

# RELIGION

(Josh McDowell research 2006 to present)

## “MEGACHURCHES OFFER RELATIONAL APPROACH WITH MULTIPLE SITES”

“An estimated five million Americans a week attend about 1,300 megachurches. A megachurch usually is defined as having weekly attendance of 2,000 or more, but even a church of 800 like Community Christian Church ranks in the top 2 percent of U.S. church attendance,” Thumma said.”

“The survey of nearly 25,000 people who attend 12 U.S. megachurches was conducted from January through August 2008.”

“The third edition of the Faith Communities Today Study of 2,527 U.S. congregations, released last week, finds the nation’s Catholic, Protestant and other world religions suffering. Only 19 percent reported they are in excellent financial health, down from 31 percent in 2000. Less than half (48 percent) could report at least 2 percent growth in worship attendance, down from 58 percent in 2005.”

(Robert Wayne, “Megachurches Offer Relational Approach With Multiple Sites,” Crosswalk.com, September 25, 2009, <http://www.crosswalk.com/news/relgiontoday/11608930/>)

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## “20-SOMETHINGS”

“A Barna study finds 50% of teens attend a church-related service or activity in a typical week and more than three-quarters discuss matters of faith with peers. A third of teens participate in a Christian club during a typical school year. 81% have attended a church for a period of at least two months during their teen years.” “Only 20% of 20-somethings have maintained a level of spiritual activity consistent with their high school experiences.”

“20-somethings are 70% more likely than older adults to strongly assert if they ‘cannot find a local church that will help them become more like Christ, they will find people and groups that will, and connect with them instead of a local church. They are also less likely to believe ‘a person’s faith in God is meant to be developed by involvement in a local church.’ Much of the activity of young adults takes place outside congregations. Among those in their 20s and 30s, 6% have beliefs that qualify them as evangelical, 36% are born again Christians.”

(The Foster Letter: Religious Market Update, Gary D. Foster Consulting, September 25, 2006 [Barna Online 9/11/06]: 2)

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## “ATTENDANCE AT AMERICAN CHURCHES”

“Attendance at American churches is less than half what has been believed in the past, claims Dave Olson, Director of the American Church Research Project. At Mission America Coalition’s annual conference, Olson revealed overall church attendance is virtually unchanged from 15 years ago, even though the U.S. population has grown by 52 million people, mostly unchurched. His data is based on actual recorded attendance in over 300,000 churches. Interestingly, the evangelical church is growing fastest among the higher income, college-educated, suburban population, and declining fastest among the least educated, and in the highest poverty rate areas.”

(Mission American Coalition annual meeting 10/18/06)

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### **“BARNA SURVEY OFFERS A PROFILE OF HOW AMERICANS SEE THEMSELVES”**

“...only 13% said they are ‘in serious debt’ ...One out of three (34%) admitted to feeling stressed out – the highest level recorded for that descriptor in the past five years...four out of every ten adults (40%) admitted to being overweight.”

“...81% say that they are ‘well-informed about current events,’ leading a large majority (86%) to state that they are ‘concerned about the nation’s moral condition...’”

“...three-quarters of adults (75%) who said they are ‘very open to moral views that differ from yours.’”

“Often described as ‘the most religious people on earth,’ most Americans ‘feel accepted by God’ (88%), see themselves as ‘deeply spiritual (62%) and believe they can be accurately described as ‘a fulltime servant of God’ (59%).’”

“Americans describe their personal faith in various ways. While more than eight out of ten (84%) view themselves as Christian, a lesser but significant majority label themselves as a ‘committed Christian’ (60%). Within that framework, people’s self-identity includes 45% who call themselves a ‘born again Christian,’ 42% who claim to be an ‘evangelical Christian’ and one out of four who adopt the label ‘charismatic or Pentecostal Christian (26%).’”

“The survey also highlighted the fact that people who are in the born again constituency (based upon their beliefs, rather than their self-identification) are less likely than atheists to be social activists (42% of atheists claimed that label, compared to just 29% of born again adults and only 20% of evangelicals). Despite their activism, though, atheists emerged as being less clear about their purpose in life and less likely to feel at peace. Not surprisingly, they were also considerably less concerned about the moral condition of the country.”

“In each of its surveys, The Barna Group defines a person as being born again if they indicate they have ‘made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ’ that is important in their life today, and who believe that when they die they will go to Heaven because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior.”

“Evangelicals’ meet the born again criteria (described about) plus seven other conditions. Those included saying their faith is very important in their life today; believing they have a personal responsibility to share their religious beliefs about Christ with non-Christians; believing that Satan exists; believing that eternal salvation is possible only through grace, not works; believing that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; asserting that the Bible is accurate in all that it teaches; and describing God as the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect deity who created the universe and still rules it today. Being classified as an evangelical is not dependent upon church attendance or the denominational affiliation of the church attended. Respondents were not asked to describe themselves as ‘evangelical.’”

(“Barna Survey Offers a Profile of How Americans See Themselves,” The Barna Update, August 14, 2006, [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org))

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### **“BARNA’S ANNUAL TRACKING STUDY SHOWS AMERICANS STAY SPIRITUALLY ACTIVE, BUT BIBLICAL VIEW WANE”**

“It is not unusual to spot minor ebbs and flows in what adults believe. However, the 2007 study of the nation’s core beliefs found that five out of six theological perspectives have shifted in recent years away from traditional biblical views. This includes perspectives about three spiritual figures: God, Jesus, and Satan.”

“Most Americans’ still embrace a traditional view of God, but they are less likely than ever to do so. Currently two-thirds of Americans believe that God is best described as the all-powerful, all-knowing perfect creator of the universe who rules the world today (66%). However, this proportion is lower than it was a year ago (71%) and represents the lowest percentage in more than twenty years of similar surveys.”

“Few adults possess orthodox views about Jesus and the Devil. Currently, just one-third of Americans strongly disagree that Jesus sinned (37%) and just one-quarter strongly reject the idea that Satan is not a real spiritual being (24%). Each of these beliefs is lower than last year and among the lowest points in nearly two decades of tracking these views.”

“The other changes in beliefs include greater reluctance to explain their faith to other people (just 29% strongly endorse this view, compared with 39% in 2006) and the willingness to reject good works as a mean to personal salvation (down to 27% from 31%).”

“Given these shifts, it is ironic that the only religious belief that was unchanged from previous years was the belief that the Bible is accurate in all the principles it teaches. Not quite half of Americans (45%) strongly assert this perspective.”

“Slightly less than one-quarter of adults had volunteered free time to help a church (22%) or some other type of non-profit (23%) in the last week. About one-fifth of all adults had attended Sunday school (20%), while a similar proportion had participated in a small group for Bible

study, prayer and Christian fellowship (19%). The survey showed that half of all adults (50%) said they had donated money to a congregation in the past year.”

“Most Americans do not have strong and clear beliefs, largely because they do not possess a coherent biblical worldview.” (David Kinnaman)

“Many believers claim to trust what the Bible teaches, but they reject the notion of a real spiritual adversary or they feel that faith-sharing activities are optional.” (David Kinnaman)

“One reason why beliefs fluctuate is that most Americans’ hold few convictions about their faith.” (David Kinnaman)

“What a person believes dictates a great deal about their behavior and allegiance.” (David Kinnaman)

(“Barna’s Annual Tracking Study Shows Americans Stay Spiritually Active, But Biblical Views Wane,” The Barna Update, May 21, 2007, [www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrow&BarnaUpdateID=216&PageCMD=Print](http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrow&BarnaUpdateID=216&PageCMD=Print))

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### **“BAYLOR REAPS THE ENLIGHTENMENT WHIRLWIND”**

“The Enlightenment idea of the independent, all-sovereign self therefore contravenes the fundamental Christian conviction that we are covenantal rather than contractual creatures... There is thus no such thing as a solitary Christian having a purely private relation to Jesus Christ, but then joining with other Christians only for the sake of worship, missions, and other common purposes. To be ‘in Christ,’ as Paul endlessly emphasizes, is to be permanently transformed by our life in the Body of Christ called the church.”

(Ralph C. Wood, “Baylor Reaps the Enlightenment Whirlwind,” Christianity Today.com, October 7, 2003, [www.kedesh.christianitytoday.com/global/pf.cgi?/ct/2003/140/21.0.html](http://www.kedesh.christianitytoday.com/global/pf.cgi?/ct/2003/140/21.0.html))

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### **“BELIEFWATCH GOOD WORD”**

“But a Beliefnet.com poll suggests another possible explanation for why readers are fascinated by alternative Christian histories: they suspect that Christianity as currently practiced is not exactly what Jesus intended. Asked whether Jesus would be happy with modern Christianity, only 15 percent in the Beliefnet poll said yes. Of course, respondents differed over why Jesus would be disappointed: 19 percent said he’d think the modern church too liberal; 24 percent said he’d think it too conservative. Seven percent said we’re neglecting the poor; 11 percent that we’re focused too much on worldly matters, and 23 percent that Jesus didn’t intend to start a new

religion at all. Either way, believers agree that something went awry – and that he wouldn't be happy about it.”

(Steve Waldman, “BELIEFWATCH Good Word,” Newsweek, March 2007)

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## “BRIEFS”

“• Archaeologists working in Jordan have determined that Edom became a complex society as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. This dating supports the biblical claim that King David fought a powerful group of Edomites, descendants of Esau. The excavation turned up arrowheads and hammers among the ruins in Edom's former lowlands. Many archaeologists previously believed that Edom did not become a complex society until the eighth century B.C.”

(“Briefs,” Christianity Today, (August 2006): 21)

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## “CHARTING BELIEFS: How USA Views God”

- “Though 91.8% say they believe in God, a higher power or a cosmic force, they had four distinct views of God's personality and engagement in human affairs. These Four Gods—dubbed by researchers Authoritarian, Benevolent, Critical or Distant—tell more about people's social, moral and political views and personality piety than the familiar categories of Protestant/Catholic/Jew or even red state/blue state.”

“For example: 45.6% of all Americans say the federal government ‘should advocate Christian values,’ but 74.5% of believers in an authoritarian God do.”

“Sociologist Paul Froese says their survey finds the stereotype that conservatives are religious and liberals are secular is ‘simply not true. Political liberals and conservative are both religious. They just have different religious views.’”

- “About one in nine respondents have no religious ties at all; previous national surveys found 14%. The Baylor survey, unlike others, asked people to write in the names and addresses of where they worship, and many who said ‘none’ or ‘don't know’ when asked about their religious identity named a church they occasionally attend.”
- “The paranormal—beliefs outside conventional organized religion—is immensely popular. Most people said they believe in prophetic dreams; four in 10 say there were once ‘ancient advanced civilizations’ such as Atlantis.”
- “‘Evangelical’ may be losing favor as a way Americans describe themselves. About one in three Americans say they belong to denominations that theologians consider evangelical, but only 14% of all respondents in the survey say this is one way they would describe

themselves. Only 2.2% called it the single best term. Top choices overall: 'Bible-believing' (20.5%) or 'born-again' (18.6%)."

"A closer look at what people read finds that 28.5% of Americans say they've read *The Da Vinci Code*. Baylor also found 19%, including 25% of all U.S. women, have read the Rev. Rick Warren's Christian handbook *The Purpose-Driven Life*, and 19% overall have read at least one of the novels in the *Left Behind* apocalyptic fiction series."

"Though 12.2% overall say abortion is wrong in all circumstances, the number nearly doubles to 23.4% for those who see an authoritarian God and slides to 1.5% for followers of a distant God."

"Highlights of Baylor's analysis:"

- The Authoritarian God (31.4% of Americans overall, 43.3% in the South) is angry at humanity's sins and engaged in every creature's life and world affairs. He is ready to throw the thunderbolt of judgment down on 'the unfaithful or ungodly,' Bader says."

"Those who envision god this way "are religiously and politically conservative people, more often black Protestants and white evangelicals.' Bader says. '(They) want an active, Christian-values-based government with federal funding for faith-based social services and prayer in the schools.'"

They're also the most inclined to say God favors the USA in world affairs (32.1% vs. 18.6% overall).

- "The Benevolent God (23% overall, 28.7% in the Midwest) still sets absolute standards for mankind in the Bible. More than half (54.8%) want the government to advocate Christian values."

"But this group, which draws more from mainline Protestants, Catholics and Jews, sees primarily a forgiving God, more like the father who embraces his repentant prodigal son in the Bible, says Froese."

"They're inclined (68.1%) to say caring for the sick and needy ranks highest on the list of what it means to be a good person."

"This is the group in which the Rev. Jeremy Johnston, executive pastor and communications director for his father's 5,000-member Southern Baptist congregation in Overland Park, Kan., places himself."

"God is in control of everything. He's grieved by the sin of the world, by any created person who doesn't follow him. But I see (a) God who loves us, who sees us for who we really are. We serve a God of the second, third, fourth and fifth chance,' Johnston says."

- The Critical God (16% overall, 21.3% in the East) has his judgmental eye on the world, but he's not going to intervene, either to punish or to comfort.”

“This group is more paradoxical,’ Bader says. ‘They have very traditional beliefs, picturing God as the classical bearded old man on high. Yet they’re less inclined to go to church or affiliate seriously with religious groups. They are less inclined to see God as active in the world.’”

“Those who picture a critical God are significantly less likely to draw absolute moral lines on hot-button issues such as abortion, gay marriage or embryonic stem cell research.”

“For example, 57% overall say gay marriage is always wrong compared with 80.6% for those who see an authoritarian God, and 65.8% for those who see God as benevolent. For those who believe in a critical God, it was 54.7%.”

- “The Distant God (24.4% overall, 30.3% in the West) is ‘no bearded old man in the sky raining down his opinions on us,’ Bader says. Followers of this God see a cosmic force that launched the world, then left it spinning on its own.”

“This has strongest appeal for Catholics, mainline Protestants and Jews. It’s also strong among ‘moral relativists,’ those least likely to say any moral choice is always wrong, and among those who don’t attend church, Bader says.”

“Only 3.8% of this group say embryonic stem cell research is always wrong, compared with 38.5% of those who see an authoritarian God, 22.7% for those who see God as benevolent and 13.2% who see God as critical but disengaged.”

(Grossman, Cathy Lynn, “Americans’ Image of God Varies,” USA Today September 11, 2006; [www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2006-09-11-religion-survey\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2006-09-11-religion-survey_x.htm))

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## “CHURCH ATTENDANCE – WHO’S RIGHT?”

“Gallup Poll reports 42% of Americans say they attend church or synagogue once a week; Barna Research finds 47% attend worship weekly. But, American church attendance expert, Dave Olsen, finds only about 17.7% of Americans are weekly attenders. Gallup and Barna stand by their numbers, but agree poll responders tend to over-report socially desirable behaviors such as church attendance. Olsen makes a case for 17.7% number based on statistical models. Either way, U.S. church attendance is not keeping pace with population growth.”

(Outreach, May/June 2006 and Gallup Alert, April 27, 2006)

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## **“CHURCH REPUTATION”**

“86% of U.S. pastors believe the Church in America is failing to accurately represent the character of God to the country. 54% believe the same is true for their own church. 75% believe their church has a good reputation in their community – 25% do no. (SermonCentral.com 10/29/07)”

(Gary Foster, “Church Reputation,” *Religious Market Update*, (2007): 4)

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## **“CLERGY SHORTAGE”**

“The number of U.S. clergy under age 35 is dwindling. With increasing numbers of baby boomer ministers looking to retire within the next few years, churches need to move fast to find replacements. Funded by a Lilly Endowment grant, Calling Congregations, a nationwide effort to help churches identify and educate young ministers within their ranks, hopes to recruit young clergy for 500 churches by 2009. They expect to find most of them within the congregations. The program will link participating congregations, provide technical support, and offer advice to churches searching their pews for new ministers. It will also offer up to \$5,000 in matching funds to help defray the costs of educating young pastors.”

- “Ministers under 35 comprise 7% of mainline denominations’ supply of pastors.”
- “52% of today’s pastors are 35-54.”
- “41% of the active pastors are 55 and older.”

(*The Foster Letter: Religious Market Update*, Gary D. Foster Consulting, September 25, 2006 [The Atlanta Journal-Constitution 08/28/06]: 4.)

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## **“EFFECTIVE MEN’S MINISTRY”**

- “Men need a safe place to discover someone understands them and that they are not alone.”
- “Men need a clear, compelling vision of biblical manhood they can grasp.”
- “Men need time with other men to effectively process their manhood.”
- “Men need practical ‘how to’s’ they can use to succeed; they need step-by-step ways to implement what they hear.”
- “Men need male cheerleaders, other men to admire their efforts and cheer their successes.”
- “Men need a sacred moment where they know they’ve become a man.”

- “Men need a positive relationship with Jesus Christ.”

(man in the Mirror, Pat Morley; Men’s Fraternity, Robert Lewis, “The Pastor’s Role in Establishing an Effective Men’s Ministry,” FOF, PWB 6/16/06)

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## “EMAIL TO JOSH”

“Citing related studies among children, Barna suggested that Christian churches and families would benefit from integrating faith practices at earlier ages. ‘We have found that unless young children are taught how to tie their beliefs into their daily behavior, the chances of that faith ever influencing their lifestyle in significant ways is slim. Parents and religious teachers must both model such integration for young people while simultaneously working through such behaviour and choices with them. Faith perspectives that are not quickly translated into action become mantras that get lip service but have limited affect on lives – theology without hands and feet. Our studies consistently show that the habits formed while we are young are the behaviors that define us when we are old.’”

“Here’s another press-release on the subject:

<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID-153>”

## “FAITH HAS A LIMITED EFFECT ON MOST PEOPLE’S BEHAVIOR”

“that people’s faith does not make as much of a difference as might be expected – especially among non-evangelical born again Christians.”

“Christian evangelicals are a small proportion of the national population, representing just 7% of the adult mass.”

“the people most likely to engage in religious fasts are adherents of non-Christian faiths.”

“Christians are more likely to invest their money in lottery tickets than are non-Christians. Overall, 15% of born again and 23% of nominal Christians purchased lottery tickets in a typical week, compared to just 10% of other-faith adherents and 12% of atheists/agnostics.”

## “Twentysomethings Struggle to Find Their Place in Christian Churches”

“relative absence from Christian churches. Only 3 out of 10 twentysomethings (31%) attend church in a typical week, compared to 4 out of 10 of those in their 30s (42%) and nearly half of all adults age 40 and older (49%).”

“Just 22% of those ages 25 to 29 attended church in the last week.”

“Many twentysomethings are reversing course after having been active church attenders during their teenage years. As teenagers, more than half attended church each week and more than 4

out of 5 (81%) had ever gone to a Christian church. That means that from high school graduation to age 25 there is a 42% drop in weekly church attendance and a 58% decline from age 18 to age 29. That represents about 8,00,00 twentysomethings alive today who were active church-goers as teenagers but who will no longer be active in a church by their 30<sup>th</sup> birthday.”

“Bible reading levels are about 33% less among twentysomethings than among older adults. Overall, only 30% of twentysomethings have read the Bible in the past week, compared to 37% of those in their 30s; 44% of fortysomethings; 47% of adults in their 50s;”

“Yet, young leaders were also the least aware of any leadership training opportunities provided by their congregation.”

“Instead, personal faith is but one of multiple sources of input which young people combine to create their own definition of personal fulfillment and meaning.”

“But the real issue is how churches will respond to the faithquakes that are reverberating through our nation’s young adults.”

““Although it may come across as unwarranted skepticism, young adults are questioning their church experience in some legitimate ways,””

“What Makes A Parent Successful?”

“Each of two qualities was listed by one-third of all parents as contributing significantly to effectively raising children. Thirty-six percent said having patience is necessary to be effective, while 32% indicated that demonstrating love was indispensable.”

“The next most frequently cited attributes of effective parenting were enforcing discipline and being understanding. Each of these qualities was named by 22% of parents.”

“Having a significant faith commitment and an identifiable set of religious beliefs was mentioned by just one out of every five parents as an ingredient required for parental success.”

“Several other qualities were named by at least one out of every ten parents. Those included having good communication skills (17%), being compassionate (14%), knowing how to listen (12%), and being intelligent (11%).”

“Characteristics that were stated by at least 5% of all parents were being an encouraging person (9%), having substantial emotional strength (8%), making consistent choices (8%), having a clear philosophy of parenting (7%), and knowing how to plan and set goals (6%).”

“Smaller numbers of parents listed elements such as being a praying person (4%) or having integrity or good character (1%) as significant characteristics.”

“All of this is exciting, but it relates back to the information we have been collecting over the past few years. For instance, our research has shown that most of the influence on what people

think and do comes from just seven sources: movies, television, music, family, books, law, and the Internet. That same body of research shows that the local church has virtually no discernible influence on people's lives. Consequently, we are striving to understand, influence and operate within the spheres of greatest influence to help facilitate genuine spiritual transformation in people's lives. But how can we do that?"

#### "THE FAILURE OF YOUTH MINISTRY"

"Almost every study out there shows that when it comes to moral behavior, there's no difference between secular and Christian students. They drink as much, screw as much, have oral sex as much, and party as much."

"What does that mean? I don't have a clue. But my hunch is that if we want to see young people have a faith that lasts, then we have to completely change the way we do youth ministry in America."

"I wonder if any of us has the courage to try."

#### "EMERGENT"

"Our lack of example in speech, behavior, love, faith, and purity may also explain why we must rely so heavily on arguments, many of them making claims that appear to postmodern people to be coercive and colonial, and therefore immoral, heavily laced with adjectives like absolute and objective to modify the noun truth,' McLaren said."

"Additionally, he noted that the message of the apologetic of good lives and good works is much more costly than asserting the message of absolute objective truth or proclaiming a version of Christianity as the true metanarrative."

"I think most Christians grossly misunderstand the philosophical baggage associated with terms like absolute and objective (linked to foundationalism and the myth of neutrality,' McLaren said. 'Similarly, arguments that pit absolutism versus relativism, and objectivism versus subjectivism"

"Rather than measuring the church by its attendance, we will measure it by its deployment,' McLaren said. 'One of the greatest enemies of evangelism is the church as fortress or social club; it sucks Christians out of their neighborhoods, clubs, workplaces, schools, and other social networks and isolates them in a religious ghetto."

"But Christians also have no business embracing the equally radical perspectivism of postmodernity,' he said. 'If one has been captured by a constructivist epistemology, a position that repudiates anyone's right even to make a truth claim, and which considers truth instead to be utterly situated,' Litfin said, 'then any truth-claim dimensions of the gospel will be dramatically muted.'"

"every statement in the Pauline summary of the gospel (1 Cor. 15) is itself a truth claim"

“identifying them falsely with ‘modernity.’”

“The cultural climate is ripe for evangelism. Tony Jones states, ‘Postmodernism is not the evil that some Christian thinkers make it out to be. No longer are we beholden to the scientific proof model of evangelism – everything does not need to be explained and rationalized.’ Jones goes on to state, ‘There is new room in our faith for experience, for mysticism, and for mystery.’”

“MISSION AMERICA”

“Percentage responding that this was the #1 cause”

1. “20% responded: the style of youth ministry/lack of understanding the generation.”
2. “17% responded: the lack of Christian community in college/work following high school/negative peer pressure/wrong friends.”
3. “10% responded: the lack of communication between high school and college staff/ministries.”
4. “10% responded: the freedom for the first time away from home and church.”
5. “10% responded: Choices students must make/activities, time and money”
6. “7% responded: the division of church based upon age”

“Percentage responding that this was one of their top three elements that should exist”

1. “23% responded: some sort of bridge/link from high school to college ministry.”
2. “17% responded: the lack of preparation/training for college/future.”
3. “13% responded: relationships/peer groups”
4. “6% responded: family ministry instead of youth ministry”
5. “6% responded: discipleship/commitment to love and study scripture”
6. “3% responded: giving youth a challenge to real ministry.”

“WHAT WILL IT TAKE?”

“What will it take to develop a generation of young people that are healthy and mature spiritually, emotionally, and relationally?”

“Top Issues

1. Experience a transformed life in Christ	84%	First
2. Know why we believe		41%
3. Develop healthy relationship		35%”

“SOULD SEARCHING”

“Table 28. Reasons Nonreligious U.S. Adolescents Raised in a Religion Became Nonreligious, Ages 13-17 (Percentages)

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Intellectual skepticism and disbelief	32	
Don't know why		22
Lack of interest		13
Just stopped attending services		12
Life disruptions and troubles	10	
Dislikes religion		7
Lacked parental support		1
Vague or no reason	2	

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“that Jesus thing, you know, whether he was actually here or not,’ Raymond says: ‘I’ll just sit there and think about it and, you know, I can’t convince myself of one thing and can’t be for sure and it pisses me off ‘cause I don’t like it. If I don’t know something, I don’t like it. But I think about this stuff all the time. I just sometimes sit and think about it for hours and hours and [eventually] fall asleep and wake up the next morning. I don’t know.’ About the existence of God, he says, ‘I believe in God and everything. I don’t know if it’s God”

“examines how poorly many teens, in spite of their claims to the contrary, are able to see and articulate religion’s role in their life.”

“they get enthusiastic or excited about, what pressing issues they are dealing with, and what forces and experiences and routines seem to them most important and central in their lives. Most teenagers talk about friends, school, sports, television, music, movies, romantic interests, family relationships, dealing with issues of drugs and alcohol, various organized activities with which they’re involved, and specific fun or formative events they have experience. What rarely arises in such conversations are teens’ religious identities, beliefs, experiences, or practices.”

“In our in-depth interviews with U.S. teenagers, we also found the vast majority of them to be incredibly inarticulate about their faith, their religious beliefs and practices”

“Instead, religion is presumed to be something that individuals choose and must reaffirm for themselves based on their present and ongoing personal felt needs and preferences.”

“Second, most U.S. teens are at least somewhat allergic to anything they view as trying to influence them. They generally view themselves as autonomous mediators or arbitrators of all outside influences; it is they themselves who finally influence their own lives. Other people and institutions provide information that youth see themselves as filtering, processing, and

assimilating. Based on this information, they then make their own decisions for themselves. Or so the story goes. This autonomous individualism, not incidentally, helps to explain why teens have such difficulty articulating how religion influences them. They have difficulty imagining how religion influences their lives because they tend to imagine that nothing influences them, at least without their final choice that it does so. The idea that one's life is being formed and transformed by the power of a historical religious tradition can be nearly incomprehensible to people who have allergies to outside influences. Such a perspective lends itself instead to thinking of religion as something one chooses to use, as we will see below, not something to which one devotes oneself or gives away one's life."

"A third consequence of American individualism for teenager' relating to religion is that most teens embrace a very strong ethos that forswears judging any ideas or people that may be different. When each individual has his or her own unique and self-authenticating experiences and felt needs and desires, those chosen beliefs, commitments, desires, or lifestyle. The typical bywords, rather, are 'Who am I to judge?' 'If that's what they choose, whatever,' 'Each person decides for himself,' and 'If it works for them, fine.' As one 16-year-old black Jehovah's Witness girl from California said of a friend who has switched between four different religions, 'Whatever floats her boat.' In this context, as it is often pointed out, the very idea of religious truth is attenuated, shifted from older realist and universalist notions of convictions about objective Truth to more personalized and relative versions of 'truth for me' and 'truth for you.' In fact, despite the rhetoric, few teenagers actually consistently sustain such radical relativism."

"What almost all U.S. teenagers – and adults – lack, however, are any tools or concepts or rationales by which to connect and integrate their radical relativistic individualist selves"

"One of the key themes of this book is that parents are normally very important in shaping the religious and spiritual lives of their teenage children, even though they may not realize it."

"the most important social influence in shaping young people's religious lives is the religious life modeled and taught to them by their parents."

"Hence, of parents who report that their faith is extremely important in their daily lives, percent of their teens report that faith is extremely or very important in the daily lives"

"Likewise, of parents for whom faith somewhat important in their daily lives, 61 percent of their teens also report that faith is somewhat or not very important in their daily lives"

"'We'll get what we are.'"

"The vast majority of the teenagers we interviewed, or whatever religion, said very plainly that they simply believe what they were raised to believe; they are merely following in their family's footsteps and that is perfectly fine with them."

"When asked how his beliefs compare to his parents', for instance, this 13-year-old black Protestant boy from Ohio answered, 'Not different. I don't know what I'm gonna believe in [the future]."

“Teens who say that their parents love, accept, and understand them are also more likely to have faith be important in their daily lives and to be part of a religious youth group. And teens whose parents monitor their lives more closely are also more likely to score higher on service attendance and importance of faith. On the other hand, it is less likely that faith is important in the daily lives of teens who say their own views on important issues.”

“‘State of Our Nation’s Youth’

‘To 84% of the teens, future success will be defined by whether they have CLOSE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS...’”

“Teenagers are an integral part of the body of Christ. If part of the body is always isolated, it will die.”

“teenagers grow toward mature Christian adulthood as they are connected to the total body of Christ, not isolated from it.’ Intergenerational ministry is not just another model that a youth ministry can select. It is not a model, but a foundation that...”

“every ministry must find ways to build on a foundation of parents providing intentional Christian nurture for their children.”

“‘Could it be that one of the reasons for the Western nations’ devastating divorce rate is that our young people are not learning the skills of genuine love? Young people learn to love through the long haul as they are surrounded by adults who, over and over again, demonstrate this kind of enduring, long-suffering love.’”

“DeVries examined his own youth ministry at which he was the youth pastor. His findings are interesting. ‘Almost without exception, those young people who are growing in their faith as adults were teenagers who fit into one of two categories: either (1) they came from families where Christian growth was modeled in at least one of their parents, or (2) they had developed such significant connections with adults within the church it had become an extended family for them.’”

“‘The students in your youth ministry don’t need your clever ideas and great programming skills. They need a living model – a man or woman of God who is passionate about his or her faith.’”

“it must be ministry oriented rather than event oriented.”

“ministry must be intergenerational. Edward Trimmer states, ‘The most neglected area of youth ministry over the past twenty years is relational ministry. Congregations need to develop and educate a cadre of adults who are willing to spend time and develop meaningful relationships with teens.’ While there is no data to prove it, the possibility exists that the rise of the professional youth worker has caused some adults to feel they are not needed in youth ministry.’”

“must make the Word of God the focus of their ministry.”

“Students want to see religious, spiritual people who are useful in our worlds.’ This is why Tony Jones believes that ‘Our primary responsibility is to build Christ-centered community among the students in our ministries.’”

“kids participated with adults in life together, and in the process they grow in the knowledge and appreciation of God’s love”

“Even today, research indicates that this pattern is the most effective pattern in ministry to youth. George Barna’s research among teens show that 78% of teens say their parents have ‘a lot’ of influence on how they act and think. Barna states, ‘No other individual or people group came close to having that degree of perceived influence.’”

“Other studies indicate this same concept. Barbara Schneider and David Stevenson conducted extensive research into today’s adolescents. As a result of their research they wrote, ‘What parents consider important for an adolescent do to – whether it is getting good grades taking challenging courses, or apply to a competitive college – builds an orientation toward the future. In families where these messages are clearly and consistently communicated through family discussions and parental actions, adolescents are more likely to share their parents’ sense of what is important.’”

“Yet, the average youth ministry has a tendency to remove the parents from the youth ministry.”

“For our own mental and societal health, we need to reconnect the age groups”

“but an issue for society to set its priorities and to pay attention to its young in the same way it pays attention to its income.”

“The church should pursue intergenerational ministry in order to enhance the positive impact on teenagers.”

“Yet, how involved are parents and adults in the average local church youth ministry? Kenda Dean states, ‘Adolescents today grow up with less adult contact than any generation in human history’”

“Paul Miller makes an interesting observation, ‘Research has found that the values of young people closely parallel those of their parents. Churches use programming to segregate youth from mainstream activities not so much because youth want as little as possible to do with adults, but because adults want as little as possible to do with youth.’”

“number of adults who want so much to be accepted and liked by teens that they forget they are adults and behave like teens.””

“First, these adults need to have a faith to share.”

“Second, they enjoy being with youth.”

“disciplers, and equippers and adults with gifts to work with youth.”

“In order for an intergenerational ministry to be effective, the youth minister must understand that the priority is to train and equip parents to minister to their kids. The youth minister should be as concerned about helping the parent, as he or she is the kid in the youth ministry. The youth minister should also train other adults to serve as spiritual parents to students whose parents may not be Christians. As Richard Barnes and Allen Jackson state, ‘The major frontier for teaching youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is ‘family responsibility’ through partnering with parents and other family members.’”

“First, parents must model and teach wholehearted and single-minded devotion to God. Second, parents must understand the cultural forces shaping the heart and head of their kids. Third, the approach to parenting must be biblical, realistic, preventive, redemptive and prayerful. Fourth, parents must give unconditional love, time, attention,”

“Doug Fields believes the youth minister must create a teamwork mentality in order to facilitate an intergenerational ministry. He states, ‘Parents must be viewed as partners in ministry. The youth worker must recognize his or her limited roles in the life of a student.’ DeVries offers two suggestions: (1) empower parents: (2) equip the extended family of the church.”

“Jesus did not do everything for His disciples. He trained them, taught them, modeled ministry and behavior, but He also pushed them into ministry. Jesus said, ‘As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.’ (Matthew 10:7-8 NIV) Trimmer observes, ‘Effective youth ministry has usually meant that adults are ‘doing’ the ministry to youth. However, youth ministry is much more than doing something to youth. It is also ministry with youth.’ Trimmer also suggests that youth ministry is accomplished by youth. Youth can do the work of the ministry.”

“Mark DeVries states, ‘If we train our youth to expect entertainment from church, we can be assured that when things get a little slow, they will be switching the channel to somebody else’s show.’”

“‘we are in danger of teaching them that the Christian life will always be a party.’”

“‘Young people who develop a low tolerance for boredom will be unable to practice the disciplines necessary to grow in the Christian life.’”

“‘At church, today’s teens can get bored and turned off when modern services get too casual, too MTV-style. They are pulled in a new direction.’”

“The youth leader must view the students in the youth ministry as ministers or missionaries.”

“Joseph, Samson, Josiah, Daniel, and David are just a few examples of young people that were greatly used by God to accomplish His purposes.”

“Fields recognizes that a church program cannot compete with the world, but he does state, ‘We do have life-changing content (the truth of God’s Word) and caring relationships with which the world can’t compete. This truth is what I want our student to understand. I want them to take some personal responsibility for evangelism and live their lives with eyes that are searching and hearts that are beating with compassion for their lost friends.’”

#### “PERSPECTIVES”

“attempted to identify churches in the U.S. that consistently and intelligently evaluate life transformation among the people to whom they minister.”

“Not having the leaders in place to utilize such information was an obstacle I had not foreseen.”

“Giving information to people whose sole interest seemed to be searching for facts that confirmed what they had already chosen to do, or seeking statistical evidence to support their teaching, was not something that seemed like good stewardship.”

“All of this is exciting, but it relates back to the information we have been collecting over the past few years. For instance, our research has shown that most of the influence on what people think and do comes from just seven sources: movies, television, music, family, books, law, and the Internet. That same body of research shows that the local church has virtually no discernible influence on people’s lives. Consequently, we are striving to understand, influence and operate within the spheres of greatest influence to help facilitate genuine spiritual transformation in people’s lives. But how can we do that?”

“The major implication of these analyses would seem to be that youth workers may have little influence over whether or not students engage risk behaviors, and the more important focus would be upon development of the faith and spiritual/religious identity.”

“the interpersonal skills themselves to be able to handle the doubts and personal problems of youth in a manner that leaves the youth feeling it was safe to go to the leader with such matters.”

“regards how safe it is to discuss personal problems.”

“Since not all students experience crises naturally, some crises of faith can be created through exposure to difficult faith questions such as: given situation ‘X’ (i.e.: tsunami, AIDS, famine, etc.)”

“Understanding youth ministry in terms of a 6-year timeframe instead of a 4-year timeframe could be critical in this regard to bridge the ‘transition stage’ of high school youth ministry to college.”

“Baptist Convention that 88 percent of the children raised in evangelical homes leave church at the age of 18, never to return;”

“energetically to counsel parents parent’s regarding their obligation to provide their children with a Christian education”\

(Josh McDowell, Fuller Seminary, Ministry Edge, and Mission America Transition Network, “Research into youth faith issues,” George Barna, Fuller Seminary, Mission America Transition Network, Cecil Culbreth, National Survey Youth and Religion, Southern Baptist Convention and many more, May 2005)

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## **“EMERGING TRENDS – TRADITIONAL BELIEFS ABOUT BIBLE LOSING GROUND”**

“Biblical literalism, the belief that the Bible represents the actual word of God in all instances, has declined over the last few decades and is now at the lowest point ever recorded, 27%. In 1963 the comparable figure was 65%”

“This downtrend has been paralleled by an uptrend in those who believe the Bible to be simply an ancient book of fables, legends, history and moral precepts recorded by man. The current figure of 20% is the highest yet recorded by Gallup.”

“At the same time, however, the percentage that believe the Bible is to be the inspired word of God has held firm. Currently half the population, 49%, expresses this belief.”

“The study for the American Bible Society was conducted by the Gallup Organization in October 2000.

### “Percentage of unchurched Americans on Upswing Over Last Quarter Century”

“Over the last quarter century the adult population has been drifting away from organized religion, with the decline most pronounced among younger people and males.

“The current figures, based on a nationwide Gallup survey with 1,000 persons 18 and older in April, shows roughly equal proportions of the population falling into the categories of ‘Churched’ and ‘unchurched’ - 53% to 47%.”

“Roughly a quarter century ago, in 1978, 41% fit the definition of ‘unchurched.’ This proportion grew slightly, to 44% in 1988, where it remained in a subsequent survey 10 years later, in 1998. The most recent survey shows a slightly higher figure, 47%.”

“The unchurched are defined as those who are not members of a church or have not attended religious services in the previous six months other than for special religious holidays, weddings, funerals, and the like.”

“Dr. Marvin Olasky, professor of the University of Texas, Austin, has taught over 1,500 students in the last two years. He explained that so many students express skepticism and unbelief toward God and religion because they have been so hurt emotionally by their fathers. He writes, “Personal experience plays a role [lack of belief]. One student related tales of betrayed and concluded, ‘My governing belief is the only person you can really trust is yourself.’” Olasky goes on to say, “It’s hard for those who have never known a faithful father to trust our father in heaven.”

(“Traditional Beliefs About Bible Losing Ground,” World Magazine, May 9, 1998, p30)

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## **“FAITH REVOLUTIONARIES STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD”**

### “Integration of Faith in Life”

“Perhaps the aspect of life in which revolutionaries are most distinct from the mass of non-revolutionary born again adults relates to the integration of faith into lifestyle. Barna revealed the following differences between the two segments.”

- “More than seven out of every 10 revolutionaries are actively serving in their community, compared to 53% among non-revolutionary born again adults.”
- “The average amount of money donated by revolutionaries in 2005 was \$2990. That surpasses the mean giving total among non-revolutionary born again adults (\$1641) by 82%, despite household income levels that are similar.”
- “Almost two out of every three revolutionaries (64%) study the Bible every day. That’s close to three times the percentage of non-revolutionary born again adults who do so (23%).”
- “A majority of revolutionaries (54%) has a quiet time with God each day. Less than one-third of non-revolutionary born again adults (31%) follows that pattern.”
- “While close to half of all revolutionary families spend time each day studying the Bible together (42%), the same is true among just one out of every eight non-revolutionary born again families (12%). In fact, a majority of the non-revolutionary born again families admit to "never" or "rarely" studying God’s Word together.”
- “About six out of every ten revolutionaries (57%) experience "intimate, personally stirring worship of God" on a daily basis. The same held true for only four out of every ten non-revolutionary born again adults (39%).”

- “Non-revolutionary born again adults were just half as likely (15%, compared to 27% among revolutionaries) to engage in daily conversations with a mentor, friend or spiritual overseer in which they were held accountable for following the beliefs they possess.”
- “Most revolutionaries (56%) frequently commit their time and energy to helping disadvantaged people in their community. That substantially surpasses the level of involvement among non-revolutionary born again adults (40%).”
- “More than four out of five revolutionaries (82%) had shared their faith in Jesus Christ with a non-believer in the preceding 12 months. That was considerably more than the 54% among non-revolutionary born again adults.”
- “Almost all revolutionaries (97%) strongly affirm "the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches." Far fewer non-revolutionary born again adults (65%) join them in that perspective.”
- “Whereas eight out of ten revolutionaries believe that there is absolute moral truth, barely half as many of the non-revolutionary born again adults (43%) concur.”
- “The passion of revolutionaries is partially fueled by their belief that Satan is real. Two out of every three (65%) firmly argue that Satan is real and affects people’s lives; just one out of every three non-revolutionary born again adults (35%) buys that point of view.”
- “The importance of obedience to God’s commands and principles is driven home by the finding that two-thirds of revolutionaries (67%) strongly believe that "success in life is determined only by your obedience to God." In contrast, a minority of the non-revolutionary born again adults (42%) embrace that thinking.”
- “Despite being unfairly criticized as "isolated" and "independent," this research found that revolutionaries are more tuned in to the importance of community in spiritual life. Not only do they have a wider net of faith-based personal relationships that affects their spiritual development, but they believe that someone cannot become a "complete and mature" follower of Christ without being personally involved in a spiritual community. While four out of ten revolutionaries strongly endorse this notion, only half as many (21%) of the non-revolutionary born again adults do so.”
- “While a startling percentage of the non-revolutionary born again adults agrees that a good person can earn their salvation (even though they contend that their own salvation was based on grace, not good works), a large majority of revolutionaries (75%) strongly rejects the works-based or multiple-means-to-salvation arguments. (Only 44% of the non-revolutionary born again adults strongly asserts that salvation can never be earned.)”

“Whereas revolutionaries are partially identified by placing their faith in God as the single, highest priority in their life, such a commitment is common to less than one out of every ten born again adults who is not a revolutionary (8%).”

“Perceiving oneself to be fully committed to God helps explain why 91% of revolutionaries view themselves as a "full-time servant of God" compared to only 72% among non-revolutionary born again adults.”

“The research also discovered that revolutionaries more frequently make use of Christian media on a daily basis as they strive to stay focused on God and their faith. Overall, a majority (54%) listens to Christian radio everyday; 42% of revolutionaries listen to teaching tapes or CDs on a daily basis; and one-fifth (20%) watch Christian television programming each day. In comparison, less than half as many non-revolutionary born again people tune in to Christian radio daily (25%), far fewer listen to teaching tapes or CDs each day (25%), and just 9% are exposed to Christian TV every day.”

“Revolutionaries were also more than twice as likely as non-revolutionary born again individuals to visit faith-related websites in a given day, and more than twice as likely to read a Christian magazine on a daily basis.”

“Pressed on the issue of the departure of many revolutionaries from congregational churches, Barna acknowledged that this is one of the hot buttons of the critics. ‘It’s important to remember that the Bible does not command us to ‘go to church.’ It commands us to live in a certain manner, to be connected to other believers in a life-shaping community and to engage in worship together. But keep in mind,’ he continued, ‘that the dominant form of the Church in the New Testament era was the house church and that the family was clearly a center of one’s faith experiences during the early church times. It is mind-boggling that so many of today’s church and seminary leaders have launched incredibly uncharitable attacks on devout followers of Christ simply because they are meeting in different places and pursuing God through divergent yet biblical approaches. That same spirit of divisiveness and contentiousness has led millions of revolutionaries to flee organized churches for alternative faith communities where their energy can be poured into honoring God and loving people, rather than fighting about man-made preferences, routines and systems.’”

(Barna Update - March 6, 2006)

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#### “FAST FACTS:”

- “The typical young U.S. church outsider has 5 friends who are Christians.”
- “More than 80% of young U.S. church outsiders have attended a Christian church for at least 6 months in the past.”
- Half of young U.S. church outsiders previously considered becoming a Christian.”

(“Fast Facts,” from The Foster Letter – Religious Market Update, October 10, 2007, [www.GaryDFoster.com](http://www.GaryDFoster.com))

## **“FIVE YEARS LATER: 9/11 ATTACKS SHOW NO LASTING INFLUENCE ON AMERICANS’ FAITH”**

“The study shows that despite an intense surge in religious activity and expression in the weeks immediately following 9/11, the faith of Americans is virtually indistinguishable today compared to pre-attack conditions. Barna’s tracking surveys looked at 19 dimensions of spirituality and beliefs. Remarkably, none of those 19 indicators are statistically different from the summer before the attacks. (This means that the small gaps in percentage points – when they exist – are not larger than the random differences that might be expected because of using a sample of Americans rather than a census.)”

“In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, half of all Americans said their faith helped them cope with the shock and uncertainty. The change most widely reported was a significant spike in church attendance, with some churches experiencing more than double their normal crowd on the Sunday after the shocking event. However, by the time January 2002 rolled around, churchgoing was back to pre-attack levels, and has remained consistent in the five years since.”

“Less publicized was the fact that several religious beliefs shifted right after the attack. But these changes were also short-lived, returning to pre-9/11 conditions by early 2002. For instance, October 2001 data showed that Americans were less likely to feel a responsibility to share their faith; they were less willing to reject the notion that good works can earn salvation; they were more likely to believe that the devil is merely a symbol of evil; and they were slightly less likely to believe God is the perfect, all-powerful creator who rules the world. These shifts in beliefs went against conventional wisdom that Americans’ were flocking to orthodox biblical perspectives. Instead, throughout the period of emotional insecurity many adults became increasingly skeptical of traditional religious views. Nevertheless, even this skepticism quickly faded to the status quo by January of 2002.”

“One of the most interesting aspects of this stability is that the percent of American adults who identify themselves as Muslim has not changed since before 9/11. Adherents to Islam account for just one-half of 1% of the U.S. adult population. Osama bin Laden’s objective of using the attacks to spur conversion to Islam has not been realized.”

“Americans’ intensity of commitment to their faith did not change at all – either right after the event or since. Just months after the attacks, Americans were no more likely to be ‘absolutely committed’ to the Christian faith, to say that their religious faith is very important, or to described themselves as ‘deeply spiritual.’”

“The director of the Barna study, David Kinnaman, put the findings in context. ‘Many Christian leaders predicted that terrorism on U.S. soil would catalyze a spiritual awakening in the country. The first few weeks were promising. But people quickly returned to their standard, faith-as-usual lives: within a month, most of their spiritual fervor was gone. Within 90 days, surprisingly few people were pursuing important questions about faith and spirituality. Now, five years removed from that fateful day, spiritually speaking, it’s as if nothing significant ever happened.

People used faith like a giant band-aid – it helped people deal with the ugliness of the event but it offered little in the way of deep healing and it was discarded after a brief period of use.”

(“Five Years Later: 9/11 Attacks Show No Lasting Influence on Americans’ Faith,” The Barna Update, August 28, 2006, [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org))

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## “FORGIVENESS COULD BE BALM FOR THE BODY, TOO”

“The ability to forgive just might improve your marriage, your health and your outlook on life.”

“A new round of findings is expected Friday, when more than 40 scientists and researchers gather in Atlanta for a conference hosted by A Campaign for Forgiveness Research, a non-profit organization that promotes studies.”

“Overall, findings show a link between forgiveness and health, says Everett Worthington, executive director of the group. ‘Chronic unforgiveness causes stress,’ he says. ‘Every time people think of their transgressor, their body responds.’”

“One study being presented at the meeting finds that although women perceive themselves as more forgiving than men, they really are not.”

“Psychologist Fred Luskin of the Stanford Forgiveness Projects at Stanford University heads a series of studies of people, some with ‘unresolved hurts’ from the likes of parents, spouses or bosses and some with very dramatic psychological injuries.”

“In one program, 17 adults from Northern Ireland who had been traumatized by an immediate family member’s murder were brought to Stanford for a week of ‘forgiveness training’ that included group discussions and advice on new ways to think about trauma. Afterward, participants on average reported 37% less hurt and about 35% fewer physical symptoms of stress, such as poor appetite.”

“Some research suggests that when partners don’t forgive each other for past hurts, they are less apt to manage conflict in the present. Luskin says adults who cannot forgive their parents for mistakes may unwittingly transfer their anger to spouses.”

“Other studies link forgiveness and:”

- “Reduced blood pressure and stress hormone levels, especially among low-income blacks.”
- “Less pain, depression and anger in patients with chronic back pain.”
- “Fewer relapses in women in substance abuse programs.”
- “Fewer symptoms of depression and stress, and higher quality of life, in HIV/AIDS patients.”

“There still may be someone out there who can teach me forgiveness. But at this point in my life, how do you do that? It is so hard.”

(USA, Today, October 23, 2003, pg. 8D)

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### **“BRIEFS”**

“• Archaeologists working in Jordan have determined that Edom became a complex society as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. This dating supports the biblical claim that King David fought a powerful group of Edomites, descendants of Esau. The excavation turned up arrowheads and hammers among the ruins in Edom’s former lowlands. Many archaeologists previously believed that Edom did not become a complex society until the eighth century B.C.”

(“Briefs,” Christianity Today, (August 2006): 21)

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### **“GOD CREATED MAN”**

“Gallup reports 46% of Americans believe God created Man in present form, 36% believe Man was developed with God guiding, and 13% think god had no part in the process. This ratio has remained basically unchanged for 24 years.”

(Gallup Alert 6/5/06)

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### **“GROWTH OF MEGACHURCHES WORRIES CHURCH COUNCIL HEAD”**

“According to a report by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, there were 1,210 U.S. churches drawing more than 2,000 worshippers, the official minimum for a megachurch. That was double the number in 2000.”

(“Growth of Megachurches Worries Church Council Head,” Asia News, February 22, 2007)

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### **“HALF OF AMERICANS SAY FAITH HAS ‘GREATLY TRANSFORMED’ THEIR LIFE”**

“Backing up its reputation as a highly religious people, half of all American adults said that their life has been ‘greatly transformed’ by their religious faith. This is one of the key results from a new survey by The Barna Group based on a nationwide telephone survey among a representative sample of more than 2000 adults.”

“Overall, 51% of the survey respondents said they have been greatly transformed by their faith, about one-fourth (28%) said their faith has been helpful but has not produced significant

transformation, and nearly one out of five (17%) claimed their faith has not made much of a difference in their life.”

“Some population segments were more likely than others to contend that they have been transformed by their faith. Women were more likely than men to claim their faith has had a great impact (56% vs. 45%). Residents of the South were the most likely to cite such an effect (63%), while folks in the Midwest were about average (50%), and adults in the West (44%) and Northeast (39%) were much less inclined to attribute such influence to faith. Nearly two-thirds of African-Americans (62%) assigned great impact to their faith, compared to half of whites (50%) and Hispanics (49%), and barely one-quarter of Asians (27%). People who are usually conservative on political matters were almost twice as likely as those who are generally liberal to cite great personal transformation as a result of their faith (64% versus 35%).”

“There were significant correlations between claiming to have experienced faith-driven transformation and engagement in various faith-oriented behaviors. For instance, people who read the Bible regularly were more than twice as likely as those who do not to have undergone faith-based transformation, and the same pattern was true among those who attend a church regularly compared to those who do not.”

“Self-perceptions related to spirituality also correlated with transformation. People who describe themselves as ‘fulltime servants of God’ were three times more likely than those who do not embrace that label to say they have been transformed by faith. Likewise, adults who define themselves as ‘deeply spiritual’ were four times more likely than those who do not accept that description to have been transformed.”

“There was a significant age distinction revealed in the data. Only one out of every four (27%) Mosaics - that is, the generation born after 1983 - had undergone serious faith-driven transformation. That was just half the proportion associated with older adults.”

(Barna Update - June 6, 2006)

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### **“HOME-GROWN CHURCHES”**

“Researcher George Barna says millions of Americans are breaking from traditional church and choosing a home church. They want to “be” the church, not just attend church. He estimates more than 20 million Americans have begun exploring alternative forms of worship since 2000. Though many still participate in their old churches while trying a new one, Barna predicts traditional churches will lose half their “market share” to alternative start-ups over the next two decades. Dawn Ministries places the number of U.S. home churches in the tens of thousands, based partly on the size of online directories and home-church conference attendance.”

(PWB 6/15/06)

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## “INSIGHTS INTO THE UNCHURCHED”

1. “Most prefer to attend church on Sunday morning, if they attend.”
2. “Most feel guilty about not attending church.”
3. “96% are somewhat likely to attend church if invited.”
4. “Very few have had someone share how to become a Christian with them; Christians have not been particularly influential in their lives.”
5. “Most have a positive view of clergy and the church.”
6. “Many have a church background.”
7. “Most cold-call evangelism is not effective, yet Christians able to share their faith in casual conversations can be effective.”
8. “They would like to develop a real and sincere relationship with a Christian.”
9. “They are not a monolithic group.”
10. “Many are far more concerned about their children’s spiritual well-being than their own.”

(Dr. Thom Ranier, [buildingchurchleaders.com](http://buildingchurchleaders.com) 5/25/06)

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## “LEADERSHIP NETWORK”

“60% of Canadians believe ‘through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God provided the way for the forgiveness of sins,’ but only 17% attend church at least weekly, down 4% over the last decade.”

(Leadership Network 5/06)

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## “LESS RELIGIOUS”

“An increasing number of people in America and around the world don’t believe in God.”

“The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press has found 20% of Americans ages 18 to 25 say they have no religious affiliation or consider themselves atheists or agnostics, nearly double the rate of 20 years ago. Another Pew survey in 3/07 concluded the nation is witnessing a ‘reversal of increased religiosity observed in the mid-1990s.’ Today, 12% of Americans age 20 and older describe themselves as not religious, up from 8% in ’87. This change appears to be generational in nature, with each new generation displaying lower levels of religious commitment than the preceding one.”

“The number of campus groups affiliated with the Secular Student Alliance, for example, has increased by more than 50% in the past two years, to more than 80 groups.” (Boston.comNews 9/16/07)

(“Less Religious,” from The Foster Letter – Religious Market Update, October 10, 2007, [www.GaryDFoster.com](http://www.GaryDFoster.com))

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## **“LIFE & THE INTERNET”**

“45% of Internet users, or about 60 million Americans, say the Internet helped them make big decisions or negotiate their way through major life episodes in the previous two years.”

(Pew Research, April 27, 2006)

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## **“LIVE LONGER, GO TO CHURCH”**

“A University of Pittsburgh study found people who attend weekly religious services have a longer life expectancy. Added years of life were similar to those associated with regular exercise. Increased longevity could be linked to a number of factors, including an enhanced sense of purpose in life and connection to a community of support.”

(Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, April 5, 2006)

## **“TOP 10 FAMILY ISSUES”**

1. “Anti-Christian Culture: Stripping away of Christian heritage and traditional values.”
2. “Divorce: Ongoing wave of broken marriages and families – inside and outside the church.”
3. “Busyness: Participation in numerous activities crowding out quality family fellowship.”
4. “Lack of Father Figure: Absence of a father in the home or lack of strong participation in the family.”
5. “Lack of Discipline: Death of respectful behavior as a norm in schools, churches, and families.”
6. “Financial Pressures: Chronic misuse of debt and/or financial mismanagement.”
7. “Lack of Communication: Increasing abbreviation or elimination of meaningful family member interaction.”
8. “Negative Media Influences: Growing influx of destructive images and messages into the home.”
9. “Balance of Work & Family: Rising pressure to invest more energy in work at the expense of family.”
10. “Materialism: High regard of ownership and consumption as a family priority.”

## **“RELIGIOUS SALES”**

“Sales of religious-themed products grew 28% from 2002 to 2005 and are expected to reach \$9.5 billion by 2010, reports The Religious Products Market in the U.S. from Packaged Facts.”

(Christian e-Tailing, April 10, 2006)

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### **“MOST TWENTYSOMETHINGS PUT CHRISTIANITY ON THE SHELF FOLLOWING SPIRITUALLY ACTIVE TEEN YEARS”**

“A new study by The Barna Group (Ventura, California) shows that despite strong levels of spiritual activity during the teen years, most twentysomethings disengage from active participation in the Christian faith during their young adult years—and often beyond that. In total, six out of ten twentysomethings were involved in a church during their teen years, but have failed to translate that into active spirituality during their early adulthood.”

“Teens Embrace Spirituality...”

“Teenagers thrive on fresh experiences and new perspectives. The spiritual dimension gives teens a fertile ground for their explorations. Half of teens attend a church-related service or activity in a typical week. More than three-quarters discuss matters of faith with peers and three out of five teens attend at least one youth group meeting at a church during a typical three month period. One-third of teenagers say they participate in a Christian club on campus at some point during a typical school year. There is also a substantial amount of unorthodox spiritual activity: three-quarters of America’s teenaged youths have engaged in at least one type of psychic or witchcraft-related activity during their teen years (not including reading horoscopes).”

“till, one of the most striking findings from the research is the broad base of opportunities that Christian churches in America have with to work with teenagers. Overall, more than four out of five teens say they have attended a church for a period of at least two months during their teenage years (81%). This represents substantial penetration and significant prospects for influencing the nation’s 24 million teens.”

“...But Disengagement Happens”

“In fact, the most potent data regarding disengagement is that a majority of twentysomethings—61% of today’s young adults—had been churched at one point during their teen years but they are now spiritually disengaged (i.e., not actively attending church, reading the Bible, or praying). Only one-fifth of twentysomethings (20%) have maintained a level of spiritual activity consistent with their high school experiences. Another one-fifth of teens (19%) were never significantly reached by a Christian community of faith during their teens and have remained disconnected from the Christian faith.”

“Piecing Faith Together”

- “Loyalty to congregations is one of the casualties of young adulthood: twentysomethings were nearly 70% more likely than older adults to strongly assert that if they ‘cannot find a local church that will help them become more like Christ, then they will find people and groups that will, and connect with them instead of a local church.’ They are also significantly less likely to believe that ‘a person’s faith in God is meant to be developed by involvement in a local church.’”
- “These attitudes explain other anomalies of twentysomething spirituality. Much of the activity of young adults, such as it is, takes place outside congregations. Young adults were just as likely as older Americans to attend special worship events not sponsored by a local church, to participate in a spiritually oriented small group at work, to have a conversation with someone else who holds them accountable for living faith principles, and to attend a house church not associated with a conventional church. Interestingly, there was one area in which the spiritual activities of twentysomethings outpaced their predecessors: visiting faith-related websites.”
- “The intensity of religious commitment is lower among young adults, but not as low as might be assumed. Among those in their twenties and thirties, 65 have beliefs that qualify them as evangelical. This is statistically on par with the level among today’s teenagers (%%), but about half the rate of those over age 40 (12%). One-third of young adults (36%) qualify as born again Christians, which is slightly lower than the 44% of those over 40. (In the Barna survey, evangelicals and born again Christians are defined based upon religious beliefs and commitments, not based on the terms people use to describe themselves.)”

#### “Research Perspectives”

“Kinnaman offered several insights about the data: ‘Much of the ministry to teenagers in America needs an overhaul—not because churches fail to attract significant numbers of young people, but because so much of those efforts are not creating a sustainable faith beyond high school. There are certainly effective youth ministries across the country, but the levels of disengagement among twentysomethings suggest that youth ministry fails too often at discipleship and faith formation. A new standard for viable youth ministry should be—not the number of attenders, the sophistication of the events, or the ‘cool’ factor of the youth group—but whether teens have the commitment, passion and resources to pursue Christ intentionally and whole-heartedly after they leave the youth ministry nest.’”

“The Strategic Leader of The Barna Group explained that, ‘it’s not entirely surprising that deep, lasting spiritual transformation rarely happens among teenagers—it’s hard work at any age, let alone with the distractions of youth. And, since teenagers’ faith often mirrors the intensity of their parents, youth workers face steep challenges because they are trying to impact something of spiritual significance that teenagers generally do not receive from home.’”

“Our team is conducting more research into what leads to a sustainable faith, but we have already observed some key enhancements that youth workers may consider. One of those is to be more personalized in ministry. Every teen has different needs, questions and doubts, so

helping them to wrestle through those specific issues and to understand God's unique purpose for their lives is significant. The most effective churches have set up leadership development tracks and mentoring processes to facilitate this type of personalization."

"Another shift,' he continued, 'is to develop teenagers' ability to think and process the complexities of life from a biblical viewpoint. This is not so much about having the right head knowledge as it is about helping teens respond to situations and decision in light of God's principles for life. Also, we have learned that effective youth ministries do not operate in isolation but have a significant role in training parents to minister to their own children."

("Most Twentysomethings Put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years," *The Barna Update*, [September 11, 2006])

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## "NEWS & TRENDS – MISSION AMERICA COALITION"

**"Christian Nation** After years of complaining about Hollywood, conservative Catholics and Evangelical Christians are gaining traction. But the battle is a long way from over, and the culture is still up for grabs. Many of these developments stem more from a long-overdue recognition of the importance of the Christian consumer market rather than a decision to embrace Christianity."

"While it may come as news to some, this *is* a largely Christian nation. White Evangelicals alone make up 26% of the population, according to John Green, University of Akron. When you add in Catholics, mainline Protestants, black Evangelicals, and other Christians, he figures nearly 80% of Americans are affiliated with a Christian church. (Business Week Online 12/14/05)"

**"Different Meanings** 80% of adults in the U.S. call themselves "Christian," while 68% self identify as "committed Christian," and 45% "born again Christian." Only half of the "born again" group prayed to God, read from the Bible and attended a religious service in the past week vs. 90% of "committed Christians." Researcher George Barna, "In our sound-bite society, with everyone moving quickly and making snap judgments, the temptation is to rely upon simple characterizations to provide a broad perspective on who a person is and what they represent. This is part of the challenge to churches: to know each person more deeply in order to serve them more meaningfully." (Barna Update 11/29/05)"

## "7 Reasons Churches Die"

1. **"Doctrine Dilution;** People are typically more attracted to a church's practices than biblical doctrine. Failure to be true to doctrine leads to apostasy."
2. **"Loss of Evangelistic Passion;** Evangelistic apathy is a deadly and deadening disease."
3. **"Failure to be Relevant;** Churches must know and address the realities, hopes and pains of people in their community."

4. **“Few Outwardly Focused Ministries;** Nearly 95% churches’ ministries are solely for its members. To survive and thrive a church must also focus outward.”
5. **“Conflict over Personal Preferences;** This is a clear indication that members are more concerned about their needs than the needs of the hurting and unchurched.”
6. **“The Priority of Comfort;** It’s easier to do things the way they’ve always been done than to get uncomfortable in the outside world.
7. **“Biblical Illiteracy;** To obey the Word, we must know the Word. Only 3% of American churches have a planned method of instructing members to learn the complete Bible, on Sundays and throughout the week. (Outreach 11-12/05 & 1-2/06)”

**“Mission Omission** In 1920, 10¢ of every \$1 donated to a church was spent on overseas missions vs. just 2¢ today. (Christianity Today 12/05)”

**“Nuns In Crisis** According to a ‘04 survey, the number of nuns in the U.S. has dropped by 50% from the 60s. Adding to the crisis, the average age of the nuns today is 70. (Christianitytoday.com 12/20/05)”

**“The Top 2006 Trends** were recently released by the Trends Research think tank. Several are grim.”

- “This generation is looking back in time for inspiration, a backlash against the poor quality of recent movies and music.”
- “The survival business will boom as Americans perceive their government as incapable of protecting them from terrorist and natural disasters.”
- “Technology will continue to empower self-reliant, “off the grid” survivalists, who will seek to avoid payments of fuel, water, electricity and phone bills.”
- “Citizen-driven movements for states to break away from the union will arise.”
- “Media coverage of Hurricane Katrina greatly damaged the world’s view of the U.S. Global sales of “made in the USA” products will suffer.”
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- “Media convergence (online TV) will signal the decline of the broadcast network news and entertainment monopoly.”
- “Rural real estate values will continue to rise as downsizing becomes fashionable.”
- “Entertainment that pokes fun at the consumption habits of the wealthy elite will become popular via reality TV.”
- “Union power for workers in the lowest strata of the U.S. economy will increase.”

- “Americans will address environmental concerns such as global warming, food safety and recycling.”
- “Discovering reliable new sources of alternative energy will be the primary drive in science and invention.”
- “Hometown economies will benefit as fuel cost soar and if a pandemic such as bird flu hits, people will patronize local merchants to avoid crowds. (USA Today.com 5/14/05)”

“**Values Pay** A 2004 study by Booze Allen Hamilton and the Aspen Institute finds companies that routinely list values as a top concern tend to report superior financial results. (CRM 1/06)”

“**CEO Failure** *The Harvard Business Review* revealed that 2 out of 5 new CEOs fail within their first 18 months on the job. Studies show interpersonal skills, rather than technical skills, are the primary reasons. The *Executive Recruiters News* (11/05) reports that a recent Leadership IQ survey identifies the two main reasons leaders fail: (1) they won’t accept negative feed-back, and (2) they can’t control or don’t understand their own emotions or have difficulty reading emotions of others. (Robert W. Dingman CO. Newsletter, Winter ’05)”

“**Fast Facts**”

- “There are roughly 97,000 Western missionaries and about 101,000 non-Westerners working cross culturally in missions. (Christianity today.com 11/7/05)”
- “42% of Americans say they’d describe themselves as “born again” or “evangelical,” a constant response since ’99.”
- “40% of Americans believe it’s a good idea for couples who intend to get married to live together first, 22% of evangelicals agree.”
- “As of 1/1/06, the earth’s population stood at 6,488,578,564 people.”
- “There are 70 million American grandparents. 68% of all the 45-plus population.”
- “57% of Boomers say, “I have no idea when I’ll retire.”
- “U.S. life expectancy is now 77.6 years, an all-time high.”
- “More than 1 billion babies have been aborted worldwide (48 million in the U.S.) since the U.S. legalized abortion in ’73.”
- “20% of women who have had abortions continue to experience stress 5 years after the experience.”

- “A Ketchum Global Research Network survey shows 74% percent of women ages 25-54 spend more time thinking about other’s needs than their own.”
- “Depression is the #1 cause of suicide among teens.”
- “16% of U.S. school children are seriously overweight and 1/3 of U.S. teens would flunk a treadmill test.”
- “25% of U.S. health and fitness club members are age 55 or older.”
- “Annual tuition, room, and board at a 4 year private college have jumped 39% to \$21,235 over the past decade.”
- “75% female college students say they pray vs. 62% of males.”
- “Two thirds of undergraduate students graduate with debt, averaging \$19,000.”
- “More than half of online casino players are now women. Historically gambling has attracted more men than women.”

(Email sent to Ryan Busboom from Mission American Coalition, January 19, 2006. Information compiled and edited by Gary Foster, Gary Foster Consulting)

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**“‘NEWS AND TRENDS’ ‘MISSION AMERICA COALITION’”**

“‘Wrong Yardstick A Barna survey found these disturbing results concerning how pastors measure spiritual health.’”

“1. ‘Stewardship is rarely deemed a meaningful measure of church vitality. Church budgets typically assume the average congregant will give only 2% to 3% of their income. Result, only 6% of born again adults tithe. It’s not seen as an indicator of spiritual health in most churches. Nor, is the fact that only 12.5% of churches bother to evaluate how many of their congregants share their faith with unbelievers.’”

“2. ‘More than 80% of pastors focus on salvation but ignore issues related to lifestyle or spiritual maturity. Result, the lifestyle of most churched adults is indistinguishable from that of unchurched people.’”

“3. ‘Churches are prone to looking for indicators of serving people within the church more often than seeking signs that needy people outside the church of being cared for.’”

“4. ‘Pastors are 9 times more concerned about reactions to their sermon than the congregation’s reactions to visitors.’”

“5. ‘Most alarming, pastors were 21 times more likely to evaluate whether people attended than whether they experienced the presence of God while at church. The challenge to church leaders is to stop pandering for popularity and to set the bar higher. People only live up to the expectations set for them. If churches believe in the life-changing power of the gospel and the Holy Spirit, they must people to a higher and more challenging standard. (Barna Online 1/9/06)’”

“‘Teen Beliefs About The Supernatural Barna Research reports 75% of teens believe in the existence of an immaterial, spiritual world; roughly 50% there is no such thing as good versus evil; 10% offered some other opinion on the matter; and 25% confess they have no idea. In addition 82% of teens embrace the biblical position on life after death, however just 61% believe Heaven is a real place or paradise where people go when they die. 71% embrace the orthodox Christian view of God (the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect creator of the world) while 58% say Satan is a real spiritual being and the enemy of God. (Barna Alert 1/24/06)’”

(Email sent to Ryan Busboom from Mission American Coalition, February 24, 2006.  
Information compiled and edited by Gary Foster, Gary Foster Consulting)

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### **“NOW YOU KNOW”**

“More than 90% of American men say they believe in God. 35% attend church weekly.”

“68% of Americans believe in the existence of Satan.”

(“Now You Know” *Servant*, issue 76 (2006): 8.)

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### **“PENTECOSTAL POWER”**

“From its origins in an AME Church on Azusa Street in Los Angeles, Pentecostalism has emerged as the world’s fastest-growing Christian movement. The World Christian Encyclopedia reports more than 500 million followers, comprising 25% of the world’s Christians, up from 6% in 1906.”

### **“GOD’S WORD”**

“36% of Americans believe the Bible is the ‘actual Word of God’ and is to be taken literally while 40% says it is the Word of God although not everything in it should be taken literally.”

(Pew Research Center, April 4, 2006)

## **“PENTECOSTALISM”**

“Pentecostalism and related charismatic movements, by all accounts, represent one of the fastest-growing segments of global Christianity. At least a quarter of the world’s 2 billion Christians are thought to be members of these lively, highly personal faiths, which emphasize such spiritually renewing “gifts of the Holy Spirit” as speaking in tongues, divine healing and prophesying. Even more than other Christians, Pentecostals and other Renewalists believe that God, acting through the Holy Spirit, continues to play a direct, active role in everyday life. Renewalist is used as an umbrella term throughout the report to refer to Pentecostals and Charismatics as a group.”

(The Pew Forum on Religion in Public Life 10/5/06)

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## **“PERSONALIZING ‘TRUTH’ MAKES IT LESS DIVISIVE”**

“Krista Tippett, host of Speaking of Faith, public radio’s weekly conversation about religion and ethics.”

“Park of an ongoing discussion sponsored by the Rothko Chapel, Tippett focused on the question ‘Must Religion Divide Us? The Problem and Promises of Speaking of Faith in America Today.’”

“Tippett believes she has found a different format for discussing religion on her show, which is heard on 150 stations around the country and over the Internet in Houston. Guests express their personal faith and beliefs and tell their own stories. Tippett said she has very few religious authorities on the show because she believes they would feel compelled to speak for their denomination or faith.”

“There is a profound difference between hearing someone say: ‘This is the truth, and hearing someone say, ‘This is my truth.’ The more we can put human voices and stories to our religious claims, the better we will be able to stay in conversation.”

(Barbara Karkabi, “Personalizing ‘truth’ makes it less divisive,” Houston Chronicle, February 2006, [www.houstonchronicle.com](http://www.houstonchronicle.com))

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## **“PEW CONDUCTS A 10-COUNTRY SURVEY OF PENTECOSTALS”**

“Pew estimated that Pentecostals and Charismatics account for about one fourth of the world’s 2 billion Christians. According to the World Christian Encyclopedia, published in 2001, there are about 66 million Pentecostals and 470 million Charismatics.”

(Mark D. Tooley, “Pew Conducts a 10-country Survey of Pentecostals,” Crosswalk, November 2006, [www.crosswalk.com/news/weeklystandard/1439899.html](http://www.crosswalk.com/news/weeklystandard/1439899.html))

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## “PROSPERITY GOSPEL”

“*Time* magazine reports growing numbers of Christians are restating the biblical admonition: ‘For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?’ to ‘Why not gain the whole world plus my soul?’ A *Time* poll found 17% of Christians embrace such a movement and 61% believe God wants people to be prosperous. *Time* claims three of the nation’s four largest mega-churches (Joel Osteen-Lakewood; T.D. Jakes-Potter’s House; and Creflo Dollar-World Changers) preach some form of Prosperity Theology.”

(*The Foster Letter: Religious Market Update*, Gary D. Foster Consulting, September 25, 2006 [Monday Morning Insight 9/18/06]: 4).

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## “EUROPE’S CHASTISEMENT—HOW THE ABANDONMENT OF CHRISTIANITY MAY BE LEADING TO DISASTER”

“Catholic scholar George Weigel, a senior fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center and author of *The Cube and The Cathedral*, says Europe is ‘committing demographic suicide, systematically depopulating itself.’”

“For any population to remain stable, it must maintain a birthrate of 2.1 births per woman. That rate provides a replacement for both mother and father, while the .1 covers infant and child mortality. When the birthrate falls below that number, a population goes into decline—unless it invites in large numbers of immigrants.”

“‘The ‘birth dearth’ is what demographers call plummeting birth rates in most of the industrialized world,’ says culture critic Chuck Colson. ‘Throughout Western Europe and East Asia, the birth rate is well below 1.2 births per woman....’”

“*Demography of Depopulation Will Shape Our Future*, puts this birth dearth in historical perspective. ‘Never in the last 650 years, since the time of the Black Plague, have birth and fertility rates fallen so far, so fast, so low, for so long, in so many places.’”

“According to U.N. figures and other projections, Patrick Buchanan states in *The Death of the West* that by 2050 Europe (from Iceland to Russia) will see its population drop from 728 million (in 2000) to 600 million—and perhaps 556 million. And if current trends continue, by the end of the century Europe’s population will stand at 207 million.”

“‘When it comes to forecasting the future, the birthrate is the nearest thing to hard numbers,’ Mark Steyn argues. ‘If only a million babies are born in 2006, it’s hard to have two million adults enter the workforce in 2026....’”

(Ed Vitagliano, Agape Press, April 12, 2006)

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## “QUOTABLES & ‘TOONS”

“Twenty-four Percent.’ Portion of the French population that believes *The Da Vinci Code* was ‘inspired by real facts,’ according to a survey in SCIENCE ET VIE magazine.”

(“Quotables & ‘Toons” *The Buzz* (May 20, 2006):16.)

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## “RELIGIOUS BELIEFS”

“Researchers found that only 10.8% of Americans have no ties to a congregation, denomination or faith group. Previous surveys had put that figure at 14%, overlooking about 10 million people involved in some form of organized religion, the Baylor report said.”

“Baylor researchers found that one-third of Americans are evangelical Protestant, just under one-quarter are mainline Protestant, one-fifth are Roman Catholic and 5% are black Protestant. Jews compromise 2.5% of the population, while 5% of Americans belong to other faiths.”

“The rest, who are not involved in religious groups, are not fully secular, researchers said. More than 60% of the unaffiliated say they believe in God or a higher power, and nearly one-third say they pray at least occasionally. Eleven percent believe Jesus is the son of God.”

“Only 15% of all respondents called themselves “evangelical” and within that group just 2% said it was the best description.”

“One-fifth of respondents have read either *The Purpose Drive Life* by pastor Rick Warren or the *Left Behind* series of apocalyptic novels, the survey found.”

“Yet, even more—28.5%--had read *The Da Vinci Code*, the best-selling mystery novel that Christians condemned as an affront to their faith. Still, the study found that the book had little impact on churchgoers.”

“Nearly one-quarter consider God a “distant” force that set the laws of nature in motion, but is not active in the world, the study found. About the same percentage view God as “benevolent,” active in their daily lives, but less willing to condemn or punish.”

“And about 16% consider God “critical,” an observer who views the state of the world unfavorably and will mete out punishment in another life.”

“The survey of 1, 721 respondents has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points and was conducted by the Gallup Organization between Oct. 8 and Dec. 12, 2005.”

(“Americans more religious, spiritual than previously thought, survey says” The Associated Press, 2006;

[www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2006-09-11-religion-survey\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2006-09-11-religion-survey_x.htm))

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## **“RELIGIOUS MAREKT UPDATE”**

“Out-Of-Wedlock Births in the U.S. have climbed to an all-time high, accounting for nearly 40% of babies born in '05.”

“• The median church in the U.S. has 75 regular participants in worship on Sunday mornings.”

“• 48% of pastors think their work is hazardous to their family well-being. (Monday Morning Insight 11/27/06)”

“• 45.5% of pastors will experience a burnout or a depression that will make them leave their jobs. (Monday Morning Insight 11/27/06)”

“• Pastors have the second-highest divorce rate among professions. (Monday Morning Insight 11/27/06)”

“• For every 20 people who go into the pastorate only one retires from the ministry. (Monday Morning Insight 11/27/06)”

(Gary Foster, “Religious Market Update,” The FOSTER Letter, (2006):2,4)

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## **“ROE V. WADE SUPPORT WANES”**

“Harris poll has been measuring Roe v. Wade support for 33 years and reports just 49% of U.S. adults support the decision today vs. 57% in 1998.”

(WSJ, May 4, 2006)

(Mission America Coalition Membership Update, May/June 2006, e-mail sent to Josh McDowell on June 28, 2006 from [info@missionamerica.org](mailto:info@missionamerica.org))

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## **“STUDY: YOUTH SEE CHRISTIANS AS JUDGMENTAL, ANTI-GAY”**

“The vast majority of non-Christians – 91% -- said Christianity had an anti-gay image, followed by 87% who said it was judgmental and 85% who said it was hypocritical.”

(Adelle M. Banks – Religion News Service, “Study: Youth See Christians as Judgmental, Anti-Gay,” USA Today, October 11, 2007, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2007-10-10-christians-young\\_N.htm?loc-interstitialskip](http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2007-10-10-christians-young_N.htm?loc-interstitialskip))

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## **“SURVEY FINDS TEENS PUT VALUE ON THEIR RELIGION”**

“An interfaith survey of 1,153 teens released yesterday by B’nai Brith reveals nearly 70 percent of all teenagers value religion in their lives and say they would like to connect better with their religion.”

“But 43 percent of them don’t know how to do so, according to the B’nai Brith Youth Organization, a Jewish group that commissioned the study to find better ways of keeping Jewish youths faithful.”

(Julia Duin, “Survey finds teens put value on their religion,” The Washington Times, January 2006, [www.washtimes.com/functions/print.php?StoryID=20060118-101251-5903r](http://www.washtimes.com/functions/print.php?StoryID=20060118-101251-5903r))

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## **“SURVEY OF FORMER CHURCHGOERS RECAPS THE REASONS THEY LEFT”**

“In looking at the top two life-situation reasons adults stop attending – “simply got too busy to attend church” (19 percent) and ‘family/home responsibilities prevented church attendance’ (17 percent) – such reasons are more preventable than some of the lower-ranking reasons such as ‘moved too far from church’ (17 percent), ‘work situation’ (15 percent) or ‘got divorced/separated’ (12percent).”

“The second most common category of reason why adults leave the church is ‘disenchantment with pastor/church,’ accounting for the withdrawal of 37 percent of the formerly churchd. Three specific sources of disenchantment are sandwiched among the life-change reasons. The formerly churchd say church members ‘seemed hypocritical’ (17 percent), ‘were judgmental of others’ (17 percent) or ‘the church was run by a clique that discouraged involvement’ (12 percent), indicating that the leadership and relational dynamics of a church can be obstacles that prevent involvement.”

“Notably, Waggoner pointed out that only two of the top 10 reasons are instances in which the formerly churchd admit to spiritual causes, citing ‘church was not helping me to develop spiritually’ (14 percent) and ‘stopped believing in organized religion’ (14 percent)”

“The latter reflects creeping secularism and is underscored by the number of respondents who consider themselves ‘spiritual, but not religious’ (24 percent) and ‘Christian, but not particularly devout’ (42 percent). Less than 1 in 5 formerly churchd adults confess to being ‘a devout Christian with a strong belief in God’ (19 percent) and a somewhat smaller number are wavering on Christianity (10 percent) or belief in God at all (6 percent).”

“But would they be ‘too busy’ to attend if they felt more welcome at church? Although many formerly churchd adults stay away from their former church for the same reasons they initially left, some indicate that the church did not notice or care. Sixteen percent said ‘nobody contacted me after I left’ and another 16 percent said ‘nobody seemed to care that I left.’”

“Compiled by the communications office of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. Two Inside LifeWay podcasts with Brad Waggoner, director of LifeWay Research, discussing the survey of the formerly churched are available at [www.lifeway.com/insidelifeway](http://www.lifeway.com/insidelifeway).”

(“Survey of former churchgoers recaps the reasons they left,” LifeWay Research, October 2006, [www.bpnews.net/printerfriendly.asp?ID=24244](http://www.bpnews.net/printerfriendly.asp?ID=24244))

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### **“TEENS LEARNING IN CHURCH.**

“A Barna study finds 65% of U.S. teens recall learning about moral and ethical standards in the last 12 months; 62% relationships, 55% faith traditions and 50% personal evangelism. Fewer recall church teachings on media, movies and TV within the last year (35%); money and finances (30%); the supernatural world (28%); leisure activities (27%); government and law (26%); art and music (22%); health issues (21%); and technology (9%). 26% of teens and 39% of born-again Christian teens say they learned something about their faith or spirituality online in the last 6 months. 16% of teens and 25% of born-again teens said they had ‘a spiritual experience’ online where they worshipped or connected with God.” (Barna Group 10/8/07)

(“Teens Learning in Church,” from The Foster Letter – Religious Market Update, October 25, 2007, p3)

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### **“THE SCHOOLS THAT DIVIDE THE NATION”**

“Increasingly, it is the values and culture of Islam which define the identity of British Muslims. A senior British Muslim leader has defined Muslim identity as: creed, sharia, and umma.”

“The Islamic creed is non-negotiable. Those who do not share this creed are despised as kafir (infidels). Hatred of non-Muslims is preached in many British mosques.”

“Meanwhile Islamic law, sharia, is deemed by the majority of Muslims unalterable. Its medieval formulations cannot be updated. Yet it is this discriminatory law which many British Muslims wish to see enforced.”

“Finally the umma, the worldwide community of Muslims, is the primary focus of loyalty. It represents the political as well as the religious.”

“Muslims have a duty to defend each other. This defensive jihad is what leads Muslims to go and fight in places such as Iraq.”

“There is a positive aspect to a multiculturalism where people share and enjoy each other’s cultures. But the UK’s well-meaning policy of validating every faith and ethnic community culturally, in a depoliticized way, is naïve when it comes to Islam. For Islam does not separate the sacred from the secular; it seeks earthly power over earthly territory. The result is that

already the UK has reached the stage of parallel societies, where purely Muslim areas function in isolation.”

“Yet at the same time the Government seems fixated on empowering an ultra-conservative Muslim leadership embodied by the Muslim Council of Britain and Muslim Association of Britain. It says sharia will never be permitted in Britain, yet it has allowed sharia-compliant mortgages, and admits that many British cities have sharia councils.”

“I believe Islam needs different treatment from other faiths because Islam is different from other faiths. It is the only one which teaches its followers to gain political power and then impose a law which governs every aspect of life, discriminating against women and non-believers alike. And this is ultimately why a naïve multiculturalism leads not to a mosaic of cultures living in harmony, but to one threatened by Islamic extremism.”

“Multiculturalism which has nurtured extremism.”

(Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo, International Director of Barnabas Fund, “The Schools That Divide The Nation,” The Evening Standard, London, September 4, 2006)

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## “THE STATE OF THE CHURCH: 2006”

“You cannot make great strategic decisions unless you are well-informed about the world you wish to influence. It is our hope that the insights in this report will help you to be sufficiently well-informed that you will be more capable of effectively leading God’s people in these challenging but exciting times.”

“**Survey Question:** The devil, or Satan, is not a living being but is a symbol of evil.”

“2006: 29%” \*indicates those who disagreed strongly with the statement

“...only three out of every ten adults strongly disagrees that Satan is merely a symbol of evil.”

“**Survey Question:** You cannot become a complete and mature person unless you belong to a community of faith that influences you.”

“2006: 18%” \*indicates those who agreed strongly with the statement.

“As a nation of independent and self-absorbed individuals, relatively few people see the value of, much less the biblical command for, significant involvement in a faith community.”

“I’m going to read some statements about what will happen after you die. Please tell me which one of these statements best describes your own belief about what will happen to you after you die. (READ STATEMENTS). Which one of those comes closest to what you believe? 1. When you die you will go to Heaven because you have tried to obey the Ten Commandments. 2. When you die you will go to Heaven because you are basically a good person. 3. When you die you

will go to Heaven because you have confessed your sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as your savior. 4. When you die you will go to Heaven because God loves all people and will not them perish. 5. When you die you will not go to Heaven. 6. You do not know what will happen after you die.”

1991: 35%\*                      1996: 39%\*                      2001: 41%\*                      2006: 45%\*

\*indicates those who said “yes” to first question and chose option 3 for the second question

**Commentary:**

“The 2006 measure represent the first time since 2001 that the born again percentage has risen beyond 41%, and reflects the highest percentage recorded to date (surpassing the 43% reported in 1997).”

“Numerically, this 45% is the equivalent of about 101 million born again adults – the first time that the estimated number of born again adults has topped the 100 million mark. Two-thirds of that number is drawn from the Boomer, Builder and Seniors generations, suggesting that the average born again adult is around 50 years of age.”

**Commentary:**

“The growth of involvement in house churches in recent years has been remarkable. Currently, about one out of every ten adults participates in a house church in a typical week, with that many again participating at least once a month, and an additional two out of ten involved less often. Overall, that constitutes more than four out of ten adults taking part in a house church.”

**“The Context of Change”**

“The tracking data for 2006 indicate that ‘God is hot’ at the moment, resulting in observable behavioral change without much transition evident in terms of beliefs. This distinction is critical because lasting change comes only when beliefs are altered. Behavior is driven by core beliefs...without change in the underlying beliefs, the changed behavior is not likely to remain changed.”

“Consequently, while it is encouraging to see the increases in a number of religious behaviors in the past decade – Bible reading, church attendance, small group involvement, Sunday school attendance, and volunteerism – we must be cautious about reading too much into those figures. There has been little real movement in people’s beliefs during the same period of time.”

“The gap between the beliefs and behavior of this generation and the figures representing the four older generations does give reason to pause and pray. Mosaics are substantially less likely than Baby Busters – the next youngest generation, and a group that itself is generally below average on most spiritual indicators – to reflect a commitment to Christianity. For instance, Mosaics are 36% less likely than Busters to say they are absolutely committed to the Christian faith; 18% less likely to describe their religious faith as very important to them; 24% less likely to have made a personal commitment to Christ; 61% less likely to have an ‘active faith;’ 24% less likely to read the Bible and 21% less likely to pray to God during a typical week. They are also less likely to hold an orthodox view of God, to accept the Bible as totally accurate in the

principles it teaches; to accept the existence of Satan; to reject the idea that Jesus sinned; and are less likely to be born again.”

“Another point of concern was that the parents of children under 18 – a segment of the adult population that represents one-third of all adults – did not emerge as being more spiritually tuned in. Until three decades ago parents of young children were typically among the most devoted to spiritual regimens, hoping to raise children with good spiritual habits and perspectives. Today, there is little distinction between the parents of youngsters and adults who do not have such a responsibility. Given the significant influence of one’s family on the shaping of a person’s faith life, and the fact that such influence is most dominant prior to the young person reaching age 13, this pattern showing the absence of parents as spiritual guerillas is unnerving.”

“As always, leadership is critical toward making serious spiritual progress in America. The issue is to one of leaders using their capacity to gain a bigger platform, to highlight more products or to attract bigger crowds, but one of engaging people in the process of pursuing God with all their heart, mind, strength, and soul. This mandates ministry on a very personal level, regardless of the nature of the facilitating faith community (congregational church, house church, parachurch, cyberchurch, etc.). If leaders are responsible for motivating, mobilizing, resourcing and directing people to pursue a shared vision from God that advances His kingdom by facilitating transformation – that’s our definition of leadership – then there must be an intelligent strategy for promoting such effort.”

“Increasingly it appears that shifting the balance of energy to reflect more emphasis on character than behavior would be advantageous. Because our actions stem from who we are, at the character level, effective ministry is tied to investing in building better foundations in terms of character. Providing learning, interactive connections, accountability and outreach efforts that equip people to be Christ-like are laudable goals. Doing so without falling prey to program development is more difficult.”

“One cannot help but return to some of the simple but profound lessons taught in the scriptures regarding the appropriate steps toward becoming such a Church – steps that leaders must first model for God’s people.”

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NLT)

*“Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.”*

Matthew 6:33 (NLT)

*“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.”*

Mark 12:29-31 (NLT)

*“Jesus replied, ‘The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul,*

*and all your mind, and all your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these.'"*

“The restoration of the Church gains from strong leadership, but that leadership is not about skills as much as it is about focus and heart. If Christian leaders will live a life that is indisputably passionate for Christ and ushers others into the presence, pursuit and pleasure of God, America will be a transformed nation.”

(George Barna, “The State of the Church: 2006 – A Report from George Barna,” The Barna Group, Ltd., April 2006)

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## “THE U.S. RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE”

“By the Pew Forum estimates the U.S. is 78% Christian and about to lose its status as a majority Protestant nation, at 51% and slipping. More than 25% of U.S. adults have left the faith of their childhood for another religion or no religion. Factoring in moves from one stream or denomination of Protestantism to another, the number rises to 44%. 25% of adults 18 to 29 claim no religious affiliation. 3 times as many are moving into no affiliation than moving to affiliation. While nearly 1 in 3 Americans were raised Catholic, fewer than 1 in 4 are Catholic today. Changes in Protestant affiliation are swelling the ranks of non-denominational churches, while Baptist and Methodist are showing net losses. Although evangelical churches strive to win new believers from the "unchurched," most converts to evangelical churches were raised Protestant. For all of the attention they get, non-Christian religions still constitute only about 5% of the American population. (NY Times, 2/26/08, Christianity Today 2/27/08)”

(Gary D. Foster, “Religious Market Update,” The FOSTER Letter, 10 March 2008)

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## “UN-CHRISTIAN CHRISTIANS”

“A new Barna study shows 16- to 29-year-olds are more critical toward Christianity than previous generations were at the same life stage. For instance, a decade ago the vast majority of non-Christian Americans, including young people were favorable toward Christianity’s role in society vs. just 16% of 16-29s today. Only 3% of 16-29-year-old non-Christians have favorable views of evangelicals. This means that today’s young non-Christians are 8 times less likely to experience positive associations toward evangelicals than were non-Christians of the Boomer generation (25%). It’s understandable why 91% of U.S. evangelicals believe ‘Americans are becoming more hostile and negative toward Christianity.’ Among young non-Christians, 9 of the top 12 perceptions measured were negative. Among them are: present-day Christianity is judgmental (87%), hypocritical (85%), old-fashioned (78%), and too involved in politics (75%). The most common favorable perceptions were that Christianity teaches the same basic ideas as other religions (82%), has good values and principles (76%), is friendly (71%), and is a faith they respect (55%). 91% of young non-Christians and 80% of young churchgoers say ‘anti-homosexual’ described present-day Christianity. Beyond this they believe Christians show excessive contempt and unloving attitudes towards gays and lesbians. Both young non-Christians

(23%) and born-again Christians (22%) said ‘Christianity in today’s society no longer looks like Jesus.’ While Christianity remains the typical experience and most common faith in America, a fundamental recalibration is occurring within the spiritual allegiance of America’s upcoming generations.” (Barna.org, 9/24/07)

(“Un-Christian Christians,” from The Foster Letter – Religious Market Update, October 10, 2007, [www.GaryDFoster.com](http://www.GaryDFoster.com))

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### **“VIDEO CHURCH”**

“About 1,000 churches, mostly evangelical, use remote feeds—live or via DVD. In 2005, 92% of mega-churches used the technology, up from 65% in 2000, states a Hartford Seminary survey. Many Christians have taken to “Godcasts” through video churches. Video technology allows leaders of growing churches to gauge interest in other communities without investing in new structures and hiring more pastors.”

(*The Christian Science Monitor*, 5/06)

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### **“WHAT TEENS LOOK FOR IN A CHURCH”**

“When seeking a church 42% of Americans say it is very important to them ‘to better understand what I believe.’ Other important things they look for in a church include spending time with close friends (34%); being encouraged or inspired (34%); and volunteering to help others (30%). Expectations teens prioritized as less important were learning about prayer (26%); listening to religious teaching (26%); participating in discussions about religion and faith (23%); being mentored in spiritual development (21%); discovering traditions of their faith (20%); participating in a study about faith (19%); and studying the Bible (18%). 39% of teens prefer a church that teaches how their faith should influence everyday decisions and lifestyle.” (Barna Group 10/8/07)

(“What Teens Look for in a Church,” from The Foster Letter – Religious Market Update, October 25, 2007, p1)

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### **“WHICH GOD?”**

“Baylor researchers measured people’s view of God by four different views of His personality and engagement. *The Authoritarian God*, embraced by 31.4% of Americans, is angry at humanity’s sins, and engaged in every creature’s life and world affairs. Those who envision God this way are religiously and politically conservative. *The Benevolent God*, favored by 23%, sets absolute standards for mankind in the Bible. In control of everything, He’s grieved by the sin of the world, by any created person who doesn’t follow Him. This group is heavily mainline Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish. *The Critical God*, preferred by 16%, has His judgmental eye on the world, but He’s not going to intervene, either to punish or to comfort. This group is less

inclined to go to church or link seriously with religious groups and is less likely to see God as active in the world. *The Distant God*, embraced by 24.4%, is a cosmic force that launched the world and then left it on its own. This appeals most to Catholics, mainline Protestants, Jews, and moral relativists.”

(*The Foster Letter: Religious Market Update*, Gary D. Foster Consulting, September 25, 2006 [USA Today 9/12/06]: 3.)

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### **“WIZARD APPEAL”**

“Currently, 84% of teens have read or watched Harry Potter. So have 77% of all church-going and born again Christian teens. The vast majority say they didn’t find much spiritual stimulation but enjoyed the story, yet 12% (3 million teens) say the stories increased their interest in witchcraft.”

(Barna Update, May 1, 2006)

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### **“YOUTH MINISTRY THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE”**

“I’ve spent five years studying the religious and spiritual lives of U.S. teenagers through my sociological research project, the National Study of Youth and Religion.”

“I’ve spent five years studying the religious and spiritual lives of U.S. teenagers through my sociological research project, the National Study of Youth and Religion.<sup>1</sup> This research has taught me much about teenagers, faith, and our culture. Some of what I’ve learned is truly surprising:”

“• I didn’t go into our research thinking most American teenagers hold what I’d call a ‘benignly positive’ view of religion, but most do.”

“• I didn’t expect teenagers to be as religiously conventional as they are.”

“• I was surprised by the powerful influence that parents still exert in the lives of most teenagers.”

“• And I was not prepared for the striking inability of most Christian teenagers to articulate what they believe and what difference their faith makes in their lives.”

“Our research also confirmed a few things that didn’t surprise me, including the importance of good church youth groups in forming the lives of young people. Of course, youth groups are not the main influence in teenagers’ faith lives. Their relationships with their parents and their parents’ faith practices matter most in shaping kids’ faith. But our research shows that the presence or absence of a good church youth group-of committed, loving, discipling youth pastors-can make a huge difference in kids’ lives.”

“Teens’ parents and other mature Christian adults need to be brought back into the youth ministry picture. In most cases, parents are the most important Christian pastors teenagers will ever have—for better or worse. Yet for decades youth ministry’s conventional wisdom has separated young people from adults. My observations suggest that there’s an important and legitimate place for age-exclusive church youth groups. Yet many parents also come to see designated youth ministers as substitutes for their own ‘pastoral’ responsibilities. They check-in their teenagers at youth group and assume all is well.”

“Many youth ministers are frustrated by this ‘service provider’ mentality in parents, and that makes them antagonistic toward them. But this adversarial situation must be replaced by a more cooperative, integrated, comprehensive approach to the faith formation of young people. 4”

“Quality matters just as much as quantity when it comes to relationships. Research on parenting styles suggest that kids turn out best when parents combine three distinct approaches into an ‘authoritative’ parenting style. In the style, parents”

- “• express lots of warmth and affection for their children;”

- “• lay down clear expectations, boundaries, demands, and accountability; and”

- “• grant their children an appropriate amount of ‘mental space’ to develop their own take on important issues.”

“The authoritative style won’t work unless all three imperatives work together.”

“Parents who are demanding but not warm, and who are inflexible about their kids’ mental space, are ‘authoritarian.’ Parents who are warm but lack expectations and accountability, and who give their kids unlimited mental space, are ‘permissive.’ Parents who are neither warm nor demanding, and who don’t care about providing mental space, are ‘disengaged.’ Authoritarian, permissive, and disengaged parents tend to raise kids with problems.”

(Dr. Christian Smith, “Youth Ministry That Makes a Difference,” May/June 2006, [www.youthministry.com](http://www.youthministry.com) )