



*inciting a* **CROSSCULTURE** *Revolution.*

## Introduction to the Research Analysis

---

## Introduction to the Research Analysis

The final four chapters contain the results and analyses of responses from the 3,795 youth from thirteen denominations who participated in the 1994 Churched Youth Survey. The eight-page survey questionnaire each young person completed had 193 questions; the survey has been divided into four categories for this analysis: Love and Sex; Marriage and Family; Faith and Religion; and Attitudes and Lifestyles. These four categories derived from the survey questionnaire encompass eleven dimensions of our young people's lives. They are:

- Attitudes about family and marriage
- Personal relationship with parents and family
- Sexual behavior and perspectives
- Lifestyle activities
- Self-view
- Perspectives related to "truth"
- Life choices and views
- Desirable life circumstances
- Religious practices
- Religious beliefs
- Spiritual commitment

In some cases the survey questions duplicated nationwide studies of the general youth and adult population conducted by The Barna Research Group, Ltd. of Glendale, California. Some questions also replicated the 1987 study among churched youth we commissioned during the "Why Wait?" Campaign. This has allowed us to make interesting comparisons between the various studies.

The survey questionnaire was initially drafted by The Barna Research Group. Each denominational contact person provided input and modification to the survey questionnaire until all thirteen groups approved of the final questionnaire used. The survey questionnaire was then pre-tested by The Barna Research Group prior to its final distribution to each participating group.

The survey was completed anonymously by the 3,795 churched youth at their normal youth group meeting between November 1993 and March 1994. Each denomination was given the goal of surveying five hundred youth from their total church list using a "multistage stratified random probability sample." Each group was supplied with a survey manual, local leader's

instruction guide, confidential survey questionnaires, envelopes, and other materials to assist proper administration of the survey.

Following is a listing of the participating denominations and their proportionate survey number of the total tabulated:

<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Usable returns</u>	<u>% of all returns</u>
Assemblies of God	319	9%
Church of God, Cleveland	232	6
Church of God, Gen. Conference	309	8
Church of the Nazarene	232	6
Foursquare Gospel	326	9
Free Methodist	175	5
Friends	236	6
Mennonite (Board of Cong.)	326	9
Mennonite (Gen. Conference of)	307	8
Pentecostal Holiness	500	13
Salvation Army	183	5
Southern Baptist Convention	176	5
Wesleyan	454	12
no identification	20	*
total: 13 denominations	3,795	100%

Regarding the statistical weighting of the data, The Barna Research Group points out:

"Readers of these data should be aware that there is no statistical weighting of the data, which means that the results are weighted according to the responsiveness of the denomination's churches, rather than in response to each denomination's magnitude within the Protestant church world, or among the 13 participating denominations."<sup>i</sup>

Though we believe the thirteen denominations reflect a good cross section of evangelical churches (and there was not a major statistical difference across participating denominations), we do not suggest that this study accurately reflects all church youth in America. We do believe, however, that this study reflects the typical evangelical young person in America and the data within the participating denominations provides each group with an accurate reading of their youth.

The survey questionnaire used in this study, listing the percentage of youth who answered each of the 193 questions, is printed verbatim on succeeding pages. Following the questionnaire is an explanation of the seven statements regarding truth which respondents answered, and the profile of those who answered all seven questions from a pro-truth perspective compared to those who didn't. The last four chapters provides a full analysis of the data, including numerous tables which cross-tabulate the data. Many of these statistics and analyses have been quoted throughout this book; we will be repeating some of them, however, to provide you with a complete report of the data as they relate to each data table.

## Confidential Survey Questionnaire

The following Survey Questionnaire was administered anonymously and in confidence to 3,795 youth while attending their youth group meeting from thirteen evangelical denominations.

### SECTION A: Background Characteristics

1. What is your gender: 48% =Male 52%=Female
2. What is your age?  
11=1% 12=6% 13=17% 14=18% 15=20% 16=16%  
17=13% 18=7% 19=2%
3. What grade are you currently enrolled in at school?  
6th=3% 7th=13% 8th=16% 9th=21% 10th=19%  
11th=14% 12th=12% College=2%
4. What is your grade average in school?  
29%=A/A- 44%=B+/B/B- 23%=C+/C/C- 4%=D+/D/D-
5. In what state is your home located?  
East=18% South=34% Central=32% West=13% Canada=1%
6. Which of the following best describes you?  
86%=White/Caucasian 4%=Hispanic/Latino 2%=Native American  
3%=Black/African-American 8%=Asian 4%=Other
7. My parents are:  
72%=Married 10%=Divorced/Remarried 3%=One has died  
13%=Divorced/Separated .3%=Both have died 2%=Other
8. I live with:  
73%=My natural father and mother 2%=My natural father or stepfather only  
.7%=Parents who are both stepparents 13%=Other  
11%=My natural mother or stepmother only

SECTION B: Family Relationships

1. Which one of the following descriptions comes closest to describing how you would define a family?

32%=all of the people related to each other by birth, adoption or marriage.

59%=any person or group whom you love or care about deeply, or who love or care about you deeply.

5%=any group of people who live together.

4%=any group of people who share the same set of values and goals in life.

2. Please indicate whether or not you would consider each of the groups of people described below to be a family. Is this a family?

Description of Situation	Yes	No	Not Sure
a. a man and woman who are not married but are living together and have no children.....	14%	72%	14%
b. a man and woman who are not married, are living together and have had children.....	40%	41%	19%
c. two homosexual men living together.....	8%	81%	11%
d. two homosexual women living together.....	9%	80%	11%
e. an unmarried mother and her children.....	74%	15%	11%
f. two divorced women who share housing but do not have a sexual relationship with each other.....	21%	58%	21%

3. How would you describe your relationship with your father? (Circle one answer.)

32%=we are very close      7%=we are not at all close

42%=we are fairly close      2%=my father is not alive -- (Go to #6)

14%=we are not too close      3%=do not know my father -- (Go to #6)

4. Indicate how frequently each of the following situations occur. How often do you...

	frequently	occasionally	seldom	never
a. talk with your father about your personal concerns?.....	12%	34%	32%	22%
b. wonder whether or not your father loves you?.....	8%	14%	21%	57%
c. seek advice from your father?.....	26%	38%	21%	15%
d. feel proud of your father?.....	56%	28%	9%	7%
e. do something special with your father that involves just the two of you?.....	19%	39%	28%	14%
f. show your love for your father?.....	41%	36%	18%	5%
g. feel your father shows his love for you?.....	51%	29%	14%	6%

5. In a typical week, about how much time do you spend talking with your father about things that really matter to you? (Circle one answer.)

- |                           |                                 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 16%=no time               | 12%=between 31-60 minutes       |
| 14%=less than 5 minutes   | 10%=1 hour to less than 2 hours |
| 20%=between 5-15 minutes  | 7%=2 hours to less than 4 hours |
| 16%=between 16-30 minutes | 5%=4 hours or more per week     |

6. How would you describe your relationship with your mother? (Circle one answer.)

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| 52%=we are very close   | 3%=we are not at all close             |
| 36%=we are fairly close | 1=my mother is not alive -- (Go to #9) |
| 8%=we are not too close | 0=do not know my mother -- (Go to #9)  |

7. Indicate how frequently each of the following situations occur. How often do you...

	frequently	occasionally	seldom	never
a.talk with your mother about your personal concerns? .....	39%	35%	18%	8%
b.wonder whether or not your mother loves you? .....	9%	13%	19%	59%
c.seek advice from your mother? .....	40%	34%	18%	8%
d.feel proud of your mother? .....	58%	31%	8%	3%
e.do something special with your mother that involves just the two of you? .....	30%	37%	25%	8%
f.show your love for your mother? .....	52%	34%	11%	3%
g.feel your mother shows her love for you? .....	68%	22%	7%	3%

8. In a typical week, about how much time do you spend talking with your mother about things that really matter to you? (Circle one answer.)

- |                           |                                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 6%=no time                | 15%=between 31-60 minutes        |
| 9%=less than 5 minutes    | 13%=1 hour to less than 2 hours  |
| 16%=between 5-15 minutes  | 12%=2 hours to less than 4 hours |
| 16%=between 16-30 minutes | 13%=4 hours or more per week     |

9. Listed below are some situations that some teenagers face. Indicate how often this is true of you. "My parents..."

	frequently	occasionally	seldom	never
a. do not trust me.....	12%	26%	38%	24%
b yell at me.....	18%	34%	40%	8%
c. fight with each other .....	9%	20%	44%	27%
d.do not allow me to do things I want to do .....	15%	36%	40%	9%
e.are really interested in who I am.....	50%	30%	15%	5%
f.spend time with me.....	46%	38%	13%	3%
g.admit when they are wrong or mistaken.....	27%	36%	25%	12%
h.are too strict .....	16%	28%	37%	19%
i.set good examples for me .....	54%	32%	10%	4%
j.show that they really love each other .....	56%	23%	10%	11%
k.expect more of me than is fair.....	19%	28%	33%	20%

10. My home is a place... (Circle one answer to complete the sentence.)

- 62%=where I feel secure and loved.
- 9%=where each of us is trying to love each other.
- 14%=where sometimes I feel loved, other times I don't.
- 8%=where I usually feel uncomfortable and would rather be elsewhere.
- 7%=where I feel comfortable, although we are not a close, loving family.

11. Please mark one answer for each statement below to indicate your reaction to the statement about marriage.

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
a. If there are children involved in the marriage, the parents should not get divorced, even if they do not love each other anymore .....	21%	46%	33%
b. Overall, you feel that your family experience has been positive.....	72%	14%	14%
c. If the traditional family in America falls apart, American society will collapse .....	47%	28%	25%
d. These days it is very hard to have a successful marriage .....	43%	44%	13%
e. Anyone who gets married these days should expect that their marriage will end in divorce .....	6%	86%	8%
f. Marriage problems have been exaggerated; most married couples have fulfilling, healthy marriages.....	34%	32%	34%
g. I want a marriage like my parents.....	48%	36%	16%
h. God intended for marriage to last a lifetime .....	90%	4%	6%
i. I would like to be a virgin at marriage.....	73%	13%	14%
j. If I wasn't a virgin now and I could change the past, I would wait to have sex after marriage.....	76%	10%	14%

**SECTION C: Relationship With Members of the Opposite Sex**

1. Which of the following have you done with a member of the opposite sex?  
 -----have done-----
- |                                     | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>Not Sure</u> |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------------|
| a. hold hands .....                 | 89%        | 10%       | 1%              |
| b. embracing and some kissing ..... | 73%        | 25%       | 2%              |
| c. heavy "French" kissing .....     | 53%        | 45%       | 2%              |
| d. fondling of breasts.....         | 34%        | 63%       | 3%              |
| e. fondling of genitals .....       | 26%        | 71%       | 3%              |
| f. sexual intercourse.....          | 16%        | 81%       | 3%              |
2. For two people who are not married but are both in love with each other and are willing, please indicate whether the actions described below are morally acceptable or not.  
 -----morally acceptable-----
- |                                     | <u>Always</u> | <u>Sometimes</u> | <u>Never</u> | <u>Not Sure</u> |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| a. hold hands .....                 | 85%           | 14%              | 0%           | 0%              |
| b. embracing and some kissing ..... | 68%           | 29%              | 2%           | 1%              |
| c. heavy "French" kissing .....     | 33%           | 48%              | 10%          | 9%              |
| d. fondling of breasts.....         | 10%           | 25%              | 49%          | 16%             |
| e. fondling of genitals .....       | 9%            | 20%              | 55%          | 16%             |
| f. sexual intercourse.....          | 7%            | 13%              | 68%          | 12%             |
3. If the opportunity presented itself today, how likely would you be to have sexual intercourse with another person if:
- |   | <u>More Likely</u> | <u>Less Likely</u> | <u>No Difference</u> |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| a. your friends strongly encouraged you to do so? .....       | 11%                | 31%                | 58%                  |
| b. you were in love with the person? .....                    | 45%                | 19%                | 36%                  |
| c. you really intended to marry that person?.....             | 44%                | 19%                | 37%                  |
| d. you were positive that a pregnancy would not result? ..... | 26%                | 25%                | 49%                  |
| e. you knew that your parents would not find out?.....        | 25%                | 24%                | 51%                  |
| f. you felt that your parents would not mind? .....           | 22%                | 24%                | 54%                  |

**SECTION D: Daily Challenges**

1. Think about your life during the past three months. Please indicate which, if any, of these activities you did during that period of time.  
 -----did this?-----
- | <u>Activity</u>  | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> |
|--|------------|-----------|
| a. watched MTV at least once a week .....                | 45%        | 55%       |
| b. watched an x-rated or pornographic movie .....        | 16%        | 84%       |
| c. used some type of illegal, non-prescription drug..... | 8%         | 92%       |
| d. cheated on an exam or other evaluation.....           | 36%        | 64%       |
| e. stole money or some other material possession.....    | 15%        | 85%       |
| f. lied to a parent, teacher or other older person.....  | 66%        | 34%       |
| g. lied to one of your friends or peers .....            | 59%        | 41%       |
| h. attempted suicide .....                               | 5%         | 95%       |

- i. read a pornographic magazine ..... 12% ..... 88%
- j. drank enough alcohol to be legally drunk..... 12% ..... 88%
- k. intentionally tried to physically hurt someone..... 20% ..... 80%
- l. intentionally tried to emotionally hurt someone ..... 23% ..... 77%
- m. gambled or bet your money on something..... 20% ..... 80%
- n. smoked a cigarette or used another tobacco product ..... 23% ..... 77%
2. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life these days?  
 31%=Very satisfied                      13%=Not too satisfied  
 53%=Somewhat satisfied              3%=Not at all satisfied
3. Which of the following words or phrases, if any, accurately describes you?
- | accurate?                | Yes | No  | accurate?                             | Yes | No                    |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|---------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| a. too busy .....        | 54% | 46% | h. upbeat.....n...have high hopes     | 37% | 87%..... 13%          |
| b. stressed out .....    | 50% | 50% | i. lacking purpose disappointed       | 80% | 35%..... 65%          |
| c. optimistic .....      | 54% | 46% | j. unmotivated.p...confused           | 21% | 79%..... 55%..... 45% |
| d. content .....         | 59% | 41% | k. physically attractive always tired | 39% | 46%..... 54%          |
| e. lazy .....            | 41% | 59% | l. mistrust people religious          | 32% | 68%..... 78%..... 22% |
| f. angry with life ..... | 26% | 74% | m. high integritys...lonely           | 60% | 40%..... 36%..... 64% |
| g. skeptical.....        | 33% | 67% | t. encouraged .....                   | 74% | 26%                   |

**SECTION E: Beliefs and Perspectives About Life**

1. Please mark one answer next to each statement to indicate whether you agree or disagree with that statement.

-----agree?-----

Statement	Yes	No	Not Sure
a. freedom means being able to do anything you want to do, as long as it is legal .....	54%	35%	11%
b. there is no such thing as "absolute truth"; people may define "truth" in contradictory ways and still be correct .....	29%	43%	28%
c. the Bible does not provide today's people with practical standards for living .....	17%	67%	16%
d. everything in life is negotiable.....	23%	55%	22%
e. there's nothing wrong with breaking the law as long as it doesn't hurt anybody .....	12%	80%	8%
f. lying is sometimes necessary .....	38%	48%	14%
g. only the Bible provides a clear and indisputable description of moral truth .....	72%	12%	16%
h. nothing can be known for certain except the things that you experience in your life .....	39%	38%	23%
i. when it comes to matters of morals and ethics, truth means different things to different people; no one can be absolutely positive that they have the truth.....	48%	29%	23%
j. what is right for one person in a given situation might not be right for another person who encounters that same situation .....	70%	15%	15%
k. God may know the meaning of truth, but humans are not capable of grasping that knowledge.....	31%	44%	25%
l. every religion offers a different explanation of the meaning of life and truth.....	59%	18%	23%
m. the best philosophy for life is: do whatever feels or seems right, as long as it doesn't harm anyone else .....	22%	62%	16%
n. you know that something is morally or ethically right if it works.....	16%	54%	30%
o. God established the limits for humankind; acting in conflict with His laws has negative consequences for those people .....	57%	13%	30%
p. the Bible isn't very relevant for today's problems.....	15%	68%	17%
q. the moral standards of Americans these days are just as high as ever .....	20%	59%	21%
r. the only intelligent way to live is to make the best choice you can in every situation based on your feelings at the moment .....	33%	48%	19%

2. Read the list of life conditions described below. If each of these conditions were possible for you to achieve in your future, please indicate how much you desire that condition for your future: a lot, some, a little bit, or not at all.

-----how desirable is this?-----

Condition	A lot	Some	Little Bit	Not at all
a. good physical health .....	83%	14%	3%	0%
b. a high-paying job .....	55%	30%	8%	7%
c. being active in a church .....	64%	24%	10%	2%
d. influence other people's lives.....	64%	25%	8%	3%
e. having a close relationship with God.....	77%	15%	6%	2%
f. live close to family and relatives .....	48%	31%	16%	5%
g. achieve fame or public recognition.....	25%	28%	30%	17%
h. having a comfortable lifestyle.....	70%	23%	6%	1%
i. having close, personal friendships .....	81%	13%	4%	2%
j. having a fulfilled sex life within marriage.....	61%	21%	9%	9%
k. having a clear purpose for living .....	81%	14%	4%	1%
l. high personal integrity .....	69%	23%	6%	2%
m. to make a difference in the world .....	62%	24%	11%	3%
n. having a spouse and children .....	73%	15%	6%	6%
o. having one marriage partner for life .....	85%	7%	3%	5%

3. Please mark one answer next to each statement to indicate whether you agree or disagree with that statement.

-----agree?-----

Statement	Yes	No	Not Sure
a. the main purpose of life is enjoyment and personal fulfillment.....	29%	55%	16%
b. it's better to get even than to get mad.....	12%	79%	9%
c. in times of trouble or crisis, I feel all alone .....	40%	47%	13%
d. sometimes, I wonder if life is worth living.....	38%	53%	9%
e. one person cannot really make a difference in this world .....	22%	66%	12%
f. everyone needs a hero in their life .....	62%	23%	15%
g. I know one or more adults who you feel really have it together.....	75%	11%	12%
h. there is nobody whom I consider to be my hero or model for life.....	24%	65%	11%
i. life is too complex these days .....	49%	34%	17%
j. what I think doesn't matter.....	19%	68%	13%
k. the future will be better than today .....	34%	30%	36%



5. Please mark one answer next to each statement to indicate whether you agree or disagree with that statement.

-----agree?-----

Statement	Yes	No	Not Sure
a. the Christian faith is relevant to the way I live today	69%	12%	19%
b. the Christian churches in my area are relevant to the way I live today	56%	19%	25%
c. the Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings	70%	10%	20%
d. I, personally, have a responsibility to tell other people about my religious beliefs	68%	15%	17%
e. the devil, or Satan, is not a living being, but is a symbol of evil	31%	49%	20%
f. there is really a place of permanent suffering, which is known as hell	80%	8%	12%
g. if a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in Heaven	23%	62%	16%
h. what I do for other people is more important than what I believe about Jesus Christ	14%	74%	12%
i. there are a lot of hypocrites in my church	32%	29%	39%
j. all good people, whether or not they consider Jesus Christ to be their savior, will live in Heaven after they die	13%	69%	18%
k. Jesus sometimes made mistakes	17%	67%	16%
l. it does not matter what religious faith you follow because all faiths teach similar lessons	21%	54%	25%
m. no one can really prove which religion is absolutely true	40%	34%	26%
n. a person can experience a relationship with God personally	84%	5%	11%

-----agree?-----

Statement	Yes	No	Not Sure
l. Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews and all other people pray to the same God, even though they use different names for their god .....	21%	52%	27%
m. when it comes to religion, what you do in life is more important than what you believe.....	15%	62%	23%
n. when it comes to religion, what type of person you are is more important than what you accomplish.....	43%	27%	30%
o. there are some sins or crimes which are so serious that they cannot be forgiven by God.....	18%	68%	14%

6. Have you ever made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in your life today?

86%=Yes      14%=No

7. If so, at what age did you make that commitment? at age  
 5=8%    at age 10=10%    at age 12=12%    at age 15=6%    at age 18=1%

8. Which one of the following descriptions comes closest to describing your view of God?  
(Circle one answer.)

2%=Everyone is god.

85%=God is the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect creator  
of the universe who rules the world today.

4%=God refers to the total realization of personal, human potential.

1%=There are many gods, each with different power and authority.

2%=God represents a state of high consciousness that a person may reach.

.4%=There is no such thing as God.

5%=I don't know what I believe about God.

9. Which of the following statements best describes what I believe will happen  
to me after I die?

6%=When you die you will go to Heaven because you  
have tried to obey the Ten Commandments.

3%=When you die you will go to Heaven because you are  
basically a good person.

75%=When you die you will go to Heaven because you  
have confessed your sins and have accepted  
Jesus Christ as your savior.

3%=When you die you will go to Heaven because God  
loves all people and will not let them perish.

1%=When you die you will not go to Heaven.

12%=You do not know what will happen after you die.

10. When you graduate from high school or move away from home, how likely is it that you  
will attend a church on a regular basis?

63%=very likely

7%=not too likely

28%=somewhat likely

2%=not at all likely

## How Our Youth View the Truth

The responses of churched youth to seven statements regarding the existence of absolute truth indicate that relatively few of our young people believe in absolute truth. Fewer still refer to objective standards of truth and morality in making life decisions.

Table D-1.1 depicts the responses of 3,795 churched youth to the seven separate survey questions. Their answers to those questions reveal that our youth are not sold on the existence of absolute truth and objective standards of morality. Cumulatively, only nine percent (9%) of the students interviewed provided a "pro-truth" reply to each of the seven statements. In other words, only one in eleven of our youth give evidence that they possess a consistent, cohesive belief in absolute truth. "This is an astoundingly low proportion," says the researcher, George Barna, "given that the sample is churched kids."

A significant number of our youth endorse the concept that some things are true for all people, for all times, and in all places, in some circumstances, but reject the idea when the question is phrased differently. This intimates that many of our kids are struggling with the concept of truth and grappling not only with how to understand it, but also with how it applies to them.

It is apparent from the survey that our youth have had little training or education regarding truth (whether it exists, for example, and how to discern it and apply it); consequently, they don't know what to think or do with the truth when they meet it.

**Table D-1.1**  
**Reactions to Statements**  
**About Absolute Truth**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
1. Only the Bible provides a clear and indisputable description of moral truth	72%	12%	16%
2. What is right for one person in a given situation might not be right for another person who encounters that same situation	71%	15%	15%
3. When it comes to matters of morals and ethics, truth means different things	48%	29%	23%

to different people; no one can be absolutely positive they have the truth			
4. Nothing can be known for certain except the things that you experience in your life	39%	38%	23%
5. God may know the meaning of truth, but humans are not capable of grasping that knowledge	31%	44%	25%
6. There is no such thing as absolute truth; people may define truth in contradictory ways and still be correct	29%	43%	28%
7. Everything in life is negotiable	23%	56%	22%
All 7 statements: Took a pro-truth position	9%	91%	

Table D-1.1 makes it clear that many of our youth have no choice but to make conditional decisions -- choosing what seems to be best in any given instance -- without referring to the truth that God has revealed to us. "It appears," says Barna, "that expecting today's youth to live in awareness of and accordance with a group of moral absolutes is unrealistic at this time."

Such a circumstance presents us with a challenge: to equip our youth with a belief in biblical truth that can guide their decisions and behavior, leading them to choose right in a world that so often encourages wrong choices.

## Chapter Fifteen

# Survey Analysis on Love and Sex

Our children are growing up in a sex-sated culture. Television, movies, music, magazines, books, billboards -- even the curriculum of many public schools -- communicate messages about sex that are in stark contrast to biblical values. Teenagers today see and hear sexual messages everywhere, and they're paying attention. And it shows.

According to general research by George Barna, of the Barna Research Group, only twenty-three percent (23%) of the entire Baby Buster generation (churched and unchurched) claim to be virgins. More than three-quarters admit to having sexual intercourse with another single person. Two out of ten single Busters say they have had sex with a married person. One in fourteen married Busters has had extramarital sex. Almost half (47%) of the babies born to Baby Buster females in 1992 were born to unmarried mothers.<sup>ii</sup> And girls are having sex much earlier these days; the median age for a young woman's first act of premarital sex has fallen from 19 in 1960 to 17 in 1990.

### **Sexual Activity of Churched Youth**

Those figures are disturbing enough; but the 1994 research among churched youth reveals that our kids -- kids from Christian homes and good churches -- are also crumbling under the constant pressures of a sex-crazed society.

By age eighteen, twenty-seven percent (27%) of churched youth have experienced sexual intercourse, and fifty-five percent (55%) have engaged in fondling breasts; in other words, your son or daughter faces a one-in-four chance of engaging in sexual intercourse by the age of eighteen.

### **Sexual Activity Compared by Age Groups**

Our kids are sold on sex, and they apparently become less -- not more -- resistant as they mature. From the youngest segment (eleven to twelve years old) to the next age category (thirteen to fourteen), the proportion of kids involved in heavy kissing doubled; the fondling of breasts increased fivefold; fondling of genitals increased by a factor of seven; and the incidence of intercourse (experienced by one percent of the youngest age group) increased eight times (to one in eleven).

Activity at each level of sexual involvement --fondling of breasts, fondling of genitals, sexual intercourse -- doubled among fifteen-to-sixteen year olds (compared to those in the next youngest age group). By the age of sixteen, two in five (41%) have engaged in (or permitted) the fondling of breasts;

nearly one in three (30%) have fondled genitals; about one in five (18%) have taken part in sexual intercourse (see Table B-2.2).

**Table B-2.2  
Sexual Activity With Persons  
of the Opposite Sex, by Age Group**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>11-12</b>	<b>13-14</b>	<b>15-16</b>	<b>17-18</b>
Held hands	89%	74%	84%	92%	95%
Embracing & some kissing	73%	39%	65%	80%	86%
Heavy "French" kissing	53%	15%	38%	61%	74%
Fondling of breasts	34%	4%	20%	41%	55%
Fondling of genitals	26%	2%	14%	30%	44%
Sexual intercourse	15%	1%	8%	18%	27%

A majority are involved in heavy kissing and fondling of breasts by the time they reach the seventeen-to-eighteen-year-old age group. About two-thirds of the boys of that age have fondled breasts, an increase of thirty-four percent over the next youngest age group; nearly half of seventeen- and eighteen-year-old boys and girls have fondled the genitals of at least one other person, a forty-seven percent increase. And, due to a fifty percent rise in the incidence of intercourse among seventeen-to-eighteen-year-olds (compared to the next youngest age group), over one in four (27%) admit to having gone "all the way."

**Sexual Activity Compared to 1987**

A ray of hope shines amid all the bad news, however. The research gives us reason to believe that there has been considerable improvement in teens' sexual involvement in the past several years. The 1994 figures, compared with the results obtained in the national "Why Wait?" survey done in 1987, suggests a nearly ten percent decline in each area of sexual involvement among teens in the time between the two surveys.

**Table B-2.5  
Sexual Activity With Persons  
of the Opposite Sex, 1987 vs. 1994**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1987</b>
Held hands	89%	91%
Embracing & some kissing	73%	81%
Heavy "French" kissing	53%	63%
Fondling of breasts	34%	42%
Fondling of genitals	26%	33%
Sexual intercourse	16%	24%

This decline, which may reflect the influence of the "Why Wait?" campaign and similar programs, indicates that it is possible to equip our youth to resist the all-out assault of a godless culture. It is possible -- if we clearly proclaim biblical standards to our kids and give them solid reasons to behave morally -- to steel them against the traps and temptations of a sex-sated society. We must not only heed the research that portrays a generation in grave danger; we must also hear when it strikes a note of hope, and gives us reason to believe that we can do something.

**What Do They Consider Morally Acceptable?**

The study reveals that sexual activity is not at all uncommon among our kids. It also reveals that a surprising number see nothing wrong with premarital sexual involvement.

Over half of our kids (51%) could not state that fondling of breasts was morally unacceptable (see Table B-3.1). More than one-third (35%) consider the fondling of breasts to be morally acceptable. Nearly that many (29%) view the fondling of genitals as moral behavior. And one in five of our kids (20%) see sexual intercourse outside of marriage as moral. The study reveals that many of our kids think that heavy petting -- even sexual intercourse --

**Table B-3.1  
Activities Deemed Morally Acceptable  
Among Two People Who Are In Love,  
Are Willing, But Are Not Married**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>ALWAYS</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>NEVER</b>	<b>NOT SURE</b>
Holding hands	85%	14%	1%	1%
Embracing & some kissing	68%	29%	2%	1%
Heavy "French" kissing	33%	48%	11%	9%
Fondling of breasts	10%	25%	49%	16%
Fondling of genitals	9%	20%	55%	16%
Sexual intercourse	7%	13%	68%	12%

between two unmarried individuals is perfectly moral.

Moreover, for nearly every practice measured in the study, nearly all of the kids who define that behavior as "morally acceptable" have engaged in it. For example, thirty-six percent (36%) of our kids say that fondling of breasts between unmarried people is morally acceptable; thirty-three percent (33%) have engaged in that behavior (see Table B-3.2). Twenty-nine percent (29%) view the fondling of genitals as moral; twenty-five percent (25%) admit to having done so themselves. And twenty percent (20%) approve sexual intercourse outside marriage; fifteen percent (15%) have participated in that activity. These figures clearly indicate the relationship between our kids' truth views and their behaviors. In each case, there is a close correlation between judging a behavior to be "okay" morally, and engaging in that behavior.

**Table B-3.2  
Activities Deemed Morally Acceptable,  
And the Incidence of Such Behavior  
(base: acceptable "always" or "sometimes")**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Morally Acceptable</b>	<b>Engaged in This Activity</b>
Holding hands	99%	88%
Embracing and some kissing	97%	72%
Heavy "French" kissing	80%	51%
Fondling of breasts	36%	33%
Fondling of genitals	30%	25%
Sexual intercourse	20%	15%

A frightening implication lies buried in those figures, like a snake slumbering in tall grass: the fact that the number of our kids who deem those activities to be morally acceptable is higher than the number who are involved in each activity suggests that there is probably more illegitimate sexual behavior yet to be unleashed among our youth. There are some kids who judge premarital sex to be moral who have not yet engaged in that behavior themselves; the study indicates that they are not restrained by any moral conviction. Therefore, it is apparent that we have yet to "max out" the proportion of kids who, based solely on moral judgments, feel perfectly justified in engaging in sexual intercourse.

**Moral Views by Age Group**

One of the interesting insights of the study reveals that our kids form their ideas about the right and wrong of sexual behavior well before they enter high school. Over a quarter (26%) of our eleven- and twelve-year-olds consider premarital fondling of breasts to be morally acceptable; one in five (21%) of that age group deem fondling of genitals among unmarried persons as moral, and nearly as many (19%) say that premarital sex is moral (see Table B-3.3).

**Table B-3.3**  
**Activities Deemed Morally Acceptable,**  
**By Respondent Age Group**  
**(base: acceptable "always" or "sometimes")**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>11-12</b>	<b>13-14</b>	<b>15-16</b>	<b>17-18</b>
Holding hands	97%	99%	99%	99%
Embracing & some kissing	92%	96%	98%	98%
Heavy "French" kissing	64%	79%	84%	83%
Fondling of breasts	26%	35%	39%	38%
Fondling of genitals	21%	29%	32%	30%
Sexual intercourse	19%	21%	22%	18%

While the numbers in each category above do change as our youth mature, they change incrementally, indicating that their sexual mores are largely in place before they even enter their teens. This suggests that attempts to educate and influence our children's ideas about sexual morality must not be put off until they enter a high school youth group; we must build a firm foundation of biblical sexuality well before our kids enter high school.

Furthermore, those numbers -- already too high among eleven- and twelve-year-olds -- do not decline as our kids mature. The percentage of our kids who judge these behaviors as immoral increases from the youngest age group we studied to the next (thirteen- to fourteen-year-olds), and peaks among fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds. At those ages, two in five (39%) believe fondling of breasts among unmarried people is morally acceptable; one in three (32%) say that fondling of genitals is okay; and more than one in five see nothing wrong with premarital sexual intercourse. Although a slight decrease in each category occurs among seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds (38% approve fondling of breasts, 30% condone fondling of genitals, and 18% endorse intercourse among unmarried partners), the study clearly indicates that our kids are becoming older, but no wiser, about matters of sexual morality.

**Moral Views Compared to 1987**

These results differ little from the attitudes of kids surveyed in 1987 for the national "Why Wait?" campaign. The percentage of kids who regard the fondling of breasts and genitals among unmarried persons as a moral

activity declined by three points in the seven years between the two studies (see Table B-3.6).

**Table B-3.6**  
**Activities Deemed Morally**  
**Acceptable, 1994 vs. 1987**  
**(base: acceptable "always" or "sometimes")**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1987</b>
Holding hands	99%	98%
Embracing & some kissing	97%	96%
Heavy "French" kissing	81%	82%
Fondling of breasts	36%	39%
Fondling of genitals	29%	32%
Sexual intercourse	20%	25%

A slightly larger decline occurred among those who viewed premarital intercourse as "morally acceptable" (25% in 1987, 20% in 1994). This is not a significant increase in our kid's moral convictions. They may be engaging less in unacceptable behavior, but it's not due largely to their moral convictions against it. This is not encouraging for me as a father. I want my kids to be able to recognize what things are wrong, and I want that knowledge to embolden them to choose right.

**What Makes Pre-marital Sex Acceptable to Them?**

In spite of the fact that one in five of our kids (20%) said they think sexual intercourse between unmarried persons is morally acceptable, more than twice that number (46%) said that they would be more likely to have sex with someone if they "were in love with the person." In other words, nearly half of our kids would tend to agree with Brittney's attitude that love -- not marriage -- makes it right.

To many of our kids, that is also true of an intention to marry. Forty-four percent (44%) say that they would be more likely to have sex with a person they "really intended to marry." Thus, nearly half of our kids stop short of endorsing the marriage commitment alone as the proper context of sex, but consider the intention to marry (a determination that may pale or disappear tomorrow, or next week, or next month) a suitable incentive for sexual involvement --- another indication of our kids' willingness to compromise sexually in advance of marriage.

Similarly, one in four of our kids (26%) say that they would be more likely to have sex if they were positive a pregnancy would not result. An identical

number responded that they would be more likely to "go all the way" if they could know that their parents would not find out, and one in five (22%) said they would be more likely to have sex if they felt that their parents "would not mind." Perhaps the sole encouragement we can glean from the data is that only one in nine (11%) said that being "strongly encouraged" by friends to have sex would make them more likely to do so (see Table B-3.7).

**Table B-3.7  
Conditions Under Which Churched Youth  
Would Have Sexual Intercourse Today**

**CONDITIONS MAKE INTERCOURSE:**

<b>Conditions</b>	<b>More Likely</b>	<b>Less Likely</b>	<b>Doesn't Matter</b>
You were in love with the person	46%	19%	36%
Really intended to marry them	44%	19%	37%
Positive a pregnancy would not result	26%	25%	49%
Knew your parents would not find out	26%	24%	51%
Felt your parents would not mind	22%	25%	54%
Friends strongly encouraged you to do so	11%	31%	58%

Such responses reveal that our kids' morals are not based on fundamental, fixed principles, but on fluid concepts of right and wrong. As a result, our children's decisions about the morality and advisability of sexual involvement are subject chiefly to their youthful emotions or intentions. There has not been a significant change in how our youth responded to this set of questions from 1987 (see Table B-3.8).

**Table B-3.8**  
**Conditions Under Which Churched Youth**  
**Would Have Sexual Intercourse**  
**1994 versus 1987**  
**(base: said conditions would make such**  
**intercourse more likely)**

<b>Conditions</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1987</b>
You were in love with the person	46%	NA
Really intended to marry them	44%	39%
Positive a pregnancy would not result	26%	29%
Knew your parents would not find out	26%	28%
Felt your parents would not mind	22%	22%
Friends strongly encouraged you to do so	11%	16%

These statistics point out the fact that our youth are floundering and flailing; they are being tempted and tossed because they do not have a sound moral and spiritual standard to anchor them when they are faced with difficult choices. As we will see, that single factor -- the possession of a strong truth view -- will make a world of difference in what they think and do.

**What Difference Does Truth Make?**

The research strongly indicates that a strong conviction about the existence of truth and objective moral standards will anchor our youth, even when they are pushed and pulled by a culture in crisis. Without such a conviction, our kids won't know which way is up or which choice is right; they'll be buffeted by the culture and, more likely than not, they'll succumb to its pressures. This is not just something I believe; the cold, hard facts of the study bear it out.

The study reveals that youth are much more likely to accept sexual petting and intercourse before marriage as moral if they lack a strong pro-truth view. Youth who do not affirm the existence of absolute truth are twice as likely to classify fondling of breasts (between unmarried persons) as moral. Young people who are not equipped with a consistent view of truth and morality are three times as likely to regard fondling of genitals (between unmarried persons) as morally acceptable. And kids who lack a "truth lens" are four times as likely to approve premarital sexual intercourse as a "moral" choice.

The data also indicate that nearly all of the kids who define a behavior as "morally acceptable" have engaged in it. Consequently, it is likely that those kids who define premarital petting or intercourse as "moral" have succumbed (or will soon) to the temptation to engage in that behavior. Therefore, while a strong foundation of biblical views about truth and morality is no guarantee that your kids will not become sexually involved before marriage, the lack of a strong foundation may nearly guarantee that they will!

**The Difference Faith Makes**

Among the students participating in the survey, sixty-five percent (65%) were classified as "born again" (that is, they said they had made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their lives today, and affirmed that when they die they will go to heaven because they have confessed their sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior).

Not surprisingly, the study revealed that a young person's faith commitment plays a role in determining his or her views about sexual morality. Compared to born-again students, non-Christians (35% of the total) were twice as likely to regard the fondling of breasts and the fondling of genitals among unmarried partners as moral. And for every three non-Christian youth who stated that premarital sex is "morally acceptable," only one born-again youth took the same stand. And what born again students believe is morally acceptable by and large allows them to engage in that activity (see Tables B-3.5 and B-2.3).

**Table B-3.5  
The Moral Acceptability of Sexual  
Activity with Persons of the  
Opposite Sex, by Faith Commitment  
(base: acceptable "always" or "sometimes")**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Born Again Christians</b>	<b>Non-Christians</b>
Holding hands	99%	99%	98%
Embracing and some kissing	97%	97%	97%
Heavy "French" kissing	81%	79%	85%
Fondling of breasts	36%	27%	52%
Fondling of genitals	29%	20%	45%
Sexual intercourse	20%	11%	37%

**Table B-2.3  
Sexual Activity with Persons  
Of the Opposite Sex, by Truth Views  
Believe in Absolute Truth?**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Held hands	86%	89%
Embracing and some kissing	71%	74%
Heavy "French" kissing	51%	53%
Fondling of breasts	35%	34%
Fondling of genitals	25%	26%
Sexual intercourse	13%	16%

**Truth More Influential Than Faith**

Perhaps the most shocking revelation of the study, however, is the indication that our kids' attitudes and behaviors are influenced more by their truth views than by whether or not they are born again. The two groups are not mutually exclusive, but born-again kids are fifty percent (50%) more likely than those who accept absolute truth to say that fondling of breasts or genitals is morally acceptable between unmarried persons. And born-again youth are two times as likely to consider premarital sex a moral activity. In other words, your child's morality will be positively affected by a born-again experience, but even more so by the development of strong convictions regarding morality (and, of course, still more if the those two factors are combined!). This applies not only to the area of sexual involvement; it is true across the board, in every area of behavior and belief.

The implications of this discovery may take some thinking through, but perhaps it will help us understand why so many Christian kids, who seem to love the Lord, are falling into harmful, sinful behaviors -- they have the desire to please God, but because they believe truth is subjectively determined, they more readily accept the counterfeit as a means of fulfilling their desires.

**The Importance of Convictions on Truth**

The study revealed yet another startling fact. If your kids do not accept the existence of objective moral standards, they will be twice as likely to consider having illicit sexual relations in certain circumstances. For example, kids who do not accept truth to be absolute are twice as likely to consider having sex "if they were in love with the person." In fact, in almost every circumstance suggested by the study ("if you really intended to marry," "if

you were positive a pregnancy would not result," "if you knew your parents would not find out," and "if your friends strongly encouraged you to do so"), youth who did not possess a pro-truth view were two times as likely to say that the cited condition would make them "more likely" to have sex (the exception: kids who denied the existence of absolute truth were sixty-four percent (64%) more likely, if they "felt [their] parents would not mind," to consider engaging in sexual intercourse). See Table B-3.9.

**Table B-3.9**  
**Conditions Under Which Churched Youth**  
**Would Have Sexual Intercourse Today,**  
**by Their Views on Truth**  
**(base: said conditions would make**  
**such intercourse more likely)**  
**Is there absolute truth?**

<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
You were in love with the person	25%	48%
Really intended to marry them	24%	47%
Positive a pregnancy would not result	14%	27%
Knew your parents would not find out	13%	27%
Felt your parents would not mind	14%	23%
Friends strongly encouraged you to do so	6%	12%

Moreover, the data again indicates that, while a born-again experience does have an impact on how our kids plan to make future sexual decisions, it is in every case half as influential as that person's convictions about truth.

In other words, the likelihood of young people being persuaded to engage in premarital sex based on emotional or practical circumstances (not moral considerations) increases significantly if they are not equipped with solid, foundational views about truth and morality (see Table B-3.4).

**Table B-3.4**  
**Morally Acceptable Sexual Activity with Persons**  
**of the Opposite Sex, in Relation to the Respondent's Truth Views**  
**(base: said these activities are morally acceptable**  
**among unmarried, in love, consenting individuals**

**Believe in absolute truth?**

<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Holding hands	99%	99%
Embracing and some kissing	96%	97%
Heavy "French" kissing	73%	82%
Fondling of breasts	18%	37%
Fondling of genitals	11%	31%
Sexual intercourse	5%	21%

This study shows that the most important thing we can do for our children -- the investment that will do the most good -- is to introduce them to the person of Truth and instill within them a conviction that his truth is right for all people, for all times, and in all places. The research indicates that doing that will double, triple, even quadruple their chances of making moral choices in an immoral world.

## Chapter Sixteen

# Survey Analysis on Marriage and Family

According to William E. Bennett's "Index of Leading Cultural Indicators," the divorce rate has climbed from 9.2 (per 1,000 married women) in 1960 to 20.9 in 1991, a 120% jump. Within that same period, the percentage of children who live with single mothers has rocketed from 8% to 22% (an increase of 175%), while births to unwed mothers have increased from 5.3% (of total births) in 1960 to 28% in 1990 (a leap of 400%).<sup>iii</sup>

We must face it; our kids are growing up in a day and age that glorifies sex and motherhood outside of marriage, and often demeans the institution of marriage as restrictive and outdated. Reasonably healthy depictions of two-parent families on prime time television are rare and are outnumbered substantially by single-parent households or multiple-parent households.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that television is the culprit; but at the very least, it reflects what people in our society think and feel. And the message of our culture very often seems to be that a happy marriage and a two-parent family is unrealistic, unnecessary, and boring.

If we expect our children to develop strong biblical values about marriage and the family, we must prepare them to do battle with the values of contemporary society. And the battle begins in our own families. What do our children say about their homes and families? Do they feel loved? How much time are they spending with Mom and Dad, as opposed to MTV? And how are their own family experiences shaping their views of marriage and family?

### **Family Portrait**

Technology these days is so advanced that we're shocked by very little. Telephone calls from planes, interactive virtual reality games, entire libraries on CD-ROM discs -- every new development is greeted with aplomb. But I remember the first time I saw a Polaroid camera. It struck me as an amazing piece of technology. I considered it miraculous to be able to point the lens at a subject, snap the shutter, extract the photo from the camera, tick off sixty seconds, and then separate the print from the protective paper to reveal the final photo.

Many years later, Polaroid came out with yet another advancement, a camera they called the "One Step." This photographic wonder spat out a stiff print instantly, which developed from a blank square of smelly chemicals

into a color photo before my very eyes! The photographer could watch the picture emerge without leaving the scene.

Our survey of 3,795 youth allows us to do much the same thing; by careful study and analysis, we can watch our own family portrait emerge before our very eyes.

The first portrait of marriage and family in the church that emerges reveals that nearly three in four (73%) of our kids live with both their mother and father; about one in four (23%) are the children of divorced parents. Thirteen percent (13%) of our kids live in single-parent homes, and one percent live with both a stepfather and stepmother.

### **What is Their Relationship to Dad?**

Three-fourths of our kids (74%) say that they are fairly or very close to their father. However, the study suggests that father-child relationships become more distant, not closer, as teens mature. For instance, junior high school students are much more likely than senior high students to feel "very close" to their father.

Our kids seem to have positive feelings toward their fathers. A majority (56%) state that they frequently feel proud of their father. Half claim that their father frequently shows his love for them. One in five (19%) say they frequently do something special with Dad that involves just the two of them. Less than one in eleven (8%) say they frequently wonder if their father loves them (see Table A-2.2).

**Table A-2.2  
Frequency of Conditions  
Related to One's Father**

<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Never</b>
Feel proud of your father	56%	38%	9%	7%
Feel your father shows his love for you	51%	29%	14%	7%
Show your love for your father	41%	36%	18%	5%
Seek advice from your father	26%	38%	21%	15%
Do something special with your father that	19%	39%	28%	15%

involves just the two of you				
Talk with your father about your personal concerns	12%	34%	32%	22%
Wonder whether or not your father loves you	8%	14%	21%	58%

A warning appears in the midst of the good news, however. In spite of the thriving relationships that many church-ed kids seem to enjoy with their fathers, the study clearly communicates the fact that fathers are not among the primary counselors church-ed youth confide in or turn to for advice. One out of every four (26%) say they frequently seek advice from their father, and about one in nine (12%) frequently discuss personal concerns with Dad. The implication is that, while most of our kids enjoy positive father-child relationships, they do not often hear Dad's perspective on intimate or sensitive matters.

There appears to be little difference between how boys and girls describe their relationship with their father. While boys are slightly more likely to say they feel very close to Dad, the gap was minute (35% for males, 29% among females). Sons were only slightly more likely than daughters to frequently seek advice from their father (28% to 23%). Females were less likely than males to say they frequently did something special with just their father (15% for females, 22% among males). The largest difference in how boys and girls relate to their fathers occurs in how frequently they demonstrate their love for Dad: half of the girls (47%) say they express love to their dad frequently, compared to just one-third of the boys (34%) who make the same claim.

**Time Spent with Dad**

Though our kids seem to enjoy positive relationships with their dads, they seem to spend precious little time with them. The median amount of time spent with a father in a typical week was seventeen minutes. Though one in four of our kids say they spent an hour or more each week in meaningful conversations with their father, one of every seven kids claim to spend no time in such interaction with Dad.

There was virtually no difference between the amount of time sons spent in conversation with fathers and the amount of time daughters spent with dads in a typical week. This area was, however, the single instance in which the

responses in the 1994 study differed significantly from the results of the 1987 "Why Wait" survey among church youth; in most cases, the state of father-child relationships today is unchanged from the way things appeared seven years ago. But the median amount of time spent with fathers rose, from twelve minutes per week among the youth participating in the "Why Wait?" survey, to seventeen minutes a week for the youth in the 1994 survey. While there is still ample room for improvement, the increase suggests that fathers may be giving more attention to their relationships with their children today than they have in the past -- a welcome development, indeed. See Tables A-2.1; A-2.3; and A-2.4.

**Table A-2.1  
Closeness to One's Father**

<b>Closeness with Father</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1987</b>
Very close	32%	30%
Fairly close	42%	43%
Not too close	14%	17%
Not at all close	7%	6%
Not alive/don't know father	5%	4%

**Table A-2.3  
Frequency of Conditions Related to  
One's Father, 1987 vs. 1994  
(base: occurs "frequently")**

<b>Conditions</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1987</b>
Feel proud of your father	56%	59%
Feel your father shows his love for you	51%	47%
Show your love for your father	41%	33%
Seek advice from your father	26%	27%
Do something special with your father that involves just the two of you	19%	16%
Talk with your father about your personal concerns	12%	11%
Wonder whether or not your father loves you	8%	7%

**Table A-2.4  
Time Spent with Father  
in a Typical Week**

<b>Amount of Time Spent</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1987</b>
No time	16%	15%
Less than 5 minutes	14%	17%
Between 5 and 15 minutes	20%	23%
Between 16 and 30 minutes	16%	17%
Between 31 and 60 minutes	13%	14%
1 Hour or more	23%	14%
Media (minutes)	17%	12%

**What is Their Relationship to Mom?**

Greg Howard and Craig MacIntosh, authors of the newspaper comic strip, "Sally Forth," depicted the reality of many families with a series of panels that showed a mother setting the breakfast table as she talked to her daughter.

"Tonight," the mother said, "we're going to have a dinner where we all sit down together. We'll spend a nice leisurely hour talking about the kinds of things families should talk about."

"An hour?" the daughter responded.

"Sure. There are so many things we can discuss that the time will fly by."

"An hour?" the daughter repeated.

"It'll be fun," Mom continued. "We'll turn off the T.V. and..."

The daughter turned to her father. "Shouldn't you at least tell me what I'm being punished for?"

It's funny, of course. But it's also sad. Many families today -- our families - - spend little time in meaningful conversation and interaction between parents and children.

While many fathers are apparently giving more attention to their relationships with their children, mothers still fare significantly better in building good relationships and initiating meaningful conversation with their sons and daughters.

Our kids indicate that they are more likely to feel close to their mother than to their father. A majority (52%) say they feel very close to their mother, substantially more than the one in three (32%) who feel very close to their father. Altogether, nine in ten (88%) characterize their relationship with Mom positively ("very close" or "fairly close"), compared to three in four (74%) who regard their relationship with Dad as positive.

The pattern continues, as two-thirds of our youth (68%) say that their mother frequently shows her love to them (compared to 51% who make the same claim about Dad). Six out of ten (59%) say they frequently feel proud of Mom, and half (52%) frequently show their affection for their mom. Three in ten (30%) claim to frequently "do something special with your mother that involves just the two of you." Only one in eleven (9%) say they frequently wonder if their mother really loves them (see Table A-3.2).

**Table A-3.2  
Frequency of Conditions  
Related to One's Mother**

<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Never</b>
Feel proud of your mother	59%	31%	8%	3%
Feel your mother shows her love for you	68%	22%	7%	3%
Show your love for your mother	52%	34%	12%	3%
Seek advice from your mother	40%	34%	18%	8%
Do something special with your mother that involves just the two of you	30%	37%	25%	8%
Talk with your mother about your personal concerns	39%	35%	18%	8%
Wonder whether or not your mother loves you	9%	13%	19%	59%

The picture that emerges from the study is a portrait of kids who feel loved, and have generally positive impressions of their parents, especially of Mom: mothers are more likely than fathers to frequently show their love for a child, to receive demonstrations of love in return, and to engage in special one-on-one activities with a child.

**They Spend Twice as Much Time with Mom**

Our youth also turn to their mothers more often than their fathers to ask advice or discuss personal concerns. Two out of every five (40%) of our children say they frequently seek advice from Mom. Not surprisingly, daughters more often take their problems or questions to their mothers. Girls are 50% more likely than boys to ask their mother for advice (47% to 31%) and twice as likely as boys (51% to 27%) to talk with their mother about personal concerns.

Our kids -- both male and female -- spend about twice as much time in meaningful conversation and interaction with Mom than they do with Dad. Our youth claim that Mom spends about thirty-seven minutes a week "talking [with them] about things that really matter." This figure has climbed forty percent (40%) in the seven years since the "Why Wait?" survey, indicating that mothers, too, are devoting more time and attention to influencing their children. See Tables A-3.3; A-3.1; and A-3.5.

**Table A-3.3  
Frequency of Conditions  
Related to One's Parents  
(base: occurs "frequently")**

<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Mother</b>	<b>Father</b>
Shows love for you	67%	51%
Feel proud of her/him	57%	56%
Show your love for her/him	50%	41%
Seek advice from her/him	38%	26%
Talk about your personal concerns	38%	12%
Do something special that involves just the two of you	28%	19%
Wonder whether or not she/he loves you	9%	8%

**Table A-3.1  
Closeness to One's Mother**

<b>Closeness with Mother</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1987</b>
Very close	52%	48%
Fairly close	36%	39%
Not too close	8%	9%
Not at all close	3%	2%
Not alive/don't know mother	1%	1%

**Table A-3.5  
Time Spent with Mother  
in a Typical Week**

<b>Amount of Time Spent</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1987</b>
No time	6%	5%
Less than 5 minutes	9%	10%
Between 5 and 15 minutes	16%	20%
Between 16 and 30 minutes	16%	29%
Between 31 and 60 minutes	15%	17%
1 Hour or more	38%	28%
Median (minutes)	37%	27%

At the same time, however, spending roughly one-half hour a week in meaningful dialogue with our kids is certainly insufficient to address all their struggles or answer all their questions. While it is encouraging to see the combined amount of time parents typically spend with their children increase from thirty-nine minutes a week (in 1987) to 54 minutes a week (in 1994), we must recognize the need to redouble our efforts to understand and influence what our children think and believe.

### **What are Their Attitudes about Home?**

"Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home." That old adage is accurate for most of the church-ed youth we surveyed. Three out of every five of our kids (62%) state that they feel their home is a place where they

feel secure and loved. One in seven identify their home as "a place where sometimes I feel loved, but other times I don't." One in eleven (9%) characterize their home primarily as a place where "each of us is trying to love each other." Eight percent (8%) say they usually feel uncomfortable at home and "would rather be elsewhere." Seven percent (7%) say home is a place "where I feel comfortable, although we are not a close, loving family." This has not changed significantly since 1987. See Table A-4.1.

**Table A-4.1**  
**Descriptions of "Home"**

<b>Description</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1987</b>
A place where I feel secure and loved	62%	52%
A place where sometimes I feel loved, but other times I don't	14%	18%
A place where each of us is trying to love each other	9%	11%
A place where I usually feel uncomfortable and would rather be elsewhere	8%	10%
A place where I feel comfortable, although we are not a close, loving family	7%	9%

The impression that most of our kids enjoy a largely positive home life is also reflected in how they view their parents. Nearly six out of ten (56%) say that their parents frequently show that they really love each other; four out of five (79%) say their parents do so at least occasionally. This response suggests that most of our kids have the benefit of parents who model loving marriages, a tremendously encouraging finding of the study (see Table A-4.2).

**Table A-4.2  
How Often Parents Exhibit  
Specified Behaviors**

**My Parents...**

<b>Description of the behavior</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Never</b>
Show that they really love each other	56%	23%	11%	11%
Set good examples for me	54%	32%	10%	4%
Are really interested in who I am	51%	30%	15%	5%
Spend time with me	46%	37%	13%	3%
Admit when they are wrong or mistaken	27%	36%	25%	12%
Expect more of me than is fair	19%	28%	33%	20%
Yell at me	18%	34%	40%	9%
Are too strict	16%	27%	37%	19%
Do not allow me to do the things I want to do	15%	36%	39%	9%
Do not trust me	12%	26%	38%	24%
Fight with each other	10%	20%	44%	27%

By and large, then, we see that when we talk about the kids participating in this survey, we're talking about our kids -- children from good Christian homes, children of good conscientious parents, children whose mothers and fathers provide a generally positive model of marriage and family life.

Keep that in mind, because we will discover that, despite the fact that three in four (73%) say that their family experience has been positive, our kids entertain some disturbing ideas and concepts about marriage and the family.

**What are Their Views on Marriage?**

For years now, many voices in the popular culture have proclaimed the demise of traditional concepts of marriage and family. New terms, like "open marriages," "domestic unions," "palimony," and "blended families" have been coined as a response to societal changes.

But recent research<sup>iv</sup> indicates that most adults in America (not just Christian adults, but the entire adult population) believe that marriage is an important and solid institution; that divorce is a cancer on society and a person's own life; that the benefits of a happy marriage are to be desired. Most adults also believe that the traditional family is critical to the health of the nation.

Our survey of church youth reveals that they espouse many traditional views regarding marriage and family. Nine out of ten (90%) affirm that God's intention was for marriage to last a lifetime. Three in four (73%) agree with the statement, "I would like to be a virgin at marriage" (an interesting response, considering the fact that fifteen percent (15%) have already engaged in sexual intercourse; consequently, it seems that more than one in nine (12%) of our kids who are still virgins don't necessarily plan to remain so until marriage). Among those who have had sexual relations, three in five admit that if they could change their past, they would wait until after marriage to become sexually involved.

Although they overwhelmingly attest that their parents love them and each other, our youth are wrestling with a disturbing degree of confusion, fear, and anxiety about marriage. Less than half of our kids (48%) say that they want a marriage like that of their parents. More than one-third say that they definitely do not wish to duplicate their parents' relationship. One-sixth of our kids claim that they don't know if they want a marriage like Mom and Dad's, suggesting that they may not like what they see (in their parents' marriage), but don't know if they can hope for anything better.

Our kids aren't convinced of the societal importance of marriage and family. Less than half (47%) agreed that "if the traditional family in America falls apart, American society will collapse," a notion to which seventy percent (70%) of the adult population (churched and otherwise) subscribe. Three in ten of our kids (28%) agreed with this statement, and one in four (25%) were not sure what to think.

Our youth are even more convinced than their elders that "these days it is very hard to have a successful marriage." Forty-three percent (43%) of our kids agree with that statement; forty-four percent (44%) disagree (only thirty-two percent (32%) of the adult population agrees with the statement).

One in three (34%) of our youth agree that "marriage problems have been exaggerated; most married couples have fulfilling, healthy marriages." A comparable proportion (32%) disagree with the statement, with the remaining third (34%) answering, "Don't Know." See Table B-1.1.

**Table B-1.1  
Attitudes and Perspectives  
Regarding Marriage and Family**

<b>Perspective</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
God intended marriage to last a lifetime	90%	4%	6%
I would like to be a virgin at marriage	73%	13%	14%
Overall, you feel that your family experience has been positive	73%	14%	14%
If I wasn't a virgin now and I could change the past, I would wait to have sex until after marriage*	62%	25%	13%
I want a marriage like that of my parents	48%	36%	16%
If the traditional family in America falls apart, American society will collapse	47%	28%	25%
These days it is very hard to have a successful marriage	43%	44%	13%
Marriage problems have been exaggerated; most married couples have fulfilling, healthy marriages	34%	32%	34%
If there are children involved in the marriage, the parents should not get divorced, even if they do not love each other anymore	21%	46%	33%
Anyone who gets married these days should expect that their marriage will end in divorce	6%	86%	8%

[\*percentages are for respondents who admit to having had sexual intercourse already]

## **Their Views on Divorce**

Another disturbing revelation of the survey is the fact that our kids favor divorce -- by a two-to-one margin -- for parents who do not love each other. Nearly half (46%) of our kids disagree with the statement, "if there are children involved in the marriage, the parents should not get divorced, even if they do not love each other anymore." One-fifth (21%) favor staying together for the kids' sake.

Put simply, our kids -- the products of loving marriages and intact families -- are not convinced that marriage is an important and solid institution, nor that divorce is an improper response to marital strife.

One message that comes through loud and clear in all these statistics is the message that our youth are wrestling to make sense of all the pressures, opportunities, and philosophies they encounter in life. As in other areas, the root of this struggle is related to the fact that most of them do not have a strong, cohesive moral standard to serve as a guide for what they think and what they do.

## **How Do They Define the Family?**

Recent studies by the Barna Research Group among American adults indicate a major shift in the ways people define "family." People once defined a family as a group of individuals related to each other by marriage, birth, or adoption. That is no longer true; these days, a majority of adults define a family as "all of those people whom I deeply care about, and all of those people who deeply care about me."

That definition means that one's family tomorrow may not encompass the same group that constitutes the family today. Family members may be added or subtracted according to feelings; I may care for a different set of people tomorrow, or next month, or next year. Family is no longer based upon legal or biblical foundations; it is based upon feeling. In other words, a "nineties kind of family" has assumed a very fluid and temporary meaning.

Our survey indicates that the majority of church youth have adopted this viewpoint. A large majority of our youth -- three out of every five (60%) -- buy into the idea of this "nouveau family," defining family as "those who deeply care about you, or whom you deeply care about." Only one in three (32%) possesses a traditional perspective of what constitutes a family ("people related to each other by birth, adoption, or marriage"). Five percent (5%) of our kids say a family is "people living together," and four percent (4%) consider "people sharing the same goals and values" to be a family. To put it another way, two-thirds of our kids, when given a choice of

four definitions of "family," select a definition that reflects a "no risk, no commitment" kind of arrangement (see Table A-1.1).

**Table A-1.1  
Defining "Family"**

<b>Definition</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>11-14</b>	<b>15-18</b>
Those who deeply care about you, or you deeply care about	60%	56%	62%	61%	59%
People related to each other by birth, adoption, or marriage	32%	34%	30%	30%	33%
People living together	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%
People sharing same goals and values	4%	5%	4%	4%	4%

However, it is apparent from the study that, while most of our kids embrace the nouveau family definition, many of them are not fully aware of the implications of their view; they are still working through how their idea of "family" applies to real life. For instance, although two-thirds of our kids have a fluid definition of family, they aren't yet willing to apply that definition to specific cases.

For example, three-fourths of our kids (74%) define "an unmarried mother and her children" as a family, but only two in five (40%) apply the same appellation to "a man and a woman who are not married but are living together and have had children together." These answers highlight the confusion that exists among our kids, confusion that is exacerbated by the adult world all around them.

One in five of our kids (21%) labels "two divorced women who share housing but do not have a sexual relationship with each other" as a family. One in seven (14%) says that "a man and a woman who are not married but are living together and have no children" constitutes a family.

One in eleven (9%) of our youth characterize two homosexual women living together as a family, and a comparable number (8%) say that two homosexual men living together is a family as well.

Keep in mind that each of these "families" fits within the construct of "those who deeply care about [each other]," to which three in five (60%) of our kids subscribe. Most of our kids possess a concept of the family that would define cohabiting couples and homosexual unions as a legitimate family; the study indicates that they do not fully realize the implications of their view, but it is there, nonetheless, to shape their reasoning -- and their behavior -- in the future (see Table A-1.2).

**Table A-1.2**  
**Is This a Family?**  
**% who say it is a family:**

<b>Description of Family Unit</b>	<b>Youth</b>	<b>Adults</b>
An unmarried mother and her children	74%	81%
A man and a woman who are not married but are living together and have had children together	40%	77%
Two divorced women who share housing but do not have a sexual relationship with each other	21%	21%
A man and a woman who are not married but are living together and have no children	14%	NA
Two homosexual women living together	9%	21%
Two homosexual men living together	8%	20%

We may take heart from this. The fact that our kids have not yet realized or explored all the ramifications of the nouveau family indicates that they may not have totally rejected biblical concepts of the family; as in other areas, they may simply lack the ability to distinguish the real from the counterfeit. They may yet be open to sound biblical teaching and careful, loving guidance. Furthermore, our kids' views about family are not as disturbing as the views of the adult population at large. According to the Barna Research Group, one in five adults (20%) says that two homosexuals living together constitutes a family; one in five adults (21%) endorses the living arrangement of two divorced women sharing housing as a "family," and three in four adults (77%) define cohabiting couples as a family.

On the other hand, there is cause for concern, not only because our own kids don't know what to make of the family, but because they are surrounded by a culture that approves "alternative families." Our children's teachers, professors, coaches, employers, and neighbors perceive a family as practically any type of domestic partnership. Our kids' views about the

family will be constantly questioned and challenged by the dominant culture, and those of our children whose concepts of family do not rest on solid biblical principles will be easily led into tragic error.

### **What Difference Does Truth Make?**

Strong convictions in matters of truth have a definite effect on our youth's views of marriage and family. Our study of church youth suggests that convictions about truth provides a network of roots for our children's concepts of marriage and family. For example, those youth who have formed a strong pro-truth view are more likely to say that God intended marriage to last a lifetime, and to characterize their family experience as positive.

Kids with strong convictions that there is an absolute right and wrong are more apt to value chastity before marriage; they are twenty-three percent (23%) more likely to say, "I would like to be a virgin at marriage," and thirty percent (30%) more likely to say, "If I wasn't a virgin now and I could change the past, I would wait to have sex until after marriage."

Youth who are thoroughly convinced of the existence of absolute moral standards, they will probably have a more optimistic view of marriage than their peers who deny the existence of absolutes. They'll be forty percent (40%) less likely to think that it is "very hard to have a successful marriage" these days, and two-and-a-half times (150%) less likely to say that "anyone who gets married these days should expect that their marriage will end in divorce."

Youth who believe in objective truth are sixty-five percent (65%) more likely to say that "if there are children involved, the parents should not get divorced, even if they do not love each other anymore." In other words, kids who lack a pro-truth view are sixty-five percent (65%) more likely to accept divorce as an option, even when children are involved.

According to the study, your children are also more likely to view the alternative family as legitimate if they lack a strong conviction about the existence of absolute truth and objective moral standards. For example, young people who hold a pro-truth view are seventy-five percent (75%) more likely to consider the traditional family as a vital part of a healthy society.

Youth who lack a pro-truth view are much more accepting of cohabitation (unmarried couples living together); they are forty-six percent (46%) more likely to say that "a man and a woman who are not married but are living

together and have had children together" qualifies as a family, and two-and-a-half times (150%) more likely to say that an unmarried couple with no children make up a family.

The gap between the attitudes of youth who accept objective standards of truth and those who do not is most striking when they are asked to classify homosexual unions. Young people who lack a consistent pro-truth view are four-and-a-half times (350%) more likely to say that two homosexuals -- male or female -- living together are a legitimate family! (see Table A-1.3)

**Table A-1.3**  
**How Perceptions of Absolute Truth**  
**Impact Views of Family**

**% who say it is a family:  
 believe in absolute truth?**

<b>Description of Family Unit</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
An unmarried mother and her children	76%	74%
A man and a woman who are not married but are living together and have had children together	28%	41%
Two divorced women who share housing but do not have a sexual relationship with each other	19%	21%
A man and a woman who are not married but are living together and have no children	6%	15%
Two homosexual women living together	2%	9%
Two homosexual men living together	2%	9%

The study consistently reveals a gap between the views of youth who embrace the existence of truth and those who reject it. That means that youth who are not equipped to evaluate moral matters in an objective way are liable to see marriage as an unnecessary (and, usually, negative) institution. If their morals are not based on fundamental, fixed principals, they will tend to view divorce as an appropriate solution to marital difficulties. If they do not have a sound spiritual and moral standard, they will be more likely to regard "alternative" arrangements (such as cohabitation or homosexual unions) as acceptable "family" settings.

Neither do youth hold these ideas and opinions in a vacuum; what they think about marriage and family will determine their behavior in these areas. The

young person who does not value marriage highly will approach a relationship from an entirely different perspective than someone who possesses a biblical perspective of marriage. A young adult who sees divorce as an option will be more likely to end the relationship during a difficult period. A teen who does not object to "alternative families" will be more likely to consider cohabiting with a boyfriend or girlfriend.

The study intimates that equipping youth for the challenges of preparing for and building a lifelong marriage and healthy family requires strong convictions that truth is right for all people, for all times, and in all places.

## Chapter Seventeen

# Survey Analysis on Faith and Religion

The generation that is now approaching or embarking upon adulthood, called the Baby Busters (those born from 1965-1983) exhibits an interesting combination of religious practice and belief. In many respects, "Busters," while somewhat suspicious of organized religion, appear more interested in spiritual matters than their parents were. General research published by the Barna Research Group indicates that a majority of the current generation are involved in some type of religious activity. One-third of all Busters (the general population, not just those participating in our survey) claim to have attended religious worship services within the past week; over half say they have done so within the past month. One-third of all Busters say they have read from the Bible within the past seven days, and the same proportion indicate that they have shared their faith within the last week.

George Barna, in his informative book, *Baby Busters: The Disillusioned Generation*, reveals that nearly four in ten of today's youth say they watch religious television programming in a typical month (again, these responses represent the entire population, not just churching kids), and three in ten listen to Christian radio. One in four say they read Christian books or magazines with some regularity.

While those results may be surprising -- even encouraging -- the 3,795 churching youth participating in our 1994 survey are -- in some respects, at least -- in an entirely different class from the rest of their generation.

Four out of five of these youth (82%) say that they attend worship services every week. That degree of religious participation is about twice the national average among the rest of their generation, indicating that the study deals with youth who exhibit an extraordinary involvement in church, far above that of the rest of their generation (see Table E-1.1).

**Table E-1.1**  
**Church Service Attendance**  
**Frequency of attending**

<b>Person Evaluated</b>	<b>Every Week</b>	<b>2-3 times Each Month</b>	<b>Once a Month</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Respondent	82%	12%	2%	3%	1%	1%
Father	56%	10%	2%	10%	15%	7%
Mother	70%	9%	2%	8%	9%	3%
Brothers/Sisters living at home	62%	11%	3%	7%	6%	12%

Their record of church attendance becomes more impressive in light of the fact that our youth are more likely than either of their parents to attend church in a given week. In fact, one-fourth of our kids (25%) say that their fathers rarely or never attend worship services, and one-sixth (16%) make the same statement about Mom.

As we might expect, our youth say that their mothers are more likely than their fathers to attend church regularly. However, almost six out of ten come from households where Dad attends church weekly, and seven in ten say that Mom does so. See Table E-1.2.

**Table E-1.2  
Influence of Family Church Attendance on Own Attendance**

<b>Family Member</b>	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>1-3 times per month</b>	<b>Infrequent</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<i>Among kids who attend church weekly:</i>				
Father	65%	9%	21%	6%
Mother	80%	6%	12%	2%
Brothers/Sisters	73%	7%	8%	12%
<i>Among kids who attend church monthly or less often:</i>				
Father	9%	13%	72%	7%
Mother	17%	17%	64%	2%
Brothers/Sisters	12%	16%	59%	13%

The study clearly and indisputably shows the importance of Mom and Dad's church attendance on their children. Teens and pre-teens who attend church weekly are seven times more likely to have fathers who attend church weekly, than those youth who attend only monthly or less frequently; similarly, youth who attend church every week are nearly five times more likely to have mothers who attend weekly. In other words, the study supports the widely held belief that children whose parents do not attend church will be very unlikely to develop a pattern of faithful church attendance themselves.

**What is Their Church Involvement?**

Our youth are also exceptional among their generation in their involvement in other forms of religious expression. For example, one-fifth of our youth (21%) say they read the Bible daily; nearly half do so at least once a week (49%). That exceeds the national average among their generation by almost fifty percent.

Almost two-thirds (65%) say they pray daily; the "flip side" of that statistic, however, is that one in four (24%) of born-again youth lack a daily prayer habit, while (interestingly) four in ten non-Christian youth do pray daily.

More than four out of five (85%) of our youth state that they attend their church youth group every week, and a slightly smaller proportion (78%) attend Sunday school on a weekly basis (more than three times the national average among their generation). Four in ten (43%) attend a Bible study group (other than a Sunday school class) every week, more than double the national average among the entire "Buster" population (see Table E-1.3).

**Table E-1.3  
Religious Activity**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Daily</b>	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Monthly</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>
Read part of the Bible	21%	28%	12%	30%	9%
Pray to God	65%	19%	6%	9%	2%
Attend church youth group	12%	73%	7%	21%	29%
Attend a Bible study group	7%	36%	7%	21%	29%
Attend Sunday School	11%	67%	5%	8%	8%

Most of our young people profess that they plan to continue attending church on a regular basis when they "graduate from high school or move away from home": almost two-thirds (63%) say they are very likely to do so, one-quarter (28%) say they are "somewhat likely," and one-eleventh (9%) say that they are not too likely or not at all likely. Those intentions must be qualified, however, with the realization that (as George Barna states), "the behavioral testing we have conducted over the past decade [suggests] that stated intentions are, at best, a moderately accurate predictor of behavior." In other words, in spite of the fact that sixty-three percent (63%) of our children say they intend to make church attendance a way of life, it is unlikely, based on the research currently available, that more than forty percent will do so. That degree of commitment would coincide with other trends and, Barna says, "remains consistent with our contention that this disillusioned generation may remain spiritually inclined, but not necessarily Christian."

### **What Do They Believe about Faith and Religion?**

A substantial proportion of our youth (86%) say that they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their lives today, and the median age at which this commitment was made was ten years old. This may not necessarily mean that all eighty-six percent are truly "born again." For example, while eighty-six percent (86%) say they had made a personal commitment to Christ, just seventy-five percent (75%) say they will go to heaven when they die because they have confessed their sins and accepted Christ; others responded that they will go to heaven because they try to obey the Ten Commandments, that they will not go to heaven, and that they "don't know" what will happen when they die.

In other words, the survey data indicate that about three-quarters of the teens who attend Christian youth groups and claim to have made a personal commitment to Christ are, in fact, trusting Christ alone for their salvation (rather than seeking to earn their place in heaven).

Many of our youth, however, seem to be confused about biblical truth and Christian doctrine. They seem genuinely perplexed when they're asked to express an opinion on such subjects as God, the Bible, the devil, heaven, hell, and salvation. In the majority of cases, one in five of our kids had to admit that they could not express an opinion.

Not all the signs are discouraging, however. Four out of five of our youth (84%) did assert that "a person can experience a relationship with God personally," and seven in ten (70%) said "the Christian faith is relevant to the way I live today." This appears to be an encouraging response;

however, it also intimates that not all of our youth who attest to a "born-again experience" are convinced that their faith is relevant to the way they live their lives, indicating that some are failing to make the connection between belief and behavior, between faith and conduct.

Unlike their generational peers outside the church, our youth overwhelmingly reflect a biblical understanding of God. More than four out of five (85%) identify God as the "all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect Creator of the universe who still rules the world today." Only four percent (4%) characterized God as the "total realization of personal, human potential." Other responses included definitions of God as "a state of higher consciousness that a person may reach" (2%), "everyone is God,"(2%), "there are many gods, each with different power and authority" (1%), and six percent (6%) who say they do not know what they believe about God.

More than two-thirds of our youth (71%) consider the Bible to be totally accurate in all its teachings; about the same proportion (67%) disagree with the statement, "Jesus sometimes made mistakes."

Two-thirds (68%) agree with the statement that "I, personally, have a responsibility to tell other people about my religious beliefs," but just over half (56%) say that "the Christian churches in my area are relevant to the way I live today."

Four out of five (80%) believe that there is "a place of permanent suffering, which is known as hell," but less than half (49%) could affirm a belief in a literal devil; the rest tended toward the opinion that Satan is "a symbol of evil."

Our young people seem to suffer the greatest confusion when they attempt to relate biblical belief to other religions and lifestyles. For example, an alarming number of our children do not believe that their faith can be objectively shown to be true; four in ten (40%) endorse the statement, "no one can prove which religion is absolutely true."

One in five of our youth (21%) believe that "Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and all other people pray to the same god, even though they use different names for their god." An identical number (21%) aver that "it does not matter what religious faith you follow because all faiths teach similar lessons." Not only that, but one in five teens (22%) agree with the statement, "if a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in heaven," and the one in

eight (13%) who conclude that "all good people, whether or not they consider Jesus Christ to be their savior, will live in heaven after they die."

These responses indicate that, in the mind of one out of every five of our young people -- youth who are predominantly from good church-going families and highly involved in church activity -- Christianity is nothing special; it is no more true, no more correct in its teachings, no more central to salvation than any other religion (see Table E-3.1).

**Table E-3.1  
What Church Kids Believe**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
A person can experience a relationship with God personally	84%	5%	11%
There really is a place of permanent suffering, which is known as Hell	80%	9%	12%
The Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings	71%	10%	20%
The Christian faith is relevant to the way I live today	70%	12%	19%
I personally, have a responsibility to tell other people about my religious beliefs	68%	15%	18%
The Christian churches in my area are relevant to the way I live today	56%	19%	25%
When it comes to religion, what type of person you are is more important than what you accomplish	43%	27%	31%
No one can really prove which religion is absolutely true	40%	34%	25%
There are a lot of hypocrites in my church	32%	29%	39%
The devil, or Satan, is not a living being, but is a symbol of evil	31%	49%	20%
If a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in Heaven	22%	62%	16%
Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews and all other people pray to the same god, even though they use different	21%	52%	27%

names for their god			
It does not matter what religious faith you follow because all faiths teach similar lessons	21%	54%	25%
There are some sins or crimes which are so serious that they cannot be forgiven by God	18%	68%	15%
Jesus sometimes made mistakes	17%	67%	16%
When it comes to religion, what you do in life is more important than what you believe	15%	62%	23%
What I do for other people is more important than what I believe about Jesus Christ	14%	74%	12%
All good people, whether or not they consider Jesus Christ to be their savior, will live in Heaven after they die	13%	69%	18%

Still, our young people fare better than American adults in matters of faith and doctrine (note that the adult sample in Table E-3.2 compares churching and non-churching adults to churching youth). We may take heart from the fact that our youth score significantly better in every category except in their estimation of the relevance of the Christian faith and in their concept of Satan (see Table E-3.2).

**Table E-3.2  
A Comparison of the Faith Views  
of Church Kids and American Adults**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Kids</b>	<b>Adults</b>
The Christian faith is relevant to the way I live today	70%	81%
The Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings	71%	59%
I, personally, have a responsibility to tell other people about my religious beliefs	68%	45%
The Christian churches in my area are relevant to the way I live today	56%	66%
The devil, or Satan, is not a living being, but is a symbol of evil	31%	32%
If a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in Heaven	22%	61%

Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews and all other people pray to the same god, even though they use different names for their god	21%	64%
It does not matter what religious faith you follow because all faiths teach similar lessons	21%	62%
Jesus sometimes made mistakes	17%	36%
There are some sins or crimes which are so serious that they cannot be forgiven by God	18%	32%
All good people, whether or not they consider Jesus Christ to be their savior, will live in Heaven after they die	13%	40%

[Adult base: drawn from five different OmniPoll surveys, all using a nationwide sample of 1,000 or more adults.]

**What Difference Does Truth Make?**

The study shows that the youth who have formulated cohesive views about truth are immensely better equipped in spiritual matters. For example, our youth are more likely to be committed to church attendance if they are equipped with a conviction that objective standards of truth and morality exist. More than nine out of ten (94%) of those who possess a positive truth view attend church weekly, compared to just four out of five (80%) of those who reject the concept of absolute truth. Moreover, if your child accepts objective standards of truth, he or she will be more likely to attend Sunday school, church youth group, and a Bible study group on a weekly basis.

The research suggests a relationship between spiritual disciplines and truth convictions. Young people are thirty-two percent (32%) more likely to develop a daily habit of prayer if they see truth as absolute and eternal: eighty-three percent (83%) of youth with a pro-truth view pray every day, compared to sixty-three percent (63%) of those who lack a pro-truth view. Similarly, youth who accept the existence of moral absolutes are more than twice as likely (125%) to read their Bible daily (see Table D-1.2).

**Table D-1.2  
A Profile of Those Who Believe in Truth, Compared to Those Who Reject Truth**

Standard of Truth?	Believe in Objective	
	Yes	No
Life Satisfaction: Very	14%	86%
Less Than Very	8%	92%
Purpose Of Life Is Enjoyment: Agree	3%	97%

	Disagree	15%	85%
Attend Church: Weekly		11%	89%
2-3 Times/Month		4%	96%
Monthly or Less		3%	97%
Read Bible: Every Week		16%	84%
Less Than Weekly		4%	96%
Bible Is Totally Accurate Teaching:			
Agree		13%	87%
Disagree		2%	98%

The study shows that what youth believe about truth also influences whether or not they make a lasting personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Nearly every young person who affirms a belief in absolute truth (98%) testifies to having made a personal commitment to Christ, compared to eight in ten (84%) of those who lack such a conviction. Similarly, youth who have formed a pro-truth view are forty-eight percent (48%) more likely to say that they will go to heaven when they die because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior.

Those youth who accept truth are also the most likely to understand and embrace biblical Christianity. For example, nearly all youth (97%) with a pro-truth view describe God in biblical terms ("all powerful, all-knowing Creator"), while four in five (83%) who lack a conviction of absolute truth reflect the same understanding of God.

If your youth possess solid convictions about truth, they will be thirty-eight percent (38%) more likely to regard the Bible as "totally accurate in all of its teachings," and half as likely to say that "Jesus made some mistakes."

A solid view of truth will make your children thirty percent (30%) more likely to recognize a connection between their faith and their behavior, saying that "the Christian faith is relevant to the way I live my life today," and thirty-four percent (34%) more likely to consider witnessing to non-Christians a priority.



of person you are is more important than what you accomplish				
No one can really prove which religion is absolutely true	20%	43%	36%	37%
There are a lot of hypocrites in my church	30%	32%	21%	40%
The devil, or Satan, is not a living being, but is a symbol of evil	14%	33%	45%	21%
If a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in Heaven	7%	24%	28%	17%
Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews and all other people pray to the same god, even though they use different names for their god	8%	23%	21%	17%
It does not matter what religious faith you follow because all faiths teach similar lessons	12%	22%	27%	18%
There are some sins or crimes which are so serious that they cannot be forgiven by God	20%	17%	19%	17%
Jesus sometimes made mistakes	9%	18%	19%	12%
When it comes to religion, what you do in life is more important than what you believe	11%	16%	13%	14%
What I do for other people is more important than what I believe about Jesus Christ	8%	15%	15%	12%
All good people, whether or not they consider Jesus Christ to be their savior, will live in Heaven after they die	6%	14%	18%	9%

If we take a moment to review all that we've learned about our children's spiritual experience and belief, one fact emerges: the study suggests that, if you wish your children to remain active in church throughout their teen years, if you desire for them the assurance of salvation in Jesus Christ, if you want them to espouse biblical Christian belief, then teaching them that God determines what is right for all people, for all times, and in all places, may be the single most influential gift you can give them.

# Chapter Eighteen

## Survey Analysis on Attitudes and Lifestyles

Spike Lee's 1989 film, *Do the Right Thing*, was the story of a white pizza parlor owner in a black neighborhood who sparks a riot. However, the film, which created a firestorm of controversy because it seemed to endorse violence, leaves the viewer to guess whether anyone has done the right thing...or even what "the right thing" is.

Unfortunately, many of our own youth face the same dilemma; the statistics indicate that church kids seem willing -- even determined -- to do the right thing, but they're uncertain as to what "the right thing" is. In some cases, it appears that our kids' desires to do (and think) the right thing are hampered by ignorance and confusion.

In religious matters, for instance, church kids display more confusion about religious realities than they do in other areas of their lives. An average of twenty-two percent (22%) responded uncertainly to statements relating specifically to religious perspectives (see Table D-2.1). Although about three out of every five church kids echoed the traditional Christian view on these statements, the high proportion of "not sure" responses suggests that even those who took a stand (one way or the other) may not be thoroughly convinced of their stated position, and probably could not convincingly defend their position.

**Table D-2.1**  
**What Church Kids Think About Life and Its Choices**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Not sure</b>
Every religion offers a different explanation of the meaning of life and truth	59%	18%	23%
God established the limits for humankind; acting in conflict with his laws has negative consequences	57%	13%	30%
Freedom means being able to do anything you want to do, as long as it's legal	54%	35%	12%
Lying is sometimes necessary	38%	48%	15%

The only intelligent way to live is to make the best choice you can in every situation, based on your feelings at the moment	33%	48%	19%
The best philosophy for life is: do whatever feels or seems right, as long as it doesn't harm anyone else	22%	62%	16%
The moral standards of Americans these days are just as high as ever	20%	59%	21%
The Bible does not provide today's people with practical standards for living	18%	66%	16%
You know that something is morally or ethically right if it works	16%	54%	30%
The Bible isn't very relevant for today's people	15%	68%	17%
There's nothing wrong with breaking the law as long as it doesn't hurt anybody	12%	80%	8%

Our youth also display misunderstanding and confusion in moral areas, too. Note that two out of five say that lying is sometimes necessary. One in six believe that the measure of whether an action is right or wrong is whether "it works." One in eight say that breaking the law is acceptable as long as it does not harm others. Taken altogether, about half of our kids display confusion when answering questions pertaining to ethics and morality.

Nearly half say they would base their choices in moral matters on feelings and emotions (rather than objective, constant, and universal standards). For instance, one in three (33%) say they would make choices, in any given situation, based on their feelings at that moment. One in five (22%) say they would act according to "whatever feels...right," as long as no one got hurt in the process. One in seven (18%) would not turn to the Bible for guidance in moral decisions; they say the Bible does not provide people with practical standards for living. Another sixteen percent (16%) were not sure whether the Bible provided such practical standards.

### **What Are Their Views About Life and Choices?**

The research revealed that the age of a young person seems to have a limited impact on his or her views about life, and his or her approach to decision-making. The age of individuals seemed to affect their answers less than half of the time. For example, roughly sixty percent of youth say that

"every religion offers a different explanation of the meaning of life and truth," regardless of whether they are in the youngest age group among those surveyed (eleven to twelve) or the oldest (seventeen to eighteen).

In areas where age was an apparently significant in the response, the oldest youth tended to give answers that reflected biblical beliefs and behaviors. In light of other indications within the research, this probably reflects the fact that most seventeen- to eighteen-year-olds who remain active in the church are those who possess strong commitments and convictions; those who lack such commitments and convictions tend to become inactive before age seventeen (see Table D-2.1a).

**Table D-2.1a**  
**Life Views and Choices**  
**by Age Group**  
**(indicates percentage of "agree" answers)**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>11-12</b>	<b>13-14</b>	<b>15-16</b>	<b>17-18</b>
Every religion offers a different explanation of the meaning of life and truth	60%	60%	59%	61%
God established the limits for humankind; acting in conflict with his laws has negative consequences	52%	52%	59%	67%
Freedom means being able to do anything you want to do, as long as it's legal	58%	58%	52%	50%
Lying is sometimes necessary	32%	39%	40%	37%
The only intelligent way to live is to make the best choice you can in every situation, based on your feelings at the moment	46%	38%	32%	25%
The best philosophy for life is: do whatever feels or seems right, as long as it doesn't harm anyone else	19%	25%	21%	19%
The moral standards of Americans these days are just as high as ever	26%	24%	19%	14%
The Bible does not provide today's people with practical standards for living	21%	20%	18%	12%
You know that something is morally or ethically right if it works	17%	17%	17%	14%
The Bible isn't very relevant for	18%	17%	16%	11%

today's people				
There's nothing wrong with breaking the law as long as it doesn't hurt anybody	11%	13%	14%	10%

In other words, whether our children are twelve or eighteen figures little in determining what basis -- subjective or objective, emotional or rational -- they use for making moral and ethical decisions.

**What Difference Does Truth Make?**

Our young people's acceptance or rejection of absolute truth greatly affects how they view life and decisions -- a more distinctive effect, in fact, than whether they testified to a personal commitment to Christ.

Being born again does influence the views and behavior of our youth in how they view choices and how they make decisions; the difference between the answers of Christian and non-Christian youth to ten of the eleven statements was statistically significant; the same was true when comparing the answers of youth who affirm consistent standards of absolute truth to those who reject absolute truth. However, those youth who accept absolute truth were more likely than born-again youth to give a biblical response to the questions (see Table D-2.2).

If our youth do not believe in absolute truth, they will be over two times more likely to believe that "lying is sometimes necessary," and over two times more likely to say that the Bible is not relevant and does not provide practical standards for living for today's people.

Youth who do not affirm objective standards of truth and morality are two-and-a-half times more likely to say that "there's nothing wrong with breaking the law as long as it doesn't hurt anybody," and almost three times more apt to judge something to be morally or ethically right "if it works."

Most importantly, perhaps, our young people's views about absolute truth affect whether they base their moral decisions on feelings and guesswork, or on objective standards of right and wrong. Our study reveals that youth who lack strong convictions of biblical truth are three times more likely to say that "the only intelligent way to live is to make the best choice you can in every situation, based on your feelings at the moment," and six times more likely to believe that the best philosophy for life is to "do whatever feels or seems right, as long as it doesn't harm anyone else."

**Table D-2.2**  
**Life Views and Choices**  
**by Faith Commitment and Truth View**  
**(indicates percentage of "agree" answers)**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Born again?</b>		<b>Accept truth?</b>	
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Every religion offers a different explanation of the meaning of life and truth	60%	58%	56%	60%
God established the limits for humankind; acting in conflict with his laws has negative consequences	62%	48%	79%	55%
Freedom means being able to do anything you want to do, as long as it's legal	48%	64%	31%	56%
Lying is sometimes necessary	34%	46%	17%	40%
The only intelligent way to live is to make the best choice you can in every situation, based on your feelings at the moment	28%	44%	12%	36%
The best philosophy for life is: do whatever feels or seems right, as long as it doesn't harm anyone else	15%	35%	4%	24%
The moral standards of Americans these days are just as high as ever	17%	25%	7%	21%
The Bible does not provide today's people with practical standards for living	13%	25%	8%	19%
You know that something is morally or ethically right if it works	12%	23%	6%	17%
The Bible isn't very relevant for today's people	10%	24%	7%	16%
There's nothing wrong with breaking the law as long as it doesn't hurt anybody	8%	21%	5%	13%

The research reveals that, when it comes to making moral choices, properly evaluating faith systems, or taking a biblical stand on moral and ethical issues, the ages of our youth -- and even their faith commitment -- are less

influential than whether they possess strong, cohesive views about absolute truth.

### **What Is Their Philosophy of Life?**

The news and entertainment media have widely reported and often repeated the claim that today's youth, popularly called "Generation X" in the media, has no heroes. Other research has asserted that most of today's kids do not have individuals in their lives whom they feel they can look to as role models. However, our study reveals that churched kids fly in the face of those claims and findings.

Almost two-thirds of our youth do claim to have a hero or role model, although more of our kids say they know adults who "really have it together" than claim to have role models or heroes, indicating that even people whose lives appear to be fulfilling and enviable may not be perceived as worthy role models by many of our young people (see Table D-2.3).

In spite of their personal hope for a better tomorrow, our kids are not convinced that things will be better in the days ahead. Their responses were almost evenly divided; one-third believe things will be better, roughly one-third do not believe things will improve, and over one-third confess that they aren't sure what to expect. This uncertainty may be related to the feelings of stress and anxiety that many of our youth express.

This disparity between hopes and expectations is intriguing in light of the fact that most of our youth say they believe that their thoughts matter and that they, personally, can make a real difference in the world. In fact, the kids who say they can change the world outnumber those who reject that idea by a three-to-one margin, and those who believe that what they think matters outnumbered those who disagreed by a four-to-one margin.

**Table D-2.3  
Role Models and Philosophies of Life**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Not sure</b>
<b>You know of one or more adults whom you feel really have it together</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Everyone needs a hero in his or her life</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Life is too complex these days</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>In times of trouble or crisis, I feel all alone</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Sometimes I wonder if life is worth living</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>The future will be better than today</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>The main purpose of life is enjoyment and personal fulfillment</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>There is nobody whom you consider to be your hero or model for life</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>One person cannot really make a difference in the world today</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>What I think doesn't matter</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>It's better to get even than to get mad</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>9%</b>

Such mixed signals may be better understood if we recognize that our youth -- many of whom express hope for the future -- feel overwhelmed and trampled by life. Half (49%) of them say that life has become too complex. Four in ten (41%) feel isolated and alone during times of personal crisis or hardship. Four in ten (38%) admit that they sometimes question whether life is worth living.

Once again, the responses of Christian youth are more encouraging than those given by non-Christian youth. The most positive attitudes, however, are again expressed by young people who consistently affirm the existence of absolute truth. Youth who believe in absolute truth, for example, are much less likely to wonder if life is worth living or to say that life is too

complex these days. They are less than half as likely to say that they feel alone in times of trouble or crisis. And youth who possess a pro-truth view are half as likely to believe that "what I think doesn't matter," and that "one person cannot really make a difference in the world today."

**Table D-2.3a**  
**Role Models and Philosophies of Life**  
**by Faith Commitment and Truth View**  
**(indicates percentage of "agree" answers)**

Statement	Born again?		Accept truth?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
You know of one or more adults whom you feel really have it together	80%	66%	82%	75%
Everyone needs a hero in his or her life	64%	57%	68%	61%
Life is too complex these days	48%	50%	36%	50%
In times of trouble or crisis, I feel all alone	37%	47%	20%	43%
Sometimes I wonder if life is worth living	34%	46%	23%	40%
The future will be better than today	33%	36%	32%	34%
The main purpose of life is enjoyment and personal fulfillment	21%	44%	10%	31%
There is nobody whom you consider to be your hero or model for life	21%	30%	17%	25%
One person cannot really make a difference in the world today	20%	28%	12%	24%
What I think doesn't matter	15%	26%	11%	20%
It's better to get even than to get mad	7%	21%	5%	13%

In other words, the research indicates that a belief in absolute truth is related to the cultivation of a positive, hopeful outlook in our young people.

**What Do They Want Out of Life?**

What are young people today looking for in life? What do they expect -- or hope -- to get out of life? What circumstances or achievements do they consider to be the most desirable?

More than four out of five of our youth identify having one marriage partner for life, having good physical health, having close personal friendships, and

having a clear purpose for living as very desirable goals or aspirations for their lives (see Table D-3.1).

Approximately three in four identified having a close relationship with God, having a spouse and children, having a comfortable lifestyle, and having high personal integrity as highly desirable. The fact that more than three-fourths of our kids (77%) considered having a close relationship with God as highly desirable is not surprising (considering the respondents were all involved in church life to some degree), but it is nonetheless heartening to hear that sustaining or improving their relationship with God constitutes a dominant hope for many of our youth.

Less important to our youth are such goals or aspirations as influencing other people's lives, being active in a church, having a fulfilling sex life, making a difference in the world, and having a high-paying job. Though these were not among the ideals most often cited, they were still indicated as "very desirable" by the majority of our youth.

The least appealing objectives among our young people are living close to family and relatives , which is highly valued by forty-eight percent (48%), and achieving fame or public recognition, highly valued by twenty-five percent (25%).

**Table D-3.1**  
**How Desirable Are Specified Life Circumstances?**  
**Born again?      Accept truth?**

<b>Circumstance</b>	<b>very</b>	<b>some</b>	<b>a little</b>	<b>not at all</b>
One marriage partner for life	85%	7%	3%	5%
Good physical health	83%	14%	3%	1%
Close personal friendships	82%	13%	4%	2%
Clear purpose for living	81%	14%	4%	2%
Close relationship with God	77%	15%	6%	2%
Having a spouse and children	73%	15%	6%	6%
Having a comfortable lifestyle	70%	23%	6%	1%
Having high personal integrity	69%	23%	6%	2%
Influencing other people's lives	64%	25%	8%	3%
Being active in a church	64%	24%	9%	2%
Make a difference in the world	62%	24%	11%	3%
Having a fulfilling sex life within marriage	61%	21%	9%	9%
Having a high-paying job	55%	30%	8%	7%
Living close to family and relatives	48%	31%	16%	5%

Achieving fame and public recognition	25%	28%	30	17%
---------------------------------------	-----	-----	----	-----

In contrast to other areas, our young people's faith commitment and their views of absolute truth seem to produce strikingly similar results in determining what life circumstances they favor. For example, born-again youth are sixty-eight percent (68%) more likely to value "being active in a church" than non-Christian youth -- a practically identical margin to that which separates the opinion of youth who espouse absolute truth from those who reject it.

A similar correspondence occurs in the answers to other questions. A young person's faith commitment and truth view seem to strongly (and similarly) affect whether they consider one marriage partner for life, high personal integrity, and a close relationship with God to be "very desirable" aims.

It is interesting, and perhaps informative, to note that today's youth display the greatest difference from adults (both churched and unchurched) in three areas. They tend to be more concerned with close personal relationships than adults; they value a comfortable lifestyle, high-paying job, and fame or recognition more highly than adults; and they are considerably less concerned about living close to other family members. Some of these perspectives are somewhat characteristic of every generation that approaches adulthood. It may also be an indication of the shifting emphases occurring within our society, away from "family" and toward "friends" (or "significant others" as they have come to be called), away from spiritual and toward more materialistic goals. Such trends are, happily, less pronounced among churched youth, but they may be worthy of our attention nonetheless.

The over-all impact of our kids' views about life and the future, however, should encourage us, because the possibility of instilling our youth with strong, biblical values is a goal that is well within our reach.

**The Conclusion**

"The conclusion," Solomon said, "when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person" (Ecclesiastes 12:14, NAS).

One cannot get more profound and concise than that. Our challenge is to know God for who he is and fear him accordingly; to resist the cultural shift that has rejected God as the determiner of truth, and acknowledge that he

and he alone defines right and wrong; to model before our families, our churches, and our communities a life of dependence upon God; and to diligently teach our children to fear God and keep his commandments, because his truth is right and beneficial for all people, for all times, and in all places.

- 
- i. George Barna, 1994 Churched Youth Research Analysis, 1994.
  - ii. Figures cited in Baby Busters: The Disillusioned Generation, by George Barna, Northfield Publishing, Chicago, 1994, pp. 122-123.
  - iii. As cited in "Virtue Man," by Michael Cromartie, Christianity Today, September 13, 1993, p. 32.
  - iv. Such as that reported by George Barna in The Future of the American Family and Andrew Greeley in Faithful Attraction.