

Cultural  
Research Center



Published by  
Arizona Christian University Press

# RAISING SPIRITUAL CHAMPIONS

*Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind and Soul*  
By Dr. George Barna



## ***Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind and Soul*** **Release #3: The Pathway for Children to Become 'Spiritual Champions'**

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Release Date: October 10, 2023

In his new book, *Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind and Soul*, veteran researcher and author George Barna describes an effective starting place for shaping the minds and lives of children if the goal is to guide them toward being disciples of Jesus Christ. Barna shares both descriptive data as well as essential, proven practices toward helping parents, grandparents, and other child influencers to facilitate intentional biblical formation.

### **Getting Foundational Beliefs Right**

Based on extensive worldview research, Barna identified seven particular beliefs that dramatically increase the likelihood of a person developing a biblical worldview. The seven beliefs, labeled the "Seven Cornerstones of a Biblical Worldview," are not a complete biblical worldview but represent a very strong foundation for developing that philosophy of life.

Research by Barna conducted through the [Cultural Research Center](#) at Arizona Christian University, in cooperation with [Family Research Council](#), revealed that if a person believes all seven of those perspectives, they have an 83% of developing a complete biblical worldview. If a person rejects one or more of those seven cornerstones, they have just a 2% probability of developing a full biblical worldview.

The importance of a biblical worldview, according to Barna, is that it is unusual for a person to be a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ without such a perspective.

### **What Children Currently Believe**

Noting that a person's worldview is typically formed before they reach the age of 13, Barna provided data from a Cultural Research Center national survey of adolescents conducted for the *Raising Spiritual Champions* book. That survey revealed that of the seven cornerstone beliefs, a majority of adolescents believes only one of those points of view.

- 69% - God exists and is the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect Creator and ruler of the universe
- 36% - As a sinner, the only solution to the consequences of sin is to acknowledge your sins, ask God to forgive you through Jesus Christ, and rely on Him to save you from those consequences
- 35% - Sin is real, and significant; we are all sinners, by choice

- 27% - Your most important reason for living is to do what God wants
- 25% - You trust the Bible because it is completely true and personally relevant to your life
- 21% - The Bible provides a complete and reliable understanding of right and wrong
- 17% - Success is consistently doing what the Bible teaches

In terms of developing a solid foundation for a biblical worldview, just 3% embrace all seven of those perspectives. That does not bode well for adolescents building a stable foundation that will lead to a robust and biblical worldview.

Adolescents clearly are exposed to many different points of view related to the subject matter of the cornerstones. The Cultural Research Center study revealed that most of today's adolescents (58%) believe just two or fewer of the seven cornerstones.

Cornerstones Embraced	Percentage of adolescents
All 7	3%
5 or 6	13%
3 or 4	26%
1 or 2	32%
None	26%

### Heaven, Hell, and Salvation

Adolescents (i.e., children 8 to 12 years of age) are well aware of both Heaven and Hell. In total, 96% said they have heard of Heaven, and the identical percentage said they have heard of Hell.

Among those who have heard of Heaven, 79% said they believe it is a real place. A slightly smaller proportion (73%) said they believe that Hell is a real place. Nearly one out of every five adolescents admitted that they do not know if Heaven and Hell are real. Surprisingly few children—less than one out of 10— contend that Heaven and Hell are not real places.

An unexpectedly large proportion of children (67%) said they believe that after a person dies, they either go to Heaven or Hell based on how they lived their life and what they believe about Jesus Christ.

One-quarter of adolescents said they are not sure what happens to a person after they die, or how that outcome is determined. However, while 30% of children ages 8 through 11 noted their uncertainty, that dropped to just half as many (15%) among 12-year-olds.

Asked what they think will happen after they die, six out of 10 children (61%) said they believe they will go to Heaven; 2% said they will go to Hell; one out of five (20%) had other ideas (e.g., nothing will happen, they will return to life as a different life form, etc.); and one out of six (17%) said they do not know.

### Understanding What's Going On—and Where to Go from Here

Barna, who has been conducting unique studies on discipleship and worldview for more than three decades, recognized the pattern in the belief structure of adolescents.

"America's children are in the process of adopting Syncretism as their dominant worldview," the prolific author commented. "They are following in the footsteps of their parents, only 2% of whom have a biblical worldview, and 96% of whom are Syncretists. That mindset and lifestyle is modeled for their

children every day and has become the comfortable default position among most adults, teens, and children who call themselves Christian.”

The situation is not hopeless, though. Referring to the strategies and tactics described in [\*Raising Spiritual Champions\*](#), Barna encouraged parents to rise to the occasion.

“Any parent can be part of the solution, if they so desire. It starts with a commitment to raising a spiritual champion, which requires a solid plan that the adult consistently implements. The plan calls for a steady diet of teaching, discussing, and modeling biblical principles, as well as evaluating how well the child is doing at understanding and applying those principles,” Barna stated.

“Thanks to the research detailed in the book, we know what practices are most effective at developing young disciples,” said the veteran researcher. “The only missing factor is a mass of parents, grandparents, pastors, teachers, coaches, and other influencers who are willing to make this their top priority in life. If those influencers really love or care about young people, then following through with effective disciple-making practices should not be a significant obstacle.”

### **A Different Kind of Parenting Book**

This latest book is based on two years of research with various types of people: adolescents, teenagers, parents, pastors, and other adults across the nation. In addition, content analysis focused on the most popular media consumed by children was also performed, the startling results of which are contained in the book.

A bestseller on Amazon since its release, [\*Raising Spiritual Champions\*](#) is organized into three sections. The first details the importance of children and the opportunity to disciple them, how effectively parents, churches, in particular, are ministering to children. The second section provides a detailed analysis of what it takes to make a disciple, digging into four specific strategies for discipling children and presenting the “Seven Cornerstones of a Biblical Worldview” as the starting point for discipleship. The third section focuses on how media and church-based ministries impact the lives of children, including a discussion of how parents and other influencers can interact most effectively in the effort to disciple children.

The author, George Barna, is the Director of Research for the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University and also a professor at the University, focusing on worldview assessment and development, and cultural transformation. He is also the Senior Research Fellow at Family Research Council’s Center for Biblical Worldview. He was the founder of The Barna Group (which he sold in 2009), as well as other research institutions. *Raising Spiritual Champions* is the 60th book he has authored or co-authored. His books include numerous *New York Times* and Amazon bestsellers and several award-winning books.

[\*Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child’s Heart, Mind and Soul\*](#) is the product of a collaborative effort between the [Cultural Research Center](#) at Arizona Christian University and the [Family Research Council](#). The objective is to assist parents, grandparents, churches and other who influence children to intentionally and strategically address the spiritual development of children in America. The book was published by [Arizona Christian University Press](#) in partnership with [Fedd Books](#), an Austin-based literary agency. It is available for purchase at [Amazon.com](#) in both paperback and digital formats.

### **Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University**

The Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University in Glendale, Arizona, conducts the annual *American Worldview Inventory* as well as other nationwide surveys regarding cultural transformation.

Recent national studies completed by the Cultural Research Center (CRC) have investigated topics related to family, values, lifestyle, spiritual practices, and politics.

One of the groundbreaking efforts by CRC has been the worldview-related surveys conducted among the ACU student population. The first-of-its-kind *ACU Student Worldview Inventory* is administered to every ACU student at the start of each academic year, and a final administration just prior to graduation. The results of that student census enable the University to track and address the worldview development of its students.

CRC is guided by Dr. George Barna, Director of Research, and Dr. Tracy Munsil, Executive Director. Like ACU, CRC embraces biblical Christianity. CRC works in cooperation with a variety of Bible-centric, theologically conservative Christian ministries and remains politically non-partisan. Results from past surveys conducted by CRC and information about the Cultural Research Center are available at [www.CulturalResearchCenter.com](http://www.CulturalResearchCenter.com). Further information about Arizona Christian University is available at [www.ArizonaChristian.edu](http://www.ArizonaChristian.edu)