

Suffering From 'Sunday School Syndrome'

✖ With surveys showing that more American Christians are becoming biblically illiterate, many proponents of the Sunday school model have argued for a churchwide return to weekly Bible classes—especially for children and youth. Yet a new study by Ken Ham, founder of apologetics ministry Answers in Genesis, indicates that Sunday school may actually lead teens to abandon church reports .

After surveying more than 1,000 twentysomethings on multiple occasions, Ham and American Research Group founder Britt Beemer found that those who had regularly attended Sunday school classes while growing up were more likely to question the authority of Scripture. These 20- to 29-year-olds were also more likely to leave the church, defend the legality of same-sex marriage and abortion, and defend premarital sex.

"This is a brutal wake-up call for the church, showing how our programs and our approaches to Christian education are failing dismally," Ham writes in his latest book, *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do to Stop It*. Though his book includes both reasons for and remedies to what Ham describes as the "Sunday school syndrome," he says one of the biggest factors is a disconnect that church leaders and parents have helped create in children's understanding of the creation account.

According to the apologist, the church began planting seeds of doubt in the last century among younger generations by turning the Genesis creation account into a figurative story that rendered scientific facts a non-issue—"while the gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection were held up as verifiable proof of the Bible's inerrancy. This inconsistency, says Ham, created a deep questioning that was furthered by an

increasingly secular school system that held everything up to the plumb line of science.

“What you see in the Bible is that when there is compromise in one generation, and it’s not dealt with, you usually notice it to a greater extent in the next generation,” Ham told . “Because of the way in which they’ve been educated, [today’s teens now believe] that what they are taught in school is reality, but the church teaches stories and morality and relationship. Bible teaching is not real in the sense of real history.”