
You don’t have to agree with everything that I say. But could you agree with me on the following observations?

*There are two powerful influences on the planet—the church and the home.*

*They both exist because God initiated them.*

*They both exist because God desires to use them to demonstrate His plan of redemption and restoration.*

*If they work together they can potentially make a greater impact than if they work alone.*

*They need each other.*

*Too much is at stake for either one to fail.*

*Their primary task is to build God’s kingdom in the hearts of men and women, sons and daughters.*

If you at least agree with these thoughts, I hope you’re ready to start a conversation with some of us who think Orange.

You can draw your own conclusions and make your own applications, as long as in the end, you are fighting for the destiny of every generation ... because you believe in the potential of the church and the family working together.
Throughout the book, we’ve placed a few resources to guide you in thinking Orange:

Slices are a collection of key terms and tools that facilitate the Orange principles. We’ve arranged them on individual pages you can cut out, frame, and place in your offices or ministry environments to help yourself and your team remember to think Orange.

Podcasts can be downloaded from OrangeLeaders.com. These audio lessons elaborate on Orange principles, terms, and topics.

See
Concentrate 6.1

Concentrates are case-studies, best practices, personal applications, and practical illustrations. You’ll see references to them in the margins as you read, and you’ll find the complete text of the Concentrates in the back of the book.
I’ve never really liked orange. Until recently, I avoided wearing orange or painting anything orange. Maybe it was a subconscious aversion to the baby aspirin I took as a kid, or the fact that orange clothes make my skin look pale, or the rowdy nature of Florida Gator fans. I just know I have always had a personal resistance to that particular color.

That’s why it’s hard for me to believe I am actually writing a book called *Think Orange*. The truth is, after extensive Internet searching and countless images, I am developing a favorable opinion about orange. You might even say I am becoming an orange fanatic.

**What’s so intriguing about the color orange?**

Orange sends a variety of interesting messages. It symbolizes health—orange foods like tangerines, sweet potatoes, and carrots suggest a proper diet packed with beta-carotene or vitamin C. Orange stands out among the family of colors as distinct and bold. Those who work in safety or emergency professions choose it for its visibility. Advertising agencies use it to make a brash statement. Interior decorators strategically place it in a room to add flare or draw attention to an area. Organizations choose it to attract awareness for critical issues; dozens of causes from hunger to leukemia are represented by the color orange. A host of schools raise orange banners and wear orange jerseys to celebrate team spirit.

I could even be convinced that it’s one of God’s favorite colors—He stuck it right there between red and yellow as the second color in the rainbow. He decorates entire forests with shades of orange every autumn. It shows up in sunrises at the start of the day, sunsets at the end of the day, and in the glow of the moon at the right time of night.

So maybe you can see why I’m gaining a new respect for orange.
Even with all these reasons to love orange, we have discovered new cause to highlight this often-overlooked hue. It’s why this book is called Think Orange. Orange is a secondary color, created when you combine two primary colors—red and yellow. I’m sure you remember finger painting in preschool. A magical moment probably occurred when you learned that mixing two colors produced something new and distinct. It was exciting to see how two pigments could merge to create something even more powerful.

Orange is what red and yellow can do when they combine efforts. If you paint only with red, you will get what only red can do. If you paint only with yellow, you will get what only yellow can do. But when you paint with red and yellow, you’ll get new possibilities, fresh solutions, vibrant outcomes.

Are you beginning to see the potential? It’s the advantage of using two colors to create a third option. When you think Orange, you see how two combined influences make a greater impact than just two influences.

Clearly, this isn’t a new concept. Positive change and innovation have often resulted from the merging of two independent entities to accomplish a greater effect.

In New Mexico’s Children, Youth and Families Department, Ellie Ortiz and Diane Granito have dedicated their lives to finding homes for older children and sibling groups. Ortiz suggested that the right photos of the children could give potential homes a look into the personalities and spirits of each child. Until that time, the photos that accompanied the children’s files resembled mug shots, with plain backgrounds and unkempt subjects who rarely smiled. Recognizing an opportunity, they began to approach world-famous photographers and art galleries with requests to photograph the children in a more cheerful style.

In 2001 the first Heart Gallery opened, featuring photographs and information about various children available for adoption. Over a thousand people attended, and inquiries about children more than doubled. Since then, national coverage has abounded. From Parade magazine to ABC’s World News Tonight and from NPR’s All Things Considered to numerous articles in local newspapers, Ortiz and Granito’s efforts have resulted in the formation of more than sixty new Heart Galleries all across the country. In city after city, the best
photographers in the business—some of whom typically require thousands of dollars for a portrait—have volunteered to take free pictures of kids who need homes. It’s hard to imagine that a child’s life could change because of the impact of one photograph, but these galleries are proving that it’s true.

Heart Galleries are a perfect example of thinking Orange. Adoption agencies everywhere are discovering that combining their passion with the resources of art galleries gives kids a better chance. When two entities leverage their talents and influence, together they can do remarkable things.

When we open our eyes, we see examples of thinking Orange everywhere. When Harvard University leveraged its influence with the power of television, the mix of entertainment and education gave us Sesame Street. When a young father decided to combine the concept of family time with the amusement park industry, the world was introduced to the phenomenon of Disney.

Combining red and yellow always creates an Orange effect, and thinking Orange challenges the norm and has the potential to introduce something revolutionary.

So what exactly is this book about?
In principle, this book is about two entities partnering to make a greater impact or to create a better solution. In practice, it explores the possibilities of what can happen if the church and the home combine efforts for the sake of impacting the next generation. For us, the church can be represented with yellow (chapter 2, “Bright Lights”) and families with red (chapter 3, “Warm Hearts”).

The premise of this book is simple: As long as churches do only what churches are doing, they will get only the results they are presently getting. And as long as families do only what families are doing, they will produce only the outcomes they are presently producing. To experience a different outcome, we have to embrace a different strategy. So if you are reading this book and you are genuinely satisfied with the results you see from kids growing up in our churches and homes, you should stop now. This book just isn’t for you.

But if you have a heightened sense of concern about what appears to be a growing spiritual and moral dilemma in the next generation, I hope you will
consider each page carefully. Thinking orange can be risky—reading this could stir you to initiate the kinds of changes that seem radical and incite controversy.

Many of us believe that both the church and the family are at a crossroads. It seems we have arrived at a potentially defining moment in society in which the church is losing its influence and the home is losing its heart. Some say it’s time to give up on the church, or at least abandon the idea that the church in the form of an organized institution can have any lasting effect on the next generation. Others seem to suggest it’s time to give up on the home. It’s only logical to assume that since the family unit is continuing to disintegrate and parents are failing in their responsibilities, it’s time to replace the home with a more effective model. Some churches are embracing the idea that the church needs to become a substitute for the family, while others are endorsing a movement that encourages the home to become a substitute for the church.

As a result, church and home represent a polarization of ideas instead of a convergence. Those who love yellow are determined to create brighter shades of yellow, while those who believe in red are determined to make richer, deeper versions of red.

But what if the solution for the next generation is neither yellow nor red? What if the answer is both, blended in a new and radical way? What if the church and the home combined their efforts and began to work off the same page for the sake of the children? We propose that the answer is Orange, seeing the potentially revolutionary effect that a true merger between the church and the home could have on the lives of children.

The critical question is who is going to initiate the strategy to get churches and families to think Orange? For the Orange effect to become a reality in the next generation, a new breed of leadership must emerge. We need leaders who will recast themselves, becoming catalysts to change the way the church and the home partner. Church leaders are the most logical people to champion this cause, as most churches have the platform and the network needed to rally the home and the church and to synchronize their efforts. But the church has not experienced leveraging its influence to truly engage the family. Too many churches are so accustomed to painting in yellow that they have difficulty thinking in terms of
Orange. Rather than synchronize their efforts, they attempt to convince parents to start painting in yellow.

What’s really at stake when the church and the family don’t think Orange, when they are not advancing the same strategy? There are a number of adverse consequences to isolated red and yellow thinking:

- The church forfeits its potential to have greater influence on kids’ and students’ lives.
- Churches miss critical opportunities to meet the needs of unchurched parents in their communities.
- Communities continue to perceive the church as institutional, insulated, and irrelevant.
- The church is characterized by superficial relationships.
- Productions or programs are positioned as the answer.
- Parents and leaders fail to teach the same truths in a synchronized effort.
- Parents avoid or abdicate to the church the responsibility to be spiritual leaders.

I am not suggesting that the church and the home merely need to work concurrently and effectively in order to accomplish more. In many cases, the church and the home are each trying to do the best job they can for their children. Churches are full of programs that inspire families, and countless families participate regularly in their local churches. Both groups are simultaneously hard at work to build faith in children, but the problem is that they are not working in sync. Working on the same thing at the same time is not as effective as working on the same thing at the same time with the same strategy. When you creatively synchronize the two environments, you get more than just red or yellow—you get Orange.

Orange Babies is a group that has dedicated itself to protecting the future of children in an unusual way. Originating in Holland, the group’s members are committed to rescuing children in Africa from falling victim to AIDS. A dose of the drug nevirapine during the last month of pregnancy can help prevent an HIV-positive pregnant mother from transferring the disease to her child. Here’s the amazing thing: One pill gives the unborn child a 50 percent chance of being born without the deadly virus. The cost of the pill is a whopping six dollars. So Orange Babies has developed a simple plan to fight AIDS: Give the pills to as
many mothers as possible so as many kids as possible can have a better chance to live.

Imagine you are a doctor who holds in his hands a drug that would stack the odds in a child’s favor. Would you use it? Absolutely! Likewise, we as leaders are called to save lives and to give every kid the best chance possible. Although parents don’t have a pill they can give their kids to help them have a better chance spiritually and morally, you can implement a strategy that will improve their odds.

Will you consider it?

It may mean that you have to abandon your existing methods.

It may require you to redesign your present programming.

It may radically change everything you do if you become convinced that partnering with parents could give kids a better chance.