

The Devastating Cost of Teens Running Away from God

A new study featuring thousands of teenagers across the globe found destructive thoughts are more common among young people “who express that they don’t believe in anything spiritual, are uncertain about their beliefs, or believe they sin but don’t believe in Jesus.”

Dr. Arnie Cole, director of research and development at The Center for Bible Engagement, the organization that commissioned the survey in partnership with Our Daily Bread Ministries, said the results offer some ominous signs parents and faith leaders must address.

Cole told CBN’s Faithwire his organization—part of Christian ministry Back to the Bible—has long explored how people become “spiritually formed,” with the focus turning to young people in recent years.

His most recent research explores the intersections of increased social media use, increased mental health problems and decreased engagement in faith.

“We’ve been very concerned about young people walking away and then are concerned about the algorithms and social media,” Cole said. “And we just thought, ‘Why don’t we do a study because a lot of people have suggested that there’s a problem with social media.’”

He said the current mental health crisis—including more than 50% of middle and high school girls who report feeling hopeless and depressed—and the general move away from faith has set off alarm bells, and the data provide a real reason to worry.

“We were absolutely shocked when we started gathering the data

about their struggles—their spiritual struggles, their mental health, and then it just progressed,” Cole said, noting how the research grew to explore young people in numerous countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, India, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, United Kingdom and the United States.

Cole said the most shocking findings in the research revolved around “how strong the destructive behavior becomes when you start combining variables.”

The survey found these destructive behaviors among teens were more common in the U.S. and U.K., postulating it might have something to do with some of the “transgender and sexual confusion” going on in the West, among other related factors.

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