**Worldview and Its Impact on the Stability of American Families**

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I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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**Abstract**

This paper investigates what has caused the decline in a Christian, biblical worldview among American families and whether this shift has negatively impacted culture. To research these issues, I utilized the research and conclusions of various journal articles and books referencing these two topics. The overall theme is that the decline in a Christian worldview has harmed the stability of the American family and will continue to harm the culture at large if the divide between the sacred and the secular continues among Christians. The results suggest that Christians need to fully adhere to a biblical worldview in order to promote stability in families and to be people of influence who impact culture rather than allow non-Christian culture to affect them. Further research will need to be conducted over time to monitor changes in worldview, the status of American families, and the culture.

*Keywords:* American family, Christian worldview, biblical worldview, worldview, postmodern family

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# Introduction

The concern in America is that in the postmodern world, also known as post-truth, fewer people classify as holding to a Christian worldview. The causes of this decline are multi-faceted and have not occurred quickly. As America becomes a nation that is less united under biblical absolutes, it is much easier for people to compartmentalize their faith and become faithful people who have religion in private and are secular in every other area of their lives. Living out a Christian worldview in all aspects of life is becoming less socially acceptable. However, an American family's spiritual development and impact on their culture can be traced to whether a Christian worldview entirely shapes their worldview or whether they have separated their worldview between the religious and the secular.

# The Decline of a Christian Worldview in American Families

Nancy Pearcey (2008) believes that helping young people develop a Christian worldview is a tool necessary for them to survive in this world that is drawing a more significant divide between the sacred and the secular. Whereas humans tend to compartmentalize their faith life, Pearcey elaborates on the basis of a Christian worldview as far back as creation since God is "the sole source of the entire created order" (Pearcey, 2008, p. 45). She further states that people are created to be in a relationship with God, and even if a person chooses to deny God, they are simply replacing the God-created worldview with something else. This something else does not remove God's all-consuming power but instead reflects an individual's change in worldview.

Fewer Americans, barely twenty-five percent and declining, according to George Barna (2013), believe that absolute moral standard is contained within the Bible. If a person's moral standard is not based on the Bible, it absorbs worldly perspectives. For children, Barna claims that a child's worldview is formed by junior high. The worldview a child has affects the choices they make, and the choices one makes can be traced back to the worldview they hold.

If a child’s worldview is formed by junior high, Christian parents must make it a priority to help a child understand a Christian worldview at an early age. It is not about a one-day seminar or lesson to answer all the questions but about helping the child know that a biblical worldview encompasses every aspect of a person’s life. Parents lead and teach best when they are leading by example. Suppose a parent identifies as a Christian but is not living with a biblical worldview. In that case, their example will confuse the family members and stunt the spiritual formation process of those living within the home. Many parents emphasize education, sports, social skills, and vacation time as children grow. However, the best gift a Christian parent can provide to a child is understanding what a biblical worldview means so they can recognize what it is not when presented with other worldviews.

In discussing the current crisis facing the evangelical church, Scott (2008) describes the issue of pew-sitting Christians lacking a biblical worldview. Scott references Jonathan Edwards and asks, "What kind of church produces the worldview of a Jonathan Edwards?" (Scott, 2008, p. 23). Scott outlines what a Christian worldview is defined as and what the church needs to do to teach this to the entire congregation, including children. Scott proposes the concept of dualism and how the church has been guilty of beginning the sacred/secular divide by attempting to avoid paganism. He also argues that the evangelical church's keen focus on evangelism has created a lack of biblical worldview because of its emphasis on saving souls but not teaching people how to live a 360-degree Christian vision like Jonathan Edwards did.

The question of what is causing religious decline drives the heart of Wittberg's (2021) research. Working off of sociologist Karl Mannheim's theory of the inevitability of religious decline in the postmodern world, Wittberg presents some of the issues contributing to religious decline. Citing the decline found in the Millenial generation, Wittberg utilizes data from prior studies demonstrating the impact of the parent-child relationship as it relates to religious upbringing on whether a person retains their religious affiliation in young adulthood and beyond.

As noted by Wittberg, there is a greater likelihood that those raised by parents who regularly attend services and discuss religious topics as a family becomes religiously active young adults than those raised by parents who are irreligious in the socialization of their children. While additional factors such as environmental issues and individualism within the culture influence a person's worldview, the groundwork of the shaping of a Christian worldview in childhood produces a greater likelihood of adherence to a Christian worldview.

Additionally, Bishop (2013) argues that values are present at birth and are a reflection of God. He further elaborates on the concept of a Christian worldview and its impact on all areas of society, individually and collectively. The Christian worldview is a means of interpreting internal and external factors through a biblical lens. Because an individual's worldview impacts values, Bishop concludes as influence upon individuals increases outside of the family unit, more diversification and departures from traditional values have occurred: "The decline of the American family can be interpreted as a direct result of the decline in Christianity" (Bishop, 2013, p. 130).

In researching the role media messages play in the worldview formation of youth, Dahle (2017) discusses the need to engage youth through the art of "double listening." In reasoning the need to do this, Dahle finds that to relate to one another, a person must listen to Scripture and the contemporary world. Dahle utilizes Disney's impact on shaping children's minds and whether there is any common ground between Christianity and the storylines of Disney movies. While some overlapping themes exist, Dahle highlights that "Disney's emphasis on finding one's 'true self' is often at the expense of community values" (Dahle, 2017, p. 69). Dahle believes the influence media has on the American family should not be overlooked or dismissed and should be deemed important work for both the family and the church to address as it relates to the formation of a Christian worldview within the family context. Parents cannot turn a blind eye to what their children do, nor should they assume their children are not participating in available media. Instead, parents need to engage with their children and train them to use what is available responsibly and funnel what they watch, see, listen to, and follow through a biblical lens.

In presenting the formation of the Christian right agenda, Dowland (2009) offered examples of how Christian evangelicals initially remained quiet about cultural events during the last fifty years in America. However, when a few well-known evangelicals presented the idea that specific issues such as gay rights, abortion, and the equal rights amendment challenged the "traditional family," this ushered in the "family values" rallying cry of the Christian right (Dowland, 2009, p. 607). According to Dowland, fifty years ago, Jerry Falwell almost predicted what would happen if the traditional family broke down. Dowland further highlighted conservative Christians' barriers to regulating morality because Americans favor individual rights with limited government interference. The collision of these two schools of thought continues to challenge the Christian right agenda as the moral decline in America continues, and the traditional family model is further at risk.

Krok (2016) utilizes the term "religiousness" to discuss the importance of religious beliefs in the shaping and nurturing of children. Krok claims religiousness helps to shape familial relationships, acquire values, define proper roles within marriage and family life, and help to lay the foundation for a child's religious beliefs. Krok cites studies demonstrating that those with a deeply religious life have a higher quality of life than those without.

For instance, in attempting to understand how religion sustains Black American Christian families, Millett et al. (2018) provide insight into how religion directly influences their worldview and relational processes among Black American Christian families. Their study highlights many faith practices, such as faith in God, faith during difficult times, the power of prayer, marital strengths, and parenting strengths. The study reveals that their faith practices are very personal, needs-based responses rather than a specific picture of how these families incorporate a Christian worldview into their everyday lives. Further study would be of interest in this area as more people discuss racial injustices and their impact on individuals in this demographic. Additionally, more discussion with pastors within the black community might also prove helpful in understanding the worldview practiced by their congregations to discover the root of some of the issues plaguing this demographic, such as teen pregnancy, abortion rates, single-parent homes, violence, and absent fathers.

# The Increase of the "Nones" and "Others" and the Impact on Future Generations

Erdvig (2020) conducted a study to build a model for a biblical worldview in evangelical Christian emerging adults. The data compiled regarding the participants' childhood is valuable. According to Erdvig, there was an almost universal consistency among the participants who stated they grew up in stable Christian families, were very involved in church, and received biblical worldview training. While Erdvig's research confirmed the importance of a strong family and Christian worldview, Scheitle and Corcoran's (2019) most critical finding in their study was that most nonreligious students do not recognize the family as a significant influence on their worldview, whereas religious students do.

Further, Bengston et al. (2018) set out to determine what influences those who identify as "nones" to do so. Specifically, their research examines parents' role in influencing their children's religious or nonreligious behavior. While the study also looks at many other contributing factors, they found "the 'linked lives' effect is all the more powerful an influence if the parent-child relationship is characterized by high solidarity, which leads to higher rates of transmission or continuity across generations (Bengston et al., 2018, p. 261). Additionally, their study focuses on parental warmth and the influence mothers versus fathers have on the religious views of their children. While societal influences such as education, politics, and geography can influence a person's religious beliefs, childhood experiences have the most significant impact on their religiosity as they progress throughout life.

In determining the social ties between family and religion and the shift in the societal culture of marriage, family, and the church, Gurrentz (2017) used data to examine what effects, if any, marriage and child-rearing had on congregational ties. Gurrentz concluded that it is not marriage alone that creates close congregational ties but the raising of children. This is particularly interesting as one looks at how a shifting Christian worldview affects those who classify as Christians. If people are not making the time to foster community within the church, their spiritual development is affected, and therefore they are more likely to not grow in all areas of their lives.

In looking for the answer to his question, "What family values pervade the Hebrew Bible?" Petersen (2005) used the book of Genesis to research the issue of family. Petersen identified three family values found in Genesis and determined that family does not just consist of the nuclear family but beyond. Humanity, in familial terms, means everyone should attempt to keep the peace and do good by others for the sake of the greater family unit. Best-effort attempts should be made to resolve family conflicts in a non-violent way. How people treat one another within the family unit has a bearing on society. Marcia Spiegel (1996) wrote, "The ultimate achievement of peace on earth depends upon its achievement in the smallest social unit, the family" (Spiegel, 1996, p. 123).

In their studies, Ouseknecht and Heimdal (2003) found that a strong family institution is necessary in order to have a strong institution of religion. They also found that both family and religion focused on the person as a whole, whereas other institutions sought what could be gained for its benefit. One does not have to look far to see that the American family is suffering in many ways. Divorce rates increase every year, single-parent households are also on the rise, abuse within the home is an epidemic, and as society learns more about mental health and well-being, the link between trauma suffered during childhood within the confines of the home and the walls of the church carry over into adulthood. Left untreated, the trauma results in behaviors and choices made by victims that are not safe or healthy. Untreated trauma also leaves people susceptible to being easily swayed by various opinions and worldviews. Institutions prey on those who need help but do not know where to get it. One of the ways to push back against the darkness attempting to permeate the American family is for Christians to adhere to a biblical worldview.

As the number of people choosing "other" as it relates to religion increases, Smith and Cragun (2019) discussed the new interest in researching this segment of the population and what is driving those who do not align with traditional religion. Their research found that nonreligious individuals were more left-leaning and atheists were even more progressive. Studies since the 2000s have also focused on how secular parents raise their children. Many of these studies suggest that secular parents face a religious bias because they may be children of religious parents but not raise their children similarly. Another issue parents face is how they manage their relationships with less religious children. Some of the studies Smith and Cragun reviewed found that socialization in highly religious environments may contribute to a complete turn to atheism. Because the research into religious others is a new area, much data will come from future trends as to what is most influencing the religious shift in America.

# Parents are Critical in Leading and Shaping the American Family's Worldview

Barna (2013) believes it is imperative Christian parents not shy away from teaching their children what a biblical worldview is. He offers four cornerstones that can be used to help build a strong spiritual foundation: the Bible, a commanding knowledge of biblical content, identification of organizing principles, and a burning desire to obey God. While implementing these four cornerstones does not guarantee that a child will adapt and follow a biblical worldview, it builds the foundation and is in line with Proverbs 22:6, which instructs parents to train their children in the ways of the Lord.

While this research discusses what a parent can do, parents who do not know what a biblical worldview is or perhaps have moved away from a biblical worldview should not be afraid to seek help to understand it before attempting to share it with their children. Pride and fear often keep people from asking questions about things they do not understand within Christian circles. However, parents should feel safe to let others know they need help with understanding and accountability. Over time, secular worldviews have subtly slipped into American churches, families, and culture. Not one person is immune to falling victim to the deceit of the serpent, and therefore Peter’s advice to stay alert in 1 Peter 5:8 is just as relevant today.

Attempting to understand the social context surrounding adolescents who experience religious transformation, Regenerus et al. (2006) used data from a nationally representative sampling of American adolescents. Their findings confirmed that adolescence is the prime state of life for religious conversion. Adolescent social networks consisting of peers and parents matter and are consistent predictors of spiritual transformation. Intact, two-parent families provide more stability for adolescents. In contrast, single-parent families or other types of family structures (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) offer less stability and an increase in religious decline. Regenerus et al. also found that parents have a tremendous impact on their children based on their parenting style, and the quality of the child-parent relationship affects an adolescent's spiritual growth.

Houseknecht and Sastry (1996) set out to empirically assess the validity of David Popenoe's argument that family decline has a severe effect on the well-being of children. In conducting their research, they looked at four countries, including the United States, to determine if Popenoe's claim proved true. After clearly defining the term "decline" and measuring both family decline and child well-being based on their set of indicators, Houseknecht and Sastry determined that, consistent with Popenoe's assertion, greater adherence to family traditionalism increases child well-being. Therefore, the condition of children depends upon society's hold on strong traditional family values.

Concerning worldview, Jones (2013) argues the importance of a biblical worldview impacting every area of a person's life. Jones suggests that training children in a biblical worldview are primarily the responsibility of the parent(s), and parents may partner with the local church or school to develop specific life skills. Jones also argues that to have a biblical worldview does not mean simply having biblical knowledge and states, "There is no biblical warrant for separating the training of children into 'secular' and 'sacred'" (Jones, 2013, p. 3). Additionally, Jones claims the training of children includes both formal and informal components. The proper biblical training of children creates a better view of children by society as well as a better view of the whole of the world for children.

In attempting to explain emerging adults' re-engagement and reaffiliation into religious exercises, Uecker et al. (2016) found that family formation is a critical predictor in a person's return to a religious environment. While church attendance is not indicative of having a Christian worldview, this information is essential to continue to study to determine how families and Christian communities should prepare children while they are still in the family home to have a solid Christian worldview. Because many Americans hold to less religious traditions, the Christian community's support system will be less available if children, when becoming adults, do not remain in the church. Additionally, Uecker et al. dissected how married with children, married childless, single, single with children, and cohabitating contribute to whether someone engages with the church.

In conducting a study to determine how much a parent's religiosity affects their children, Smith (2020) examined religious conservatives, religious moderates, religious liberals, and those who do not profess to be religious at all. Smith found that a parent's religiosity is conferred upon their children through what is known as religious transmission (Smith, 2020, p. 332). As noted by Smith, the closeness of a family is based on the level of religiosity of the parents, including church attendance and the ability to effectively and clearly communicate their religious ideology. Smith's findings are that conservative religious parents tend to be much closer with their children and emphasize a healthy, functioning family life. There is also an emphasis on church attendance and congregational socialization (the building of community).

As noted before, many parents prioritize other activities such as sports, education, and leisure over church attendance during a child’s formative years. While missing church may not seem significant, these studies reveal that skipping church and failing to model the importance of biblical community impact a child far beyond childhood. If the number of "nones" continues to rise, America will be a place where church is no longer a regular thing, and people will act upon their morals rather than a standard of morals based upon the Bible.

# Conclusion

While the term biblical worldview or Christian worldview is not new, American society continues to see the impacts of compartmentalizing the sacred and the secular. This shift has not occurred overnight; people have not heeded warnings or paid attention to the red flags indicating a move farther away from God. As people become less aware of the mixing of worldviews, people, including parents, will be lulled to sleep and continue to abdicate their role in shaping their children's biblical worldview. This trend cannot continue, and more research will need to be done to monitor the decline of a Christian worldview and its effects on the stability of the American family. Additionally, as the Christian family becomes more unstable, it is less able to impact the culture positively. Only by putting a biblical worldview into daily practice will American families be able to stand against the non-biblical worldviews present in society today.

# Annotated Bibliography

Barna, G. (2013). *Transforming children into spiritual champions* (pp. 42, 53). Recorded Books, Inc.

Fewer Americans, barely twenty-five percent and declining, according to George Barna (2013), believe the absolute moral standard is contained within the Bible. If a person’s moral standard is not based on the Bible, it absorbs worldly perspectives. For children, Barna claims that a child’s worldview is formed by junior high. The worldview a child has affects the choices they make, and the choices one makes can be traced back to the worldview they hold. Barna believes it is imperative that Christian parents not shy away from teaching their children what a biblical worldview is. He offers four cornerstones that can be used to help build a strong spiritual foundation: the Bible, a commanding knowledge of biblical content, identification of organizing principles, and a burning desire to obey God. While implementing these four cornerstones does not guarantee that a child will adapt and follow a biblical worldview, it builds the foundation and is in line with Proverbs 22:6, which instructs parents to train their children in the ways of the Lord.

Bengtson, V. L., Hayward, R. D., Zuckerman, P., & Silverstein, M. (2018). Bringing up nones: Intergenerational influences and cohort trends. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *57*(2), 258–275. https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12511

Bengston et al. (2018) set out to determine what influences those who identify as "nones" to do so. Specifically, their research looks at parents' role in influencing their children's religious or non-religious behavior. While the study also looks at many other contributing factors, they found "the 'linked lives' effect is all the more powerful an influence if the parent-child relationship is characterized by high solidarity, which leads to higher rates of transmission or continuity across generations (Bengston et al., 2018, p. 261). Additionally, their study focuses on parental warmth and the influence mothers versus fathers have on the religious views of their children. While societal influences such as education, politics, and geography can influence a person's religious beliefs, childhood experiences have the most significant impact on their religiosity as they progress throughout life.

Bishop, W. H. (2013). The genesis of values in Genesis. *Journal of Human Values*, *19*(2), 127–132. https://doi.org/10.1177/0971685813492271

Bishop (2013) argues that values are present at birth and are a reflection of God. He further elaborates on the concept of a Christian worldview and its impact on all areas of society, individually and collectively. The Christian worldview is a means of interpreting internal and external factors through a biblical lens. Because an individual’s worldview impacts values, Bishop concludes as influence upon individuals increases outside of the family unit, more diversification and departures from traditional values have occurred: “The decline of the American family can be interpreted as a direct result of the decline in Christianity” (Bishop, 2013, p. 130).

Dahle, M. S. (2017). Worldview formation and the Disney universe. *Journal of Youth and Theology*, *16*(1), 60–80. https://doi.org/10.1163/24055093-01601005

In researching the role media messages play in the worldview formation of youth, Dahle (2017) discusses the need to engage youth through the art of "double listening." In reasoning the need to do this, Dahle finds that to relate to one another, a person must listen to Scripture and the contemporary world. Dahle utilizes Disney's impact on shaping children's minds and whether there is any common ground between Christianity and the storylines of Disney movies. While some overlapping themes exist, Dahle highlights that "Disney's emphasis on finding one's 'true self' is often at the expense of community values" (Dahle, 2017, p. 69). Dahle believes the influence media has on the American family should not be overlooked or dismissed and should be deemed important work for both the family and the church to address.

Dowland S. (2009). ‘Family values’ and the formation of a Christian right agenda. Church History, 78(3), 606–631.

In presenting the formation of the Christian right agenda, Dowland (2009) offered examples of how Christian evangelicals initially remained quiet about cultural events during the last fifty years in America. However, when a few well-known evangelicals presented the idea that specific issues such as gay rights, abortion, and the equal rights amendment challenged the "traditional family," this ushered in the "family values" rallying cry of the Christian right (Dowland, 2009, p. 607). According to Dowland, fifty years ago, Jerry Falwell almost predicted what would happen if the traditional family broke down. Dowland further highlighted the barriers conservative Christians face to regulate morality because Americans favor individual rights with limited government interference. The collision of these two schools of thought continues to challenge the Christian right agenda as the moral decline in America continues, and the traditional family model is further at risk.

Erdvig, R. C. (2020). A model for biblical worldview development in evangelical Christian emerging adults. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, *29*(3), 285–306. https://doi.org/10.1080/10656219.2020.1816517

Erdvig (2020) conducted a study to build a model for a biblical worldview in evangelical Christian emerging adults. The data compiled regarding the participants’ childhood is valuable. According to Erdvig, there was an almost universal consistency among the participants who stated they grew up in stable Christian families, were very involved in church, and received biblical worldview training. These findings are significant because although one’s spiritual development is a continuing process and can begin at any time, Christians fare better as emerging adults when their parents help them to establish their foundation in early childhood. Parents need to model continual spiritual development growth so their children know that no one can become complacent in their biblical worldview.

Gurrentz, B. T. (2017). Family formation and close social ties within religious congregations. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *79*(4), 1125–1143. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12398

In determining the social ties between family and religion and the shift in the societal culture of marriage, family, and the church, Gurrentz (2017) used data to examine what effects, if any, marriage and child-rearing had on congregational ties. Gurrentz concluded that it is not marriage alone that creates close congregational ties but the raising of children. This is particularly interesting as one looks at how a shifting Christian worldview affects those who classify as Christians. If people are not making the time to foster community within the church, their spiritual development is affected, and therefore they are more likely to not grow in all areas of their lives. When people are not in community and growing spiritually, they are more susceptible to isolation and might allow other views and opinions to shape their worldview.

Houseknecht, S. K., & Sastry, J. (1996). Family "decline" and child well-being: A comparative assessment. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *58*(3), 726. https://doi.org/10.2307/353732

Houseknecht and Sastry (1996) set out to empirically assess the validity of David Popenoe’s argument that family decline has a severe effect on the well-being of children. In conducting their research, they looked at four countries, including the United States, to determine if Popenoe’s claim proved true. After clearly defining the term “decline” and measuring both family decline and child well-being based on their set of indicators, Houseknecht and Sastry determined that consistent with Popenoe’s assertion, greater adherence to family traditionalism increases child well-being. Therefore, the condition of children is dependent upon society’s hold on strong traditional family values.

Jones, T. P. (Fall 2013). Editorial: How a biblical worldview shapes the way we teach our children. *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry*, *JDFM 04:1*, 2–4.

With regard to worldview, Jones (2013) argues the importance of a biblical worldview impacting every area of a person’s life. Jones suggests that training children in a biblical worldview are primarily the responsibility of the parent(s), and parents may partner with the local church or school to develop specific life skills. Jones also argues that to have a biblical worldview does not mean simply having biblical knowledge and states, “There is no biblical warrant for separating the training of children into ‘secular’ and ‘sacred’” (Jones, 2013, p. 3). Additionally, Jones claims the training of children includes both formal and informal components. The proper biblical training of children creates a better view of children by society as well as a better view of the whole of the world for children.

Krok, D. (2016). Examining the role of religion in a family setting: Religious attitudes and quality of life among parents and their adolescent children. *Journal of Family Studies*, *24*(3), 203–218. https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2016.1176589

Krok (2016) utilizes the term “religiousness” to discuss the importance of religious beliefs in the shaping and nurturing of children. Krok claims religiousness helps to shape familial relationships, acquire values, define proper roles within marriage and family life, and help to lay the foundation for a child’s religious beliefs. Krok cites studies demonstrating that those with a deeply religious life have a higher quality of life than those without. This finding is important, especially with the mental health crisis plaguing so many children and young adults and its effect on families and communities.

Millett, M. A., Cook, L. E., Skipper, A. D., Chaney, C. D., Marks, L. D., & Dollahite, D. C. (2018). Weathering the storm: The shelter of faith for black American Christian families. *Marriage & Family Review*, *54*(7), 662–676. https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2018.1469572

In attempting to understand how religion sustains black American Christian families, Millett et al. (2018) provide insight into how religion directly influences their worldview and relational processes. Their study highlights many faith practices, such as faith in God, faith during difficult times, the power of prayer, marital strengths, and parenting strengths. However, this study needs to touch on what the participants are doing in terms of possessing a Christian worldview in all things. The faith practices are very personal, needs-based responses rather than how these families incorporate a Christian worldview in their everyday lives.

Ouseknecht, S., & R..Heimdal, K. (2003). Does a strong institution of religion require a strong family institution? *Comparative Sociology*, *2*(4), 631–666. https://doi.org/10.1163/156913303322661892

In their studies, Ouseknecht and Heimdal (2003) found that a strong family institution is necessary in order to have a strong institution of religion. They also found that both family and religion focused on the person as a whole, whereas other institutions sought what could be gained for its benefit.

Pearcey, N. (2008). *Total truth: Liberating Christianity from its cultural captivity*. Crossway.

Petersen, D. L. (2005). Genesis and family values. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, *124*(1), 5. https://doi.org/10.2307/30040988

In looking for the answer to his question, “What family values pervade the Hebrew Bible?” Petersen (2005) used the book of Genesis to research the issue of family. Petersen identified three family values found in Genesis and determined that family does not just consist of the nuclear family but beyond. Humanity, in familial terms, means everyone should attempt to keep the peace and do good by others for the sake of the greater family unit. Best-effort attempts should be made to resolve family conflicts in a non-violent way. How people treat one another within the family unit has a bearing on society. Marcia Spiegel (1996) wrote, “The ultimate achievement of peace on earth depends upon its achievement in the smallest social unit, the family” (Spiegel, 1996, p. 123).

Regnerus, M. D., & Uecker, J. E. (2006). Finding faith, losing faith: The prevalence and context of religious transformations during adolescence. *Review of Religious Research*, *47*(3), 217–237. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3512355

Attempting to understand the social context surrounding adolescents who experience religious transformation, Regenerus et al. (2006) used data from a nationally representative sampling of American adolescents. Their findings confirmed that adolescence is the prime state of life for religious conversion. Adolescent social networks consisting of peers and parents matter and are consistent predictors of spiritual transformation. Intact, two-parent families provide more stability for adolescents. In contrast, single-parent families or other types of family structures (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) offer less stability and an increase in religious decline. Regenerus et al. also found that parents have a tremendous impact on their children based on their parenting style, and the quality of the child-parent relationship affects an adolescent's spiritual growth.

Scheitle, C. P., & Corcoran, K. E. (2019). More than nothing: Examining the worldview influences of nonreligious college students. *Review of Religious Research*, *62*(2), 249–271. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13644-019-00391-0

Scheitle and Corcoran (2019) identified important influences on first-year college students' worldviews. The study's most critical finding is that most nonreligious students do not recognize the family as a significant influence on their worldview, whereas religious students do. This point is critical for the American Christian family because it highlights the necessity of parents to not only have their own biblical worldview but to be effective in training their children to have a biblical worldview. Otherwise, as children go off to college and eventually into the workforce and raise families, their worldview will tend to be more influenced by political beliefs, philosophical beliefs, social class, and gender or sexual identity.

Scott, D. (Fall 2008). A church without a view: Jonathan Edwards and our current lifeview discipleship crisis. *Christian Apologetics Journal*, *CAJ* 07:2, 23–40.

In discussing the current crisis facing the evangelical church, Scott (2008) describes the issue of pew-sitting Christians lacking a biblical worldview. Scott references Jonathan Edwards and asks, “What kind of church produces the worldview of a Jonathan Edwards?” (Scott, 2008, p. 23). Scott outlines what a Christian worldview is defined as and what the church needs to do to teach this to the entire congregation, including children. Scott proposes the concept of dualism and how the church has been guilty of beginning the sacred/secular divide by attempting to avoid paganism. He also argues that the evangelical church’s keen focus on evangelism has created a lack of biblical worldview because of its emphasis on saving souls but not teaching people how to live a 360-degree Christian vision like Jonathan Edwards did.

Smith, J. (2020). Transmission of faith in families: The influence of religious ideology. *Sociology of Religion*, *82*(3), 332–356. https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/sraa045

In conducting a study to determine how much a parent's religiosity affects their children, Smith (2020) examined religious conservatives, religious moderates, religious liberals, and those who do not profess to be religious at all. Smith found that a parent's religiosity is conferred upon their children through what is known as religious transmission (Smith, 2020, p. 332). An important note also is the closeness of a family based on the level of religiosity of the parents, including church attendance and the ability to effectively and clearly communicate their religious ideology. Smith's findings are that conservative religious parents tend to be much closer with their children and emphasize a healthy, functioning family life. There is also an emphasis on church attendance and congregational socialization (the building of community). Unless conservative Christian parents remain influential in their children's lives, this religious transmission may wane, which is a serious issue for increasing a Christian worldview in communities.

Smith, J. M., & Cragun, R. T. (2019). Mapping religion's other: A review of the study of nonreligion and secularity. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *58*(2), 319–335. https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12597

As the number of people choosing “other” as it relates to religion increases, Smith and Cragun (2019) discuss the new interest in researching this segment of the population and what is driving those who do not align with traditional religion. Their research found that nonreligious individuals were more left-leaning and atheists were even more progressive. Studies since the 2000s have also focused on how secular parents raise their children. Many of these studies suggest that secular parents face a religious bias because they may be children of religious parents but not raise their children similarly. Another issue parents face is how they manage their relationships with less religious children. Some of the studies Smith and Cragun reviewed found that socialization in highly religious environments may contribute to a complete turn to atheism. Because the research into religious others is a new area, much data will come from future trends as to what is most influencing the religious shift in America. This will be important work for the church to monitor as it seeks to equip parents in raising Christian children.

Uecker, J. E., Mayrl, D., & Stroope, S. (2016). Family formation and returning to institutional religion in young adulthood. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *55*(2), 384–406. https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12271

In attempting to explain emerging adults' reengagement and reaffiliation into religious exercises, Uecker et al. (2016) find that family formation is a key predictor in a person's return to a religious environment. While church attendance is not indicative of having a Christian worldview, this information is critical to continue to study to determine how families and Christian communities should prepare children while they are still in the family home to have a solid Christian worldview. Because many Americans hold to less religious traditions, the Christian community's support system will be less available if children, when becoming adults, do not remain in the church. Additionally, Uecker et al. dissected how married with children, married childless, single, single with children, and cohabitating contribute to whether someone engages with the church. As the country becomes more secularized and people have children later in life, this creates a much wider gap between childhood church attendance and spirituality and adult engagement with church and a biblical worldview. This impacts the community a person lives and works in and the larger picture of Christianity in America.

Wittberg, P. (2021). Generational change in religion and religious practice: A review essay. *Review of Religious Research*, *63*(3), 461–482. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13644-021-00455-0

The question of what is causing religious decline drives the heart of Wittberg's (2021) research. Working off of sociologist Karl Mannheim's theory of the inevitability of religious decline in the postmodern world, Wittberg presents some of the issues contributing to religious decline. Citing the decline found in the Millenial generation, Wittberg utilizes data from prior studies demonstrating the impact of the parent-child relationship as it relates to religious upbringing has on whether a person retains their religious affiliation in young adulthood and beyond. As noted by Wittberg, there is a greater likelihood that those raised by parents who regularly attend services and discuss religious topics as a family become religiously active young adults than those raised by parents who are irreligious in the socialization of their children. While additional factors such as environmental issues and individualism within the culture influence a person's worldview, the groundwork of the shaping of a Christian worldview in childhood produces a greater likelihood of adherence to a Christian worldview. This is an important topic because many may throw up their hands in the name of postmodernism, falsely believing sociologists' claims that advancement in society automatically results in a decline in religion. Intentionality is crucial in shaping one's worldview, and parents should assume responsibility for this task to increase the odds their children will retain a Christian worldview and pass that on to future generations.