

A PUBLICATION OF



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# VANGUARD

OVERCOMING THE DARKNESS

## A Word from the President



The last week of February I attended the annual convention of the National Religious Broadcasters. Probe Ministries is a member organization, but this was the first time I had attended. With Kerby Anderson as my guide and interference runner, I was able to set up several radio and TV interviews to discuss the results from Probe's survey of 817 born again adults age 18 to 40. Conducted for us by The Barna Group, this survey gave us valuable insights about this important generation regarding what they believe, how they practice their faith, what influence their faith has on the decisions they make, and what areas of life (personal, relational, sexual, work, money, etc) cause them the most concern (and therefore where they experience failure and guilt). While approximately 37% exhibit a biblical worldview according to established Barna criteria, when six additional questions are asked—involving the exclusive claims of Christ, competing claims of Mohammed and Buddha, their purpose in life, the coherence of science and the Bible, the overall truth of the Bible, and the need to present their beliefs to others without judgment—the number drops to 17%. If you add in church and Bible study attendance, sin issues, and other necessary tenets of a biblical faith, the remnant is small indeed. Pray for us as we devise a plan to reach out to this all important demographic in the church so they can be effective salt and light in a culture full of false voices.

## Ministry Snapshots

**Ray and Sue in Belarus**—Beer goggles were the hit this month when Ray and Sue taught pastors in Belarus. Wearing these goggles alters one's perception like that of a person drunk. Ray used them with the students to illustrate what having the wrong worldview "goggles" does to a person's perception of life and the world

**Don in East Asia**—Don was part of a small team that met first with a group of U.S. workers for strategic planning, and then with national "club leaders" for a training conference. These efforts are a result of concerted prayers for a deeper partnership with our brothers and sisters to better equip the body of Christ in Asia.

**Hawaii Apologetics Conference**—Pat reports that his conference in February was a great success. William Lane Craig joined Pat in leading the sessions. The sanctuary of the church was too small for the 430 in attendance. Pat is now talking with the leaders of a mega church about hosting next year's conference.

**Michael in Hungary**—It isn't often that we get to teach overseas without a translator. That was the case this time when Michael returned to Word of Life Bible Institute in Tóalmás, Hungary. Because all the students spoke English, he was able to deliver significantly more content in his course on apologetics

**Total Truth at Plano Bible**—At the invitation of pastor Larry Murray, Probe led a series at Plano Bible Chapel based on Nancy Pearcey's book *Total Truth*. The subject matter was different than what many were used to hearing, but that was the point—to make people aware of a divide in American Christian's lives. See the report on page 6.

**Mind Games times two**—For many years at our summer conference, Christian high schoolers made the startling but delightful discovery that there were others like them who really wanted to think deeply about their faith! *Mind Games* reappears this summer in two forms. See Renea's article on page 7.

“What we find . . . is that less than one in ten evangelical emerging adults hold to these religious beliefs and engage in these religious practices.”

# Emerging Adults Part 2: Distinctly Different Faiths

Steve Cable

## National Study of Youth and Religion

In his book *Souls in Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*, Christian Smith summarized the findings of the National Study of Youth and Religion (Wave 3).<sup>1</sup> One of his results showed that the number of young adults who identify themselves as not religious or as a religious liberal has grown from one in three young adults in 1976 to almost two out of three in 2008.

This culture has produced a set of young Americans who may still claim to be associated with Protestant or Catholic beliefs but in reality have accepted the view that God and Christ are potentially helpful upon death, but are of little value until then. As these young adults moved from teenagers into emerging adults, Smith found that over four out of ten of them became less religious over a five year span.

Along with general demographic information, the questions asked by the survey can be generally divided into four segments: Religious Beliefs, Religious Practices, Cultural Beliefs, and Cultural Practices. We found a significant disconnect between each of these four segments. What we find is that of 881 evangelicals age 18- to 23-years-old, a grand total of zero (that is zilch, nada, none) share a common set of beliefs and practices across all four categories.

## Religious Beliefs

Let us begin by first considering the data on

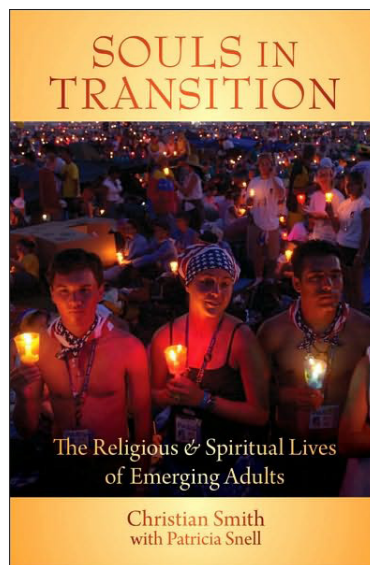
religious beliefs. First, we find that four out of five of those associated with an evangelical church believe in God as a personal being and Jesus as His Son who was raised from the dead.<sup>2</sup>

But when we add in the concepts that only people whose sins are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ go to heaven and that there is only one true religion, the number of evangelicals in this age group who agree drops to 38%.

Thus, only one in three ascribe to the most basic beliefs of evangelical Christianity.

When one adds in the concepts that faith is important, that demons are real beings, and that there are some actions that are always right or wrong, and combine those with attending a worship service at least two times a month, the number among evangelicals drops to less than one in five. And if we add another seven questions on belief in things like life after death, heaven,

judgment day, and miracles, about 15% of evangelical young adults answer correctly.



## Religious Practices

We might expect that the religious behaviors of this core group of 15%, such as regular prayer and Bible reading, would match their beliefs. What we find, however, is that less than one in ten evangelical emerging adults hold to these religious beliefs and engage in these religious practices. In fact, nearly half of those with the core beliefs do not read their Bibles or pray. When we add on questions about whether they are interested in learning more about their faith and have shared their faith with someone else, the number drops



to less than one in twenty of the evangelical young adults. So, over ninety-five out of one hundred young people affiliated with evangelical churches do not believe and practice their belief fully.

## Cultural Beliefs

How do evangelicals in this age group fare on significant cultural beliefs that should be informed by their faith? When asked about the creation of the world, approximately half said that God created the world without using evolution over a long period of time to create new species. Only one in four believe they should wait to have sex and don't need to try out sex with their partner before they get married. Forty-eight percent of evangelicals have respect for organized religion in this country and believe it is okay for religious people to try to convert other people to their faith. However, when we combine these three beliefs together—beliefs about creation, sex, and evangelism—we find that only one in ten evangelicals agree with all three of these. Then when we look to see how many have the religious beliefs and practices *and* agree on these three things, we find that only eight out of a hundred evangelicals (less than 1%) qualify. Thus, we have only eight people out of over 2500 who have a consistent set of evangelical religious beliefs, religious practices, and cultural beliefs.

It appears that many emerging adults discount any religious teachings that would discourage them from doing what the culture promotes as acceptable, in contrast to the Bible which says, "Love not the world neither the things of the world. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, are not of the Father but are of the world."<sup>3</sup>

## Cultural Practices

Perhaps the disturbing cultural beliefs are belied by the cultural practices. According to the NSYR report, over half (54%) of the evangelical, emerging adults surveyed did not smoke pot or engage in binge drinking in

the two weeks before the survey. Of course this also means that almost half of them *have* engaged in one of both of these activities.

How many have not engaged in viewing X-rated videos in the last year or in unmarried sex (including oral sex)? This number begins at approximately one third of evangelicals not engaging in unmarried sex but drops to only one fifth when X-rated videos are added. So, four out of five evangelical, emerging adults are engaged in sexual sin, most of them on a regular basis.

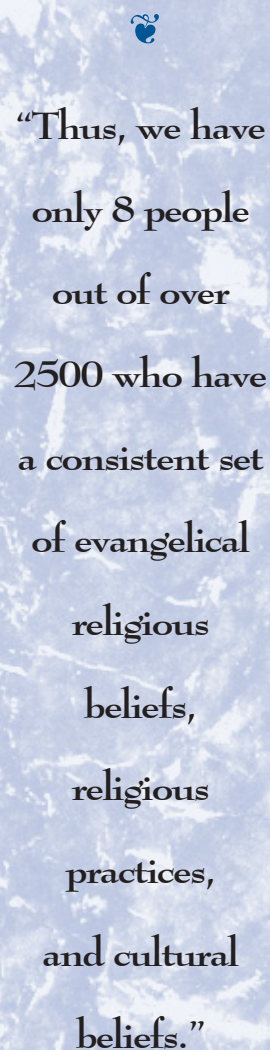
If we add to this actions related to helping others, expressions of gratitude for what they have, and actively planning for the future, we find that only about 2% of all emerging adults hold to a biblical set of practices.

## Conclusions

First, the basic religious beliefs of emerging adults largely depart from the Bible, and when you add in religious practices and cultural beliefs and practices we find that no one maintains a distinctly biblical worldview. Second, there does not appear to be uniformity in the beliefs of emerging adults. Rather than having a subset of evangelicals, say 15%, holding to a distinctly biblical worldview, you end up with none because they trip up in different areas.

As Christian Smith pointed out, "emerging adults felt entirely comfortable describing various religious beliefs that they affirmed but that appeared to have no connection whatsoever to the living of their lives."<sup>4</sup> This is because religious teachings are not the authority on this world. Rather, it is what you choose to believe that is your authority for the "truth" in your life. This belief results in a large number of evangelical, emerging adults who don't hold to a set of common beliefs about God, Jesus, religion, and cultural practices, but instead hold to a wide variety of beliefs which are counter to the Bible.

*Emerging Adults.... continued on pg 8*



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“Their  
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this question is  
a new one.”

# The Professor: *Why Are You a Christian?*

Ray Bohlin

## The Professor!

Our young people are heading into public and even Christian colleges thinking they are ready for the challenge to their faith that higher learning can be. Over the last ten years, I have used a very effective technique to help teens realize their unpreparedness for the step toward college. The technique I use is to impersonate an atheistic college professor doing research on the religious beliefs of young people. Sometimes the students know I am playing a role with them, but occasionally I play the professor and the students are none the wiser.

When I step to the front of the room, I introduce myself as Professor Haimie Schwartz (a name borrowed from my late colleague Jerry Solomon who played this role far better than I do). I tell the group that, since I am conducting research on the religious beliefs of young people, their youth pastor, counselor, principal, teacher, whatever, has allowed me to visit with them.

I begin the conversation something like this: “Since this is a church or Christian school I presume you are all Christians. Is anyone *not* a Christian?” Of course no one raises their hand. At this point I simply call on someone. “You! Are you a Christian?” No one has ever answered no. Upon receiving an affirmative answer, with hands casually in pockets, I demand, “Why?”

This simple question why is usually something our young people, and even their parents, have never really considered. Their

Christian faith is certainly something they would claim is central to their lives, but the dumbfounded looks on their faces tells me repeatedly that this question is a new one.

By asking such questions, I can get them pretty riled up and confused. The point is not to have fun but to help them see that they need to be prepared and think about why Christianity is important to them and why they think it’s true.



## “I Asked Jesus into My Heart!”

Having their Christianity questioned usually comes as a surprise and even a shock. Rather than directly answering the question, they try to tell me *how* they became a Christian. It usually takes the form of confidently saying they asked Jesus into their heart.

The professor quickly fires back, “You asked Jesus into your heart?! That sounds pretty gross really.

What’s he doing in there with all that blood? Yuck!” That always gets a surprised reaction and a little befuddlement. The student typically tries to recover by saying something like, “No, I mean it’s like I trusted Jesus as my Savior.”

Again the professor will fire back quickly with a question like, “Why did you do that?” or, “Savior? What did you need saving from?” It really is not difficult to pick something from what he or she said and challenge it. I either pretend I don’t understand what they said, forcing them to better explain themselves (which is rare), or I deliberately ask them why they think that way or how they know that.



In answer to “How do you know that?” I am often told that “It says so in the Bible!” They usually can’t tell me where the Bible says that. I also ask if the Bible is true, and when they say it is, I ask, “How do you know it’s true?” The blank stare reemerges.

While I admit I have a little fun playing this role, it never ceases to break my heart how ill-prepared our young people are to follow Peter’s advice to always be prepared with an answer for the hope that is within them (1 Pet. 3:15). I have yet to find a student in ten years who is willing and able to go toe-to-toe with the professor.

### **“You’re a Narrow-Minded, Self-Righteous Bigot!”**

When I have challenged students to tell me why they think or believe Christianity is true, some will turn to their own subjective experience.

A student may say that Jesus speaks to them in their prayer time, to which I quickly ask what His voice sounds like or how they know it was Jesus and not indigestion. The blank stares usually resume at this point. Sometimes a student will interject that they believe in Jesus because that’s what their family has taught them or it’s what they learned in church. After commending them for honoring their parents I tell them that’s really pretty stupid. Pausing a second for the shock to register, I go on about the boy raised in India whose parents are Hindu and he respects his parents and believes Hinduism is true, so the boy in India and this student are both headed to heaven because they trusted their parents!

One time a student stammered around and eventually agreed with my statement as his youth pastor put his head in his hands.

Finally in talking about salvation I ask what

happens to those who don’t believe in Jesus. Most will hesitatingly say they go to hell. The professor predictably rants, “Just because I don’t believe the same fairy tale as you, I’m going to hell?” When they predictably shake their head yes, I get down eye to eye and spit out, “You’re a narrow minded, self-righteous bigot!”

### **Always Be Ready to Give an Answer, with Gentleness and Respect**

Students enjoy the interactive nature of this routine even though they are routinely embarrassed by their inability to handle the challenge. When we’re done, if time allows I

attempt to leave them with hope by quickly summarizing how I (now identified as Dr. Ray Bohlin, President of Probe Ministries) would answer the same question. I go into some detail about the evidence of design in the universe. I talk about the universal sense of right and wrong that must come from a supreme Lawgiver. I tell about

the uniqueness of Scripture, written by forty authors from eight countries over fifteen hundred years in three languages and all with a consistent and unique message of a God of love who ransomed us from our sins. Then I talk about Jesus who repeatedly claimed to be the unique divine Son of God and offered his death and resurrection on behalf of mankind as proof. That Jesus bodily rose from the dead is the only rational conclusion of the evidence of the empty tomb. On top of that, my experience of the last thirty-seven years has shown me again and again the unique love and power of God.

So what about you? Why are *you* a Christian?



“The professor rants, ‘Just because I don’t believe the same fairy tale as you, I’m going to hell? . . . You’re a narrow minded, self-righteous bigot!’”

# Total Truth at Plano Bible Chapel

This winter, Probe taught an eight lecture series based on Nancy Pearcey's book *Total Truth* at Plano Bible Chapel (Plano, TX) at their invitation. Pastor Larry Murray thought this was significant enough to have all the adult classes and high schoolers attend and to connect his most of his sermons with our talks.

Why was this so important? "As a pastor," he says, "I'm disturbed by the consistent statistics and personal ministry experience that reveal that there seems to be no observable difference between evangelical believers and unchurched unbelievers." Just with respect to marriage and divorce, for example, statistics show little difference between evangelicals and the rest of our society. Murray is also alarmed by the fact that "61% of today's young adults had been churchd at one point during their teen years but are now spiritually disengaged (i.e., not actively attending church, reading the Bible, or praying)."

One of the things that surprised Murray was "the resistance of so many to admit and recognize where the church may be held captive by our American culture." What was more shocking are the characteristics that have developed in evangelicalism that restrain us such as emotionalism, pragmatism, and the notion that simply reading the Bible will equip us to speak God's truth into

our world, that there is no need to understand our own culture well and think through how to relate Christian truth to it.

One result of the series was "the stimulation of thought and discussion [at PBC] with regard to understanding the Truth of God's Word in our day and culture. . . . There is a growing interest in learning how to practically live out the Gospel by translating Christian theology into contemporary language."

As the leadership of PBC looks to the future, Murray understands the need "to help our students recognize and deconstruct the conceptual idols that hold so many people, even believers, captive. Without the tools of apologetics, our children, our youth, our young adults can be solidly trained in Bible study and doctrine, yet still flounder helplessly when they leave home and face the world on their own. This tragedy is replayed over and over again, as Christian teenagers pack their bags, kiss their parents goodbye, and head off to secular, and even Christian, universities, only to abandon their faith before they graduate, falling prey to the latest intellectual fads."

Anyone in the greater Dallas area who might be interested in having us present this series at their church should call Renea McKenzie at 972-941-4568.

## Contemporary Apologetics Class

Every Thursday evening since January 13, a small group has gathered in Probe's conference room for a series on apologetics. This course, which was originally developed as a seminary class and ran all day for five days, has been modified to make it more accessible to lay people in the Dallas area. It will run a total of ten weeks.

Students can take the class for seminary credit or just for their own edification. Those seeking credit are required to read portions of Norman Geisler and Ron Brooks' book *When Skeptics Ask* and James W. Sire's book *The Universe Next Door* in addition to other readings distributed on CD.

The series begins with a broad look at worldview and apologetics and then narrows down to apologetics in a postmodern context. Following that there are lectures on basic evidences for God, the Bible, and the deity and the

Resurrection of Christ. After that are lectures on miracles, religious pluralism, the problem of evil, religion and science, and bioethics and the environment.

A mix of backgrounds is represented in the class, so we have students who are familiar enough with basics to want to dig into deeper issues and others who are digging into apologetics in a serious way for the first time. One of the strengths of Probe staff is the ability to speak to a wide audience, but we still find ourselves stretched as we present the material in a meaningful way to all.

No date has been set, but we plan to offer this class again next fall. Keep an eye out for details next summer.

# 2011 Summer *Mind Games*

We are thrilled to once again be offering summer *Mind Games* programs this year!

Over the last few years we have been searching and praying for a camp in the Dallas area that could meet the unique needs of our program, and last October we found just the place. Camp Copass in Denton could not have been more of a Godsend. Located on beautiful Lake Lewisville, Camp Copass simultaneously provides contemplative escape into God's beauty as it is expressed in nature and convenient access to the city for those last minute, but inevitable, trips to Walmart!

In addition to finding a facility for a *Mind Games* camp, we have also been blessed with a venue for a *Mind Games* where both parents and teens can benefit. Partnering with *VisionTours*, we are offering for the first time a Probe *Mind Games* Cruise! Parents of teens who have been to *Mind Games* regularly tell us how *they* need apologetics training just as much as their students. The *Mind Games* Cruise is the perfect opportunity to turn your typical summer vacation into a meaningful and bonding family trip with long-lasting impact on your and your children's lives as believers in Christ.

Both venues will equip participants with the tools needed to grapple with today's toughest questions: How do we know the Bible is true? Is Jesus really the only way? If God is so good, why does evil exist? How do I talk to my gay friends about Christ? What about evolution?

Do you know anyone with teenagers 16-19 years old? Registration is open!

## Feedback

**Paul appreciated a response by Probe founder Jimmy Williams years ago to a question about the "sin unto death":**

Well written article on "Sin unto death". Thank you for your adherence to God's word. I needed some scriptures and you were right on the mark. May the Lord continue his guidance over your ministry.

**Jocelyn left this message on our Facebook page:**

Just wanted to say I love the resources your website provides! I'm doing research on the Christian view of Islam for my teens Sunday School class, and your

1 OUT OF 3  
TEENAGERS LOSE THEIR  
FAITH WHEN THEY  
LEAVE FOR COLLEGE.  
FIGHT BACK!

PROBE MINISTRIES

college bound

Come learn how to tackle Christianity's toughest questions: How do we know the Bible is true? Is Jesus the only way? What about evil? How do I talk to my gay friends about Christ? What about evolution?

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PROBE.ORG

2 EVENTS!

JUNE 26-JULY 3 – CARIBBEAN CRUISE  
JULY 31-AUG 5 – CAMP COPASS

The [Probe \*Mind Games\* Cruise](#) is June 26-July 3, and the [Probe \*Mind Games\* Camp](#) at Camp Copass is July 31-August 5. Click on these event names for more information and registration.

website has tons of info, such as the basics of Islam and how to breach the barriers of Islam. Thanks for all that you do!

**Susan sent this note of appreciation to Kerby:**

Please convey to your staff my thanks for such a great informative ministry. I have heard your radio spots often and thought, "I need to go to that website." Tonight I finally did go to the website! I'm so grateful for your doctrinal statement and your stand on various issues facing the Christian community today. The Lord bless you and your work.





## The Probe Vanguard

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**Raymond G. Bohlin, Ph.D.**  
President & Publisher

**J. Kerby Anderson**  
National Director and  
Executive Editor

**Rick Wade**  
Editor

**James F. Williams, Jr.**  
Founder and  
Minister-at-Large

**Graphic Production**  
JBH Communications

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Probe Ministries,  
Suite 2000  
2001 W. Plano Pkwy.  
Plano, TX 75075  
972-941-4565  
[info@probe.org](mailto:info@probe.org)

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*A higher standard.  
A higher purpose.*

## Probe Speaking Schedule Spring 2011

Date	Name	Event	Location
Mar. 20	Kerby Anderson	Chinese Independent Baptist Ch.	Oakland, CA
Mar. 20	Pat Zukeran	Wintersburg Presbyterian	Santa Ana, CA.
Mar. 21-26	Pat Zukeran	Kanakuk Bible Institute	Branson, MO
Mar. 27	Kerby Anderson	Bayside Community Church	Tampa, FL
Mar. 27	Pat Zukeran	First Filipino Church Sunday Service	Bayonne, NJ
Apr. 1-2	Pat Zukeran	<i>Mind Games</i> Conference Chinese Christian Church and Center	Philadelphia, PA
Apr. 6-May 11	Pat Zukeran	Hope Chapel West Oahu Wednesday Evening Apologetics Series	Waipahu, HI.
Apr. 9	Kerby Anderson	Center for the Study of N.T. Manuscripts Banquet	Richardson, TX
Apr. 29-30	Kerby Anderson	International Society of Christian Apologetics Annual Meeting	Wake Forest, NC
May 5-26	Pat Zukeran	New Hope Leeward Thursday Evening Apologetics Series	Waipahu, HI
May 24	Michael Gleghorn	Dallas Bible Church Apologetics class	Dallas, TX
June 5	Pat Zukeran	Calvary Chapel Windward Sunday service	Kailua, HI
June 24-25	Kerby Anderson	Lamb and Lion Conference	McKinney, TX
June 25-26	Pat Zukeran	Santa Clara Valley Christian Ch.	Santa Clara, CA
June 26-July 3	Probe staff	<i>Mind Games</i> Cruise	Caribbean
June 31-Aug. 5	Probe staff	<i>Mind Games</i> , Camp Copass	Denton, TX

*Emerging Adults.... continued from pg 3*

### Notes

1. Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 101. The details of the study can be found at Association of Religious Data Archives, <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/NSYRW3.asp>,
2. "The National Study of Youth and Religion," <http://www.youthandreligion.org>,
3. For the sake of brevity, we are not including the beliefs of mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics in this article. To see how their beliefs influence the percentages, see the full article online. Ed.
4. 1 John 2:15-16 (NASU)
5. Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 155.

It is your sacrifices that enable us to analyze, strategize, write, record, answer emails and phone calls, maintain a web site, produce *Probe Alerts* and *Vanguards*, study, and teach. Thank you for being generous with your prayer and giving.

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