

# Maximum Faith

*May 31, 2011*

How does God transform the lives of Christians? If you think the answer to that question is easy, perhaps you should talk with George Barna. Six years after beginning what he assumed would be a relatively typical research process that sought to better understand how God transforms people's lives, he discovered he had tackled a deeply challenging and amazingly revealing journey. The end product was his new book, *Maximum Faith*.

After lots of research and exhausting surveys, he was able to describe what he calls ten stop points on the journey to wholeness. Stop 1 is ignorance of the concept or existence of sin. Millions of people grow up oblivious to the fact that God exists and that we have a sin nature. Stop 2 is an awareness and indifference to sin. As life goes on, people gain exposure to the idea of sin, but many do not accept it as valid or significant. Stop 3 is concerned about the implications of personal sin. And stop 4 is a decision to confess sin and ask Jesus Christ to be savior. It is worth noting that about 2/3rd of Americans are stuck in one of these four stops.

Stop 5 is a commitment to faith activities. A believer gets involved in church activities (church service, Sunday School classes, etc.). Another quarter of Americans are at this stop. This means that nearly 90 percent of Americans are stuck at one of the first five stops and are not therefore not experiencing the other five stops that George Barna has identified.

Stop 6 is a prolonged period of spiritual discontent. Stop 7 is an experience of personal brokenness. Stop 8 is a decision to surrender and submit fully to God. Stop 9 is enjoying a profound intimacy with the love for God. And stop 10 is

experiencing a profound compassion and love for humanity.

It is worth noting that only a fraction of a percent find themselves in these last two stops. In general, Christians in America are not experiencing what God intends for them. Put another way, most Christians are captive to the culture and therefore unwilling to seek godliness. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

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## **Ominous Ruling from the UK**

*March 14, 2011*

A landmark ruling in the U.K. will have a major impact on the future of foster care and adoption in that country. The High Court suggested that Christians with traditional beliefs on sexual ethics are unsuitable as foster care parents. And they went on to argue that gay rights trump religious beliefs and freedom of conscience.

A key lawyer in the case was Paul Diamond, a prominent Christian barrister in England. I have had him on my radio program on two occasions to talk about how ideas in the U.K. often make it to the U.S. He has noticed that our legal system is going down the same path as England and has wanted to warn us about this trend. What happens in the U.K. doesn't stay in the U.K. It crosses the Atlantic to our nation. Many justices are interested in trends in international law and work to implement those ideas in our opinions. And when the Supreme Court takes a break over the summer, many of the justices go over to Europe to study and lecture.

This current case has ominous implications for Christians in England and could eventually have an impact in this country. A

married couple (Eunice and Owen Johns) applied to be foster care parents in 2007. The Derby City Council blocked their application because the Johns were not willing to promote the practice of homosexuality to a young child. Both parties asked the High Court to rule on whether they could be foster parents.

The High Court Judges upheld an Equalities and Human Rights submission that children that might be in the care of the couple risk being “infected” (their word) by Christian moral beliefs. That stated that Christian beliefs on sexual ethics may be “inimical” to children. In other words, these Christian beliefs are harmful to children.

While it is true that this ruling merely applies to this particular couple, it signals that other Christians who hold to orthodox Christian views on sex, marriage, and family are likely to face difficulties in the future. This ruling will likely be applied to any Christian wanting to be a foster parent or adopt a child. And it is possible that some day in the future we may see a similar ruling in America. I’m Kerby Anderson, and that’s my point of view.

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## **Psalm 8**

*April 22, 2011*

If you study astronomy for very long, you can feel very small. We are a small planet in one solar system in one of many galaxies. Just consider some of the comments by scientists about our place in the universe.

Werner von Braun said: “We find that we live on an insignificant planet of a humdrum star lost in a galaxy tucked

away in some forgotten corner of a universe in which there are far more galaxies than people.”

Astronaut Neil Armstrong said he felt very small when he was in space. “It suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. I didn’t feel like a giant. I felt very small.”

Stephen Hawking said: “We are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star. But we can understand the universe. That makes us something very special.” I don’t know about you, but I don’t feel very special just because I can understand the universe.

David asks the same question in Psalm 8. Are human beings special? Speaking to God he says: “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?”

David then gives God’s answer to this important question. “Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.”

Our significance doesn’t come from being on planet Earth or even from understanding the nature of the universe. Our significance comes from the fact that an all-powerful, loving God created us in His image and gave us dominion over His creation.

Astronomy interpreted from a naturalistic worldview doesn’t give us significance. Only a Christian worldview which teaches that we are God’s special creation can give us true significance. I’m Kerby Anderson, and that’s my point of view.

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# Shadow Scholar

*April 28, 2011*

A few months ago, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* published an expose written by a man who makes his living writing papers for a custom-essay company. His article is getting even more attention now that *Readers Digest* has printed an edited version. He has written roughly 5,000 pages of scholarly literature for students in college and graduate school. You won't find his name on a single paper.

The article follows his experience with one student who wants him to write a 75-page paper on business ethics. It later became part of a 170-page graduate school thesis. Her e-mail reads as follows: "You did me business ethics propasal [sic] for me I need propasal got approved pls can you will write me paper?" Yes, her English and grammar are that poor. I will spare you all the other e-mails she writes to him.

He has found there are three demographic groups that seek out his services: the English-as-second-language student, the hopelessly deficient student, and the lazy rich kid. He admits that he lives rather well "on the desperation, misery, and incompetence" that our educational system has created. He remarks that "my company's staff of roughly 50 is not large enough to satisfy the demands of students."

Perhaps the greatest irony in his work is that he does lots of work for seminary students. He says: "I like seminary students. They seem so blissfully unaware of the inherent contradiction in paying someone to help them cheat in courses that are largely about walking in the light of God and providing an ethical model for others to follow. I have been commissioned to write many a passionate condemnation of

America's moral decay as exemplified by abortion, gay marriage, or the teaching of evolution. All in all, we may presume that clerical authorities see these as a greater threat than the plagiarism committed by the future frocked."

Anyone looking for evidence of moral decline in America need look no further than the willingness of students (including seminary students) to hire ghostwriters to do their work and then claim it as their own. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

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# unChristian

*January 27-28, 2011*

If you have ever wondered why non-Christians reject the gospel and turn down your invitation to attend your church, then I have a book for you. Barna Research has produced a book entitled, *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity*. This book helps us understand why non-Christians seem so cold to the claims of Christianity.

The researchers found that a minority of young people who believe that labels like "respect, love, hope, and trust" describe Christianity. But the rest have lost respect for Christianity. David Kennaman, President of the Barna Research Group and one of the authors of the book, says we need to resolve this perception problem if we are to connect with the youngest generation.

He lists six common perceptions that non-Christians have about Christians and Christianity.

**1. Hypocritical** – outsiders to Christianity believe that Christians say one thing and do another. They found that 84

percent knew a Christian, but only 15 percent believed that the Christian they knew acted consistently with his or her beliefs.

Hypocrisy is not just a 21st century phenomenon. Lately I have preached on the subject of hypocrisy and have been reminded how Jesus spoke so strongly against hypocrisy in the 1st century. But this survey shows that Christians must be authentic and acting consistently with Christian beliefs.

**2. Focused on converts** – outsiders often feel more like targets. Christians want to get them saved, but they don't listen to them and these outsiders don't feel truly loved.

**3. Anti-homosexual** – the younger generation is less likely to see homosexuality as sin so they equate Christians with being anti-homosexual. There is a real need for us to show biblical compassion as we also address this issue with our biblical convictions.

**4. Sheltered** – outsiders feel that Christians often offer simplistic answers to the complex and troubling aspects of modern life. They perceive us as old-fashioned, boring, and generally out of touch with reality.

**5. Political** – often outsiders perceive Christianity as merely an extension of right-wing politics. They feel Christians are too political or are motivated by political interests. That doesn't mean Christians shouldn't be salt and light, but they should be aware that this is a connection that non-Christians often make.

**6. Judgmental** – nearly 90 percent of outsiders say the term "judgmental" accurately describes Christians today. Only 20 percent of outsiders view the church as a place where people are accepted and loved unconditionally. Christians sadly are known more for their criticism than for their love. And we may be so fixated with sin that we cannot really love broken people.

As we look at the six perceptions, we should admit that some of these criticisms would surface no matter how well Christians try to be loving and gracious. After all, many of these same people would probably call Jesus judgmental. So some of these perceptions will be with us no matter what we say or do.

But I think it is important for us to be real and authentic rather than hypocritical. And we should be relevant rather than sheltered. So there is some work for us to do if we are to effectively reach the next generation. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

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## Millennials and Media

How has the Millennial generation been influenced by media and technology? Thom and Jess Rainer attempt to answer that question in their book, [\*The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation\*](#). Their survey of 1,200 older Millennials provides a detailed look at this generation.

When technology first comes on the scene, there are early adopters then a significant majority and finally laggards. Millennials fit into the category of early adopters. In the survey they were asked if they agree with the following statement: "I am usually among the first people to acquire products featuring new technology." About half agreed with the statement, and half disagreed with the statement. And even for those who disagreed, it is safe to say they did not fit into the category of laggards. Millennials are quick to embrace new technology.

When asked how they most frequently communicate when not actually with the other person, they rated phone first (39

percent), then texting (37 percent), and then e-mail (16 percent). At the bottom was by letter (1 percent). The survey also noticed a difference between older and younger Millennials. Put simply, the younger you are, the more likely you are to communicate by texting.

Social media is also a significant part of the lifestyle of a Millennial. Not surprisingly, the most popular social media site was Facebook (73 percent), followed by MySpace (49 percent).

Although social media can be accessed in many ways, still the most pervasive is through the computer. Millennials use computers both for work and for personal use. Most Millennials (83 percent) use a computer for work and spend about 17 hours on it each week. And Millennials spend 17 hours per week on computers for personal use.

If you put these numbers together, you find something shocking. The average Millennial spends 17 hours per week on a computer for work, and spends the same amount of time on a computer for personal use. That totals 34 hours per week on a computer. "That means that roughly one-third of Millennials' waking lives are spent on a computer."

If Christians are to reach the Millennial generation, it is important to know how they use media and technology. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

*January 25, 2011*

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# **Is the Internet Changing How**

# You Think?

*January 21, 2011*

Can the Internet change how you think? That was a question columnist Suzanne Fields asked the other day. If you go to [Edge.org](http://Edge.org), you will notice that the question they pose for this year is slightly different. It is: "How is the Internet changing the way you think?"

I have been wondering the same thing. Unlike Suzanne Fields, I wasn't wondering IF the Internet was changing our thinking but HOW it is already changing the way we think. There were two reasons why I have been thinking this.

First, look at the younger generation being raised on the Internet. If you haven't noticed, they think and communicate different from previous generations. I have done [radio programs](#) and read articles about the millennial generation. They do think differently, and a large part that is due to the Internet.

A second reason for my interest in this topic is an *Atlantic* article by Nicholas Carr entitled "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" He says: "Over the past few years I've had an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with my brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory." He believes this comes from using the Internet and searching the web with Google. And he gives not only his story but many anecdotes and some research to back up his perspective.

A developmental psychologist at Tufts University puts it this way. "We are not only what we read. We are how we read." The style of reading on the Internet puts "efficiency" and "immediacy" above other factors. Put simply, it has changed the way we read and acquire information.

Now you might say that would only be true for the younger generation. Older people are set in their ways. The Internet could not possibly change the way the brains of older people download information. Not true. The 100 billion neurons inside our skulls can break connections and form others. A neuroscientist at George Mason University says: "The brain has the ability to reprogram itself on the fly, altering the way it functions."

The Internet does appear to be altering the way we read and think, but more research is needed to confirm if this true. If so, parents and educators need to take note of what is happening in our cyberworld. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

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## Mapping America

*Jan. 18, 2011*

A new study verifies what many of us have known for some time. Children who grow up in an intact family and attend religious services do better than children who do not. Dr. Patrick Fagan at the Family Research Council documents this in [Mapping America](#). He uses the data collected by Drs. Nicholas Zill and Philip Fletcher from the National Survey of Children's Health.

They found a significant discrepancy between children who grew up in intact families (with both biological parents) and those who came from broken homes. They also found a similar discrepancy between those who attend religious services weekly and those who worship less frequently. They found that children in the former groups were five times less likely to repeat a grade, less likely to have behavior problems at home and school, and more likely to be cooperative and

understanding of others' feelings.

The benefits not only accrued to the children, but also had an impact on the parents. For example, parents of kids from intact families who worship regularly were much less likely (21 percent) to be contacted by the child's school about behavior or achievement problems compared to parents (53 percent) whose kids were not living with both parents and not attending church services regularly. Parents of the children in the first group also report less stress, healthier parent-child relationships, and few concerns about their children's achievement.

Even more surprising in the study was the these differences held true even after controlling for family income and poverty as well as for the parents' education level, race, and ethnicity. In essence, the study suggests that the best prescription for society is a stable family and family worship. In this environment, children thrive emotionally and achieve academically. They become the foundation for the next generation of leaders and citizens.

In a sense, this study is the flip side of studies that were published years ago about the impact of divorce on children. In my book, [Christian Ethics in Plain Language](#), I document the three e's of negative impact of divorce (emotional impact, educational impact, and economic impact). Whether you look at these positive studies or the earlier negative studies, you can see the importance of family and worship. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that is my point of view.

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# Index of Belonging

*Jan. 13, 2011*

The American family has been in trouble for some time, but it is often difficult to provide a clear statistical picture of what is happening. Dr. Patrick Fagan at the Family Research Council has put together an Index of Belonging and Rejection that might be the best tool yet to help us understand what is happening to children in these families.

Only 45 percent of American children have spent their childhood in an intact family. The study defines an intact family as one in which a biological mother and father remain legally married to one another since before or around the time of their child's birth.

Let's look at the other part of the index. The first part is belonging. The second part is rejection. When we look at American teenagers and their parents we see that 55 percent of the teenagers' parents have rejected each other, either through divorce, separation, or choosing not to marry.

Patrick Fagan warns that "American society is dysfunctional, characterized by a faulty understanding of the male-female relationship." He goes on to explain the individual children, as well as communities, suffer the consequences of a "culture of rejection in American homes."

There are some ethnic and regional differences. Asian-American children are most likely to live in intact families. African-American children are least likely. And children living in the South are more likely to live in intact families.

Broken homes lead to broken hearts and a disturbing increase in social problems. These include higher levels of poverty, unemployment, welfare dependency, domestic abuse, child neglect, delinquency, crime, drug abuse, academic failure, and

unmarried teen pregnancy and childbearing.

A nation's strength depends upon the strength of its families. This new index illustrates once again in a very powerful way that the strength of the American family is waning. Churches and Christian organizations need to do what they can to strengthen families through preaching, teaching, and programs. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

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## **Muslim Bias in Textbooks?**

Oct. 5, 2010

The Texas State Board of Education has been the center of controversy over textbook adoption. And since Texas buys so many public school textbooks, what happens in Texas affects the rest of the nation.

Earlier this year there was a battle over curriculum standards. The latest battle was over a resolution over what is perceived as a Muslim bias in the textbooks. The resolution that was passed over a week ago alleges that some older textbooks are "politically-correct whitewashes of Islamic culture and stigmas on Christian civilization."

Those are pretty strong words, and so my first inclination was to check out the charges and see if they were true. Unfortunately, the knee-jerk reaction of the left and the media was to dismiss the accusations without even investigating them.

I collected articles from Internet Web site such as MSNBC, FoxNews, and WorldNetDaily. And you can add to that various

newspaper accounts. The Christian or conservative sources at least took the time to interview the man responsible for the resolution before the Texas State Board of Education. The others did not. Oh, they did take the time to get some comments from the Texas Freedom Network or other liberal groups that condemned the resolution as erroneous and politically motivated.

If you took the time to dig through all the charges and accusations, you would find a few facts that were relevant to the resolution. The concerns seemed valid because of the space and tone of the presentations. The textbooks devoted twice or nearly twice as much space to Muslim "beliefs, practices and holy writings" as to Christian beliefs. And the tone was different. For example, Christians during the Crusades were called "violent attackers" while Muslims were called "empire builders." The resolution also called attention to what it called "sanitized definitions of jihad."

The fact that the resolution barely passed illustrates that trying to identify and document religious bias in our textbooks may just be too controversial. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.