

# Americans Not Concerned About Spiritual Condition

*The Barna Research Group recently released a nationwide survey indicating 40 percent of Christian parents admitted that they were not being spiritually challenged.*



The Barna Research Group released the results of a nationwide survey last week indicating 40 percent of Christian parents (with children under 18) admitted that they were not being spiritually challenged. George Barna, co-founder of The Barna Group, said the study's findings are reflective of the rapidly declining spiritual condition found in American culture. "Many of the same people who claim that their faith is very important to them and that they are absolutely committed to Christianity also say that they face no spiritual challenges in life," he said. "Americans focus on what they consider to be the most important matters; faith maturity is not one of them." Of the Christian parents who said they do feel challenged on their spiritual journeys, the majority said the two main struggles were developing their children spiritually and personally investing more time in praying and reading their Bible. Other spiritual struggles included the need for more church involvement, exhibiting faith-driven behaviors, coping with sickness, having a deeper faith and dealing with the decline of moral values in the media. Barna encourages church leaders to address these issues by having intimate relationships with church members. "Ministry is most effective when it addresses the specific needs of each person on a one-to-one or few-to-one basis," Barna said. "The data underscore the importance of people knowing and ministering to each other in a very direct and personal way, recognizing the uniqueness of every person and their journey."

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# Pastor to the Presidents

*Evangelist Billy Graham has affected the lives of millions but he has had an unique role in the lives of the last 11 U.S. presidents and their wives.*



Evangelist Billy Graham has affected the lives of millions of people across the world. But last Friday he was featured on ABC's *20/20* for his unique role in the lives of the last 11 U.S. presidents. In addition to the current President George W. Bush, Graham has been personal confidant and friend to former Presidents Bill Clinton, George Bush Sr., Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford, Richard Nixon, Lyndon B. Johnson, John F. Kennedy, Dwight Eisenhower and Harry Truman, and to their wives as well. "Each one I've known long before they ever became president, been in their homes many times, always called them by their first names, until they became president," Graham told *20/20*. During the segment, living presidents shared how Graham helped with everything from marriage counseling to war to alcohol addictions. "It was just a conversation," said President George W. Bush, recalling a discussion with Graham during the 1980s when he told the pastor, "Billy, I'm longing for something," and Graham gave him a Bible (that the president still has). "All I can tell you is that as a result of being inspired by Billy Graham I started reading the Bible and shortly after, I quit drinking," said President Bush. The Baptist preacher's influence over the years didn't stop with the presidents but extended to the first ladies of the White House as well. Barbra Bush remembers being stunned by her first meeting with Graham because of his "penetrating" eyes. Sen. Hillary Clinton told *20/20* that Graham was her personal counselor during her husband's impeachment scandal. "[Graham] is one of the people who made a

real difference to me personally,” she said, adding that Graham encouraged her to do what was best for her and her marriage despite what the critics said. Although Graham is considered one the most influential preachers in history it was not his celebrity that drew the presidents to him, said former President Bill Clinton. “I doubt that many presidents wanted to be around him because they thought it would help them politically,” he said. “I think they really felt and hoped that by being with Billy Graham, they might have more strength for the work at hand.”

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## Research Shows Why Young Adults Leave Church

*A recent study of Protestant young adults highlights reasons why more than two-thirds stop attending church between ages 18 and 22.*



A recent study of young Protestants found that more than two-thirds of young adults who once regularly attended church during high school stopped attending altogether during their crucial decision-making years following high school. Conducted by Lifeway Research, which is affiliated with the publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, the study found that 70 percent of 18- to 30-year-olds stopped attending church for at least a year as young adults. The two major factors contributing to the decline in their church attendance were life changes and a lack of personal relationships in the church. Although 30 percent of the 70 percent that left the church said they made a conscious decision to leave the church after high school, the majority surveyed attributed their

decline to either work responsibilities, moving away from their home church or moving to a college campus. Though the statistics are alarming, Brad Waggoner, vice president of research and ministry development at LifeWay, said it is within grasp to change the trends. "Relationships are often the glue that keep people in church, or serves as the attraction to begin attending again following a period of absenteeism," he said. "Many people are deeply influenced by friends and loved ones." The study found that the majority of 18- to 22-year-olds who remained in church felt that attending church was a vital part of their lives and helped guide their life decisions. They were also found to have strong relational ties to the church. "Clearly the reasons young people leave are a reflection both of their past experience in church and the new opportunities they have as young adults," said Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research. "To remain in church, a person must have experienced the value of the teaching and relationships at church and see the relevance for the next phase of life."

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## **Florida Church Distributes Bibles to Staff at the Capitol**

*A Florida megachurch delivered 5,000 bibles to staff members in the Capitol building. Overall the group said the staff was open to receiving the bibles.*



Recently *The New York Times* reported that a Lakeland, Fla. megachurch delivered leather bond bibles to staff members in the Capitol building. The 43-member group from First Baptist

Church at the Mall set out to deliver 5,000 Bibles in an effort dubbed Project Light. The group visited 435 offices in three buildings to deliver the specially made Tyndall Bibles called "The Decision Maker." "When we walked through those doors, we were only representing Jesus," Jay Dennis, pastor of the 8,000-member church, told the *Times*. "We were not there to lobby." This is the third year the group has handed out Bibles and they noted significant changes. In 2000 only one office refused the Bibles. In 2002 three offices declined them. This year, despite the Bibles not conflicting with any ethical or legal guidelines for accepting gifts, 19 offices refused to receive the Bibles. Dennis noted that none of those 19 offices could be categorized as either Republican or Democrat. The pastor said one of the most encouraging responses came from the office staff of Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., who despite being known for his liberal positions welcomed the group with open arms. Overall Dennis said the trip was very encouraging and that all 5,000 Bibles were distributed. The group said that in addition to staff members in the Capitol they were also able to distribute the Bibles to the janitorial staff, the cafeteria staff and a group of teenagers touring the building. "The only things eternal are the Bible and people," Dennis said. "We never waste our time when we invest in giving people the Bible."

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## **Assemblies of God Elects New General Superintendent**

*The Rev. George O. Wood was elected Friday. He will replace Thomas E. Trask who resigned two years early.*



This weekend the Assemblies of God (AG) in the U.S. will conclude their 52nd General Council meeting in Indianapolis with the Rev. George O. Wood as its newly elected general superintendent. Holding two doctorate degrees, Wood has served

as the AG general secretary since 1993. He also pastored Newport-Mesa Christian Center in Costa Mesa, Calif., for 17 years. He will replace Thomas E. Trask, who held the position since 1993. He announced in mid-July that he would not complete his remaining two years of his four-year term. "I have taken time to seek the Lord as to His direction," Trask said in his resignation letter. "Shirley and I love the ministry and plan to stay active in the work of the Lord as He gives strength." During his farewell speech, Trask encouraged the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world to uphold righteousness and reject all forms of sin. "What many churches are offering America is a new religion that guarantees no hell and requires no holiness," Trask said. "It is a limp, spineless Christianity that does not confront sin for fear of being judgmental. It is an impotent gospel that tells people everything is OK."

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## Officers Who Helped Christian Group Face Scrutiny

*The U.S. Army and Air Force are considering disciplinary action against seven officers for being interviewed by a Christian organization filming a fundraising video.*



The U.S. Army and Air Force are considering disciplinary action against seven on-duty officers for allowing themselves to be interviewed by a Christian organization filming a fundraising video, the Associated Press reported. In a report released by the Pentagon, the inspector general said the officers—four of whom were generals—made comments in the video that “conferred approval of and support” to the Washington-based evangelical group called Christian Embassy and that “the remarks of some officers implied they spoke for a group of senior military leaders rather than just for themselves.” According to the report some officers being probed told

investigators that Christian Embassy initiatives are often seen by the Pentagon's community as "sanctioned or endorsed" activities of the Department of Defense. Christian Embassy is described on its Web site as a nonprofit and nonpolitical ministry established nearly 30 years ago by politicians, business leaders and the late Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ in order to serve the nation's leaders and decision-makers.

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## Ministry to Pray Every Day Until Olympics

*Open Doors ministry is calling for believers to pray for religious freedom in China every day until the Aug. 8 opening ceremonies for the 2008 Olympics.*



With the 2008 Olympics beginning at this time next year, Chinese officials are rapidly preparing for the events. During the bidding process for the Summer Games more than six years ago China promised to improve human rights and grant more freedom to the press in their communist country. But many throughout the world are chiding China for not upholding their promises. Chinese Christians are still being greatly persecuted for their faith. In response to the persecution Open Doors ministry, which focuses on prayer for the persecuted church, is calling for believers to pray for religious freedom in China. Every day until the Aug. 8 opening ceremonies, the prayer campaign called One Minute/One Year/One Country is encouraging believers to pray for one minute, preferably at 8 p.m. Beijing time (8 a.m. in New York). "The Beijing Olympics presents an awesome opportunity for believers in the West to unite in prayer ... not only for our fellow Christians but for the communist government of China to grant religious freedom to all worshipers, especially house-church members," said Carl Moeller, the Open Door's president and

CEO. Moeller directs people who want to pray to register on their Web site [www.opendoorsusa.org](http://www.opendoorsusa.org). Registrants will receive a monthly prayer e-mail calendar and a daily e-mail brief with updated information on China and specific prayer requests. "Together we can make a difference," Moeller said. "And prayer is the No. 1 way."

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## Bridge Collapse Called a "Miracle"™

*Despite the disastrous circumstances, which left five dead, eight missing and more than 100 injured, the recent bridge collapse in Minneapolis is being called a miracle.*



Despite the disastrous circumstances, which left five dead, eight missing and more than 100 injured, the recent bridge collapse in Minneapolis is being called a miracle. "We were surprised that we didn't have more people seriously injured and killed," Minneapolis Fire Chief Jim Clack told The Associated Press. "I think it was something of a miracle." An estimated 100 to 150 cars fell more than 60 feet into the rushing Mississippi river, which was moving slower than usual due to a drought. Because of the bridge's design, many of the vehicles fell on top of the debris, which went into the river first. A school bus carrying 50 young children back from summer camp was on the bridge during the collapse, but all survived and none of the children were seriously injured. "All I could think was, thank God that bus didn't go in the river," Kelly Morgan, a resident who lived near the children's summer camp, told Fox News. Still many ministries are asking that Americans would pray for those currently affected by the tragedy. "Pray for protection for those involved in trying to rescue people in difficult circumstances, including debris and heat," said Steve Loopstra, executive director of Prayer Transformation Ministries in Minneapolis. "Pray for the

families of those who have been caught in this collapse; pray for the Lord's peace for those involved, especially the injured people needing medical attention.”

To view more pictures of the bridge collapse [click here](#).

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## North Korean Christian Man Facing Death

*The international effort to free a Christian man from death row continued in early August with the Voice of the Martyrs calling all citizens to speak out on his behalf.*



The international effort to free a North Korean Christian man from death row continued in early August with the Voice of the Martyrs (VOM) calling all citizens to write letters and send e-mails on Son Jong Nam's behalf to North Korean officials, the United Nations, the U.S. Department of State and their elected officials. VOM, an Oklahoma-based Christian advocacy group for the world's persecuted Christians, launched an international campaign in July to free a man awaiting execution in a reportedly torturous North Korean prison. Sources at VOM maintain that Son Jong Nam, a former North Korean Army officer turned underground evangelist, is being beaten and tortured for his Christian faith in a bleak prison basement cell in the capital city of Pyongyang. VOM enlisted the high-visibility help of presidential candidate Sen. Sam Brownback of Kansas, who sent letters signed by four other U.S. senators asking Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to work for immediate and safe release of the Christian man. “All religions have been harshly repressed in North Korea [and] thousands of Christians

have been murdered since the Korean War,” said Todd Nettleton, a spokesman for VOM. “Christians must practice their faith in deep secrecy and are in constant danger.”

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## Heart Doctor Revives Dead Patient With Prayer

*Dr. Chauncey W. Crandall IV is defying normal medical practices by encouraging other doctors to pray for their patients to be healed.*



At the 4th Annual World Christian Doctors Network Conference in Miami earlier this month, Dr. Chauncey W. Crandall IV of the Palm Beach Cardiovascular Clinic in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., told 120 medical doctors their patients could be miraculously healed, even revived from death, if they would pray, reported Assist News Service (ANS). As Crandall regaled the doctors with stories of God miraculously healing past patients, he told the story of a 53-year-old mechanic whose heart stopped beating after he suffered a massive heart attack last year in West Palm Beach, Fla. Crandall said that as the man's body was being prepared to go to the morgue he sensed the Holy Spirit tell him to pray for the man. “There was no life in the man. His face and feet and arms were completely black with death and I sat next to his body and I prayed,” Crandall said. “Father, God, I cry out for the soul of this man if he does not know You as his Lord and Savior, please raise him from the dead right now in Jesus name.” Within minutes the man's heart began to beat perfectly and he started moving his fingers and toes and then he started to speak, ANS reported. The man awoke with a story of his journey to hell and of crying out for Christ to save him. Crandall encouraged doctors at the conference to integrate prayer into their everyday tasks. “I would just like to say to my colleagues and

physicians out there, that the Lord is real," he said. "We've seen many miracles and we pray for our patients daily. There is not one week that goes by that we don't see a mighty miracle in our office. The people need this, they need the power of Christ in their life, and they need the power of Christ for healing." Crandall employs a full-time chaplain to prayer with his patients.