

How Religion Affects Teens

UPDATED 9/19/07

“CHURCH YOUTH SEXUALLY ACTIVE, SURVEY REVEALS”

“A total of 31 percent of the Anglicans – aged 12 to 19 – were sexually active, compared with a figure of 38 percent reported for Western Cape youth in general by the SA Youth Risk Behaviour Survey.”

“The sexually active church-based youngsters appeared to have a higher rate of multiple partners – 66 percent – than the 48 percent reported in the SAYB survey.”

“Sixty five percent of the Anglican youngsters had not used a contraceptive during their first sexual encounter.”

“Only 33 percent of them believed that oral sex was actually sex, and only half that anal sex was indeed sex.”

(“Church youth sexually active, survey reveals,” IOL, February 2006, www.int.iol.co.za)

“HELPING CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES & PRODUCT COMPANIES DISCOVER NEW REVENUE STREAMS AND TO BETTER LEVERAGE EXISTING ONES”

“Quarter Life Crisis A Concourse Group study shows young workers 18 to 34 are ‘extremely dissatisfied’ with their jobs than any other age group, with 50% feeling burned out and 25% seeing an entirely new career.”

“Teen Childbearing has declined since the early 90s, but still cost U.S. taxpayers \$9.1 billion in ’04. Children of teen moms have higher health care, foster care, and incarceration costs than those of older parents, claims a National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy reports. Teen births declined from 62 per 1,000 in ’91 to 41 in ’04, primarily due to abstinence and contraception. The abortion rate dropped from 37 per 1,000 teen girls in ’91 to 22 in ’02, the most recent data available. Still, the U.S. teen birth rate is 4 to 5 times the rate in much of Europe and more than twice that of Canada. Compared with women who have a first child at 20 or 21, teen girls are more than twice as likely to have a child placed in foster care, to be reported for child abuse or neglect, and to have a son sent to prison. Their kids are far more likely to drop out of high school and their daughters to become teen mothers themselves. (USA Today 10/29/06)”

“Mass Audience Media Today, technology rather than music drives the generation gap. Tech savvy 16-34’s are 25% more likely than 35-49’s to use instant messenger, with over 75% of ages 16-34 currently using at least one service. 40% of 16-34’s belong to a social network site – twice the rate of 35-49’s. Nearly 40% of 16-34’s have met someone face to face after meeting on the Internet. 75% of 16-34 heavy Internet users currently use instant messenger. There are twice as many 16-34’s visiting social networking sites as 35-49’s. 71% of 16-34 year olds have blogged and 33% have participated in peer-to-peer file sharing vs. 12% of 35-49’s. We can no longer simply broadcast messages to a mass audience and hope standard reach and frequency metrics will bring success. (Center for Media Research 10/3/06).”

“Religious Book Sales Down While book sales were up in August for most categories, religious books declined 19.5% for the month (\$27.1 million) and 18% for the year, reports the Association of American Publishers. Net sales overall were up 3.3% for the month; however, year-to-date sales were off 2.6%. (Christian e-tailing 10/23/06)”

“• Surveys indicate that the average age of exposure to pornography is now 9 years old.”

“• During 10/06, the month the U.S. population topped 300 million, the Internet topped 100 million websites.”

(Gary D. Foster, “Helping Christian ministries & product companies discover new revenue streams and to better leverage existing ones.” Gary D. Foster Consulting, (2006):2-4)

“YOUNG ‘HAPPY WITH A LIFE WITHOUT GOD’”

“The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu said the report must be seen as a wake-up call.”

““This book [Making Sense of Generation Y] stresses the need for investment in relationships with young people and for ‘patient sowing’ of the Gospel story into our culture. There are no ‘instant solutions’, but there are things we, empowered by the Holy Spirit, can – and must – do,” the Archbishop says in the book’s foreword.”

“Making Sense of Generation Y is based on interviews with 120 young people aged 15 to 25 who have little or no connection with the Christian faith.”

“The number of young people who go to church has halved since 1979, and now less than sever per cent of 15- to 19-year-olds and five per cent of those between 20 and 29 attend church.”

(Maggie Stratton, “Young ‘Happy With a Life Without God’,” Yorkshire Post Today, May 9, 2006, online article)

“WHY TODAY’S KIDS JUST DON’T GET IT”

Taken from The National Study of Youth and Religion interview with Dr. Christian Smith, professor of sociology at UNC – Chapel Hill.

“**Smith:** Teenagers are highly, highly, conversational when it comes to religion. The vast majority are happy to just go along with however they were raised. It is not a contentious area of life – it’s not something in the foreground that they’re paying too much attention to.”

“**Smith:** Very little spiritual seeking among teens – I mean teenagers who are ‘spiritual’ but not religious. Most think that anybody can practice whatever they want, but they themselves want to practice religion the way they were raised...however they were raised is good enough for them.”

“**Smith:** Well, the impression you get from the media is that there is a massive tidal wave of spiritual seeking – that there are a lot of questors out there, including very young people. We found that is just not the case. The other reason it is surprising is because in our culture adolescence is synonymous with rebellion, and we expected to hear a lot more fighting and resistance and rebellion and unhappiness around religion. And that wasn’t the case.”

“**Smith:** They could not explain what they believed – hardly at all. They had extreme difficulty in explaining how it affected their lives. It seems like religion operates in the background – it’s just part of the wallpaper, part of the furniture.”

“**Smith:** They [teens] very much are shaped religiously and spiritually by their parents and reflect what their parents look like religiously. The best rule of thumb for adults or parents trying to figure out how their teens are going to turn out religiously is ‘we will get what we are.’”

“**Smith:** So a pastor can be just great at the pulpit, but it’s just there, if parents don’t bring it home and express it to their teens – ‘This is important in my life; here is what I believe’ – then the teens pick up on that and say, ‘Well this is just a one-hour-a-week thing, so what’s the big deal?’”

(Rick Lawrence, "Why Today's Kids JUST DON'T GET IT," Group Magazine, January/February 2005, pp106-108.)

"YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTES--YOUTH ISSUES: SPIRITUALITY"

"I'm just searching right now. I grew up being a Baptist, and I started traveling the world. It's so weird-sometimes you wish you had naiveness to stay with one religion and go with it. But after seeing the world and seeing all these different religions out there, who's to say that I'm right, and who's to say that they're right?"

"Britney Spears answering the question, "Are you a spiritual person?", Seventeen, April 2004, p. 135."

"I think I always did have faith, but I never knew its true power until it was revealed in my darkest times. I had a hole in me that got bigger and bigger the more I tried to fill it with people and expensive things and drugs. Then it was all stripped away, and I learned you can't fill the hole inside that way. It has to be filled with something else, with faith and love and humility."

"Actor Charlie Sheen, Parade Magazine, October 5, 2003, p. 6"

"Each one of them has to struggle with their own lives and burn up their own Karma. All the scriptures tell you, 'Don't judge'"

"Hip hop founder Russell Simmons speaking about critics of hip hop, Vibe, September 2003, p. 252"

("Youth Culture Hot Quotes-Youth Issues: Spirituality," Center Parent/Youth Understanding, http://cpyu.org/pageview_p.asp?PageID=8826)

"TODAY'S TEEN KEEPING THE FAITH"

"A new Gallup Youth Survey finds that more than 6 in 10 U.S teens identify with specific religious denominations: 34% say they are Protestant, 23% are Roman Catholic, and 2 % identify as Jewish, 1 % as Mormon, and 1% as Orthodox. A substantial minority of teens, 29%, say they are atheist, agnostic, or have no particular preference (a response category that could include non-denominational Christians)."

"Forty-four percent of teens currently say they have attended church or synagogue in the last seven days—but these days religious experience geared to teens are not confined to church and Sunday school. Twenty eight percent of teens say they have participated in

religious activities other than church or synagogue services—such as youth group meetings, religious classes, or choir rehearsals—in the past seven days. Protestant teens are almost twice as likely as Catholic teens to say they have engaged in such church functions, 37% vs. 21%.”

(Linda Lyons, “Today’s Teens Keeping the Faith,” The Gallup Organization, September 7, 2004, <http://www.gallup.com/content/print.aspx?ci=12928>)

“DARWIN OR DIVINE? TEEN’S VIEWS ON ORIGIN OF SPECIES”

“How Did We Get Here?”

“Gallup asked teens (aged 13 to 17) to choose from three different statements on the origin of human beings: 1) humans developed over millions of years, but God guided the process; 2) humans developed over millions of years, but God had no part in the process; or 3) God created humans pretty much in their present form within the last 10,000 years or so. A plurality of teens (43%) choose the ‘middle-ground’ option, believing God guided human evolution over millions of years. More than a third of teens (38%) choose the ‘creationist’ option -- that God created humans pretty much as they are now. Only 18% of teens choose the ‘evolutionist’ view -- that humans evolved over millions of years with no help from God.”

“Gallup asked this same question of U.S. adults in a November 2004 poll**. The results are similar, although slightly more adults (45%) believe God created human beings in their present form within the last 10,000 years or so. Thirty-eight percent of adults say humans evolved over millions of years with God's guidance, and only 13% believe human beings evolved without God's help.”

(Heather Mason, “Darwin or Divine? Teen’s Views on Origin of Species”, Gallup Poll News Service, March 88, 2005, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/content/print.aspx?ci=15163>)

“INTEGRATED SEXUAL HEALTH TODAY”

“the physical development of the pre-frontal cortex is not complete until the mid-twenties.”

“-the overriding influence-is an incompletely developed pr-frontal cortex that limits the ability of adolescents to independently make mature decisions.”

“The brain at maturity weighs just three pounds, and is made up of 10 billion neurons, 100 billion support cells, and 100 trillion connections – far more than all the internet connections in the world.”

“The frontal sections (lobes) of each of the cerebral hemispheres are used for logical reasoning, emotions, judgment, and voluntary muscle movements.”

“the limbic system, the center of emotions”

“Of all living beings, humans have the largest number of connections between the prefrontal area and the limbic structures, which allows them to display the widest variety of feelings and emotions. Anyone who has observed teenagers expressing emotions is aware that emotions can partially or totally block logical reasoning.”

“She asked them to identify the emotions shown. Adults made few errors in assessing the photos. Kids made lots of mistakes, often seeing anger and hostility where there was none.”

“dopamine increases dramatically in the prefrontal lobes during adolescence. This chemical has been shown to be necessary for an individual to choose between conflicting options”

“Dr. Jay Giedd’s unprecedented but oft-confirmed discoveries of the past decade have shown us that there is sudden explosive growth and development of brain tissue during adolescent years, just as there was during fetal life.”

“(by age six, the brain has reached adult size)”

“from then on, the only active process that occurred was gradual maturing of the brain.”

“not complete until the mid-twenties, and that the last portion of the brain to reach complete and mature growth is the pre-frontal cortex.”

“known that the source of cognitive thought is the pre-frontal cortex. This means that the area of the brain necessary for planning and decision making is physically incomplete and, therefore, cannot produce fully mature decisions until the mid-twenties.”

“such as how present actions can affect one’s future – also known as “cause and effect.”

“The brain is plastic and molded by experience.”

“Research carried out over the past decades has given us some astonishing information, especially when viewed in the light of this new information about the adolescent brain. As early as 1964, a group of researchers at UC Berkeley showed that experience could change the fundamental structure of the brain. After years of interviewing neuroscientists, Barbara Strauch concluded in her book *The Primal Teen* (Doubleday, 2003). ‘[T]o many, this idea of the brain responding to experiences, connecting up synapses as we go, is the take-home message about brains, overall.’”

“This means that adolescents’ activities or experiences actually mold their brains, causing some synapses to be cut, some to connect, and some to not connect.”

“This is why it is hard for a person who was raised speaking Japanese, which has no separate ‘L’ and ‘R’ sounds, to hear and speak these letters in English words.”

“The information discussed here shows that the adolescent’s brain is ‘plastic’ and moldable, much like a baby’s brain. Experiences that can mold an adolescent’s brain may be unpleasant but beneficial – such as parental discipline. Others may be unpleasant and damaging, such as becoming a teen parent. Both types of experiences physically change and mold the adolescent brain, but one helps a young person’s future and one hurts it.”

“Societal Implications of These Neuroscientific Facts”

“The implications of this transformation are enormous, Adolescents’ ability to make totally mature judgment calls based on abstract thinking i.e., seeing how current behavior affects future outcomes, is limited. Therefore, their failures in this area are not necessarily moral. Quite literally, they do not have the brain cell connections to ‘do’ judgment calculations. This means that, if parents, mentors, and the rest of society fails to give adolescents guidance (and, if necessary, discipline), if we fail to help them make the best decisions for themselves and for society, we abandon them to guidance by their own brains – brains which are incompletely developed and that are incapable of the truly mature judgment. Surprisingly, incomplete cognitive development of the brain lasts well through college years and, therefore, has enormous implications for the responsibility of parents and university administrators to that group.”

“We fail young persons when we give them ‘just the facts’ and say ‘you decide’ without guiding them to and supporting them in making the best decisions. We fail them when we expect them to control their impulses and avoid risk behaviors, when we abandon them at critical decision-points to their own minds – minds with a limited capacity for abstract thinking.”

“These two messages – that experiences actually shape the adolescent brain and that adults can and should fill in (in an ever-diminishing capacity) for adolescents’ immature frontal

lobes – should be of great encouragement to parents. In considering how his research has shaped the way he parents his own children, Dr. Jay Giedd says it has made him comfortable with the fact that giving guidance to his children, even though their college years, is not ‘butting in.’ He points out that trial and error and mistakes and successes are all a part of the process of brain molding that is supposed to happen. Parents need to understand this and take it into consideration as their adolescents mature, intervening to help prevent ‘irreversible’ mistakes whenever possible.”

“Parents and mentors and all society have a responsibility to adolescents. This new information allows adults to comfortably help our children develop wisdom, avoid dangerous risk behaviors, and have the brightest futures.”

“One of the most confusing ‘mine fields’ for today’s youth to negotiate is sexual decision making.”

“Parents: Connect with your children emotionally, with time and love.”

“Institute policies that realistically accommodate the limited abstract thinking of college-age young people.”

“Recent research is showing that, because the developing brain of the adolescent is undergoing such rapid proliferation, it is susceptible to damage from drugs such as alcohol or nicotine, just as it was during fetal development. Memory and learning are especially affected.”

“However, almost no school-based comprehensive programs ever measure these outcomes”

“The medical institute published an in-depth evaluation of...”

“(Contracept Rep. 1994;5(2):10-2) often touted by supporters of comprehensive sexuality education, such as Henry Waxman, is a mentoring program in New York (this is actually not a school-based program”

“program provides Depo-Provera to young women.”

“STI rates have never been evaluated for this highly touted ‘pregnancy’ prevention program in New York. Bone loss is also recognized as a possible side effect of Depo-Provera us. A recent (11/18/2004)”

“Women who use [Depo-Provera] may lose significant bone mineral density...”

“it is prohibitively expensive”

“original would still run about \$7.5 billion does not include the cost of treating STDs or their long-term effects such as infertility).”

“particularly through the 1980s – these programs never produced any appreciable drop in STD, HIV, and nonmarital pregnancy rates.”

“HIV prevention on World AIDS Day, 2004 (Halperin, et al. Lancet North Am Ed. 2002;574:1913-1914). In it they said, ‘...for [young people] who have not started sexual activity the first priority should be to encourage abstinence or delay of sexual onset, hence emphasizing risk avoidance as the best way to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections as well as unwanted pregnancy. After sexual debut, returning to abstinence or being mutually faithful with an uninfected partner are the most effective ways of avoiding infection.’”

“the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention were used to develop a community-based abstinence program in Denmark, SC (Vincent, et al. JAMA 1987;257:3382-3386). The half of the county that participated in this program had a dramatic drop in pregnancy rates. No such decrease was observed in the remainder of the county, or in adjacent comparison counties. In the 1990s, a second successful community-based abstinence program was implemented by a health department in Monroe County, NY in response to a high rate of teen pregnancy (Doniger, et al. J Health Commun. 2001;6:45-60). Following implementation, an appreciable drop was observed both in self-reported sexual activity and teen pregnancy rates for the county.”

“First, it says that we say that ‘touching another person’s genitals’ can result in pregnancy.”

“seen these types of cases. Although we thank Rep. Waxman’s group for pointing out a small error in our old Chlamydia material, this information had been deleted long before he notified us.”

“The authors of the Waxman report did not evaluate ‘comprehensive’ sexuality education materials with the same scrutiny they gave to abstinence oriented material.”

“• SIECUS (SIECUS REPORT. 1998;27(1): ‘Condoms are 98% effective in preventing pregnancy when used correctly – and up to 99.9% effective in reducing the risk of STD transmission when combined with spermicide.’ These numbers are both dangerous and erroneous; yet this was a widely circulated ‘scientific’ report. The only groups of women ever to achieve such high rates are 1) older women who have used condoms for at least four years and who have had several children, 2) women who are over 40 and have had

zero to two children. No peer-reviewed publication has ever asserted that condoms are 99.9% effective in reducing the risk of STD transmission, even with spermicide.”

“provide protection against sexually transmitted infections.”

“condoms merely reduce the risk – they do not eliminate the risk.”

“Condoms also protect both males and females from some STDs,”

“and a report totally ignored by Waxman’s paper”

“This report clearly points out that condoms reduce the risk of Chlamydia transmission and syphilis transmission by approximately 50%.”

“Condoms can reduce the risk of herpes transmission by about 50%, and a majority show no evidence of risk reduction for HPV transmission”

“Even the Centers for Disease Control must continually update their medical information. Until mid-2004 their website stated ‘[S]tudies found that, even with repeated sexual contact, 98 – 100% of those people who used latex condoms correctly and consistently [italics added] did not become infected.’”

“Recently, the CDC removed this statement from their website”

“the use of condoms do not take into account the emotional impact of sexual activity on young people. There is a well-documented increase in rates of depression and suicide attempt in young people who have transitioned from being virgins to being sexually active.”

“The younger the age of sexual debut, the greater the number of eventual sex partners. An increased number of sexual partners is one of the biggest risks for sexually transmitted disease. All of these crucial considerations are taken into account by abstinence programs.”

“Today, 800,000 teen girls become pregnant each year, and 1 in 4 teens contracts an STI.”

“the government spends \$12 to promote contraception for every dollar spent to encourage abstinence (\$1.73 billion vs. \$0.14 billion in 2002)”

“favorite African proverb says, ‘When elephants fight, it is the grass that gets hurt the most’”

“when adults are fighting, it is the kids who are getting hurt.”

“scientific criteria requiring study participants to be randomly selected if the result are ever to be generalized. Following the lead of Alfred Kinsey, they chose the ad hoc approach of allowing participants to self-select.”

“the ethnic composition of the participants bears scant similarity to that of Texas schools.”

“astonishing absence of any control group.”

“has been exposed to an intervention to a group that is not exposed to the intervention.”

“1) Science is losing to politics.

2) We need to get over our fear of research.

3) We didn’t find strong evidence of program effect.”

(“Integrated Sexual Health Today,” The Medical Institute (Spring 2005)

“RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION AND PARENTAL MORAL EXPECTATIONS AND SUPERVISION OF AMERICAN YOUTH”

“A large body of empirical studies shows that religion often serves as a factor promoting positive, healthy behaviors and outcomes in the lives of American adolescents. This research note reports findings of one test of a ‘moral order’ explanation of these religious effects.”

“To examine the relationship between parental religious participation and measures of parental moral expectations and supervision of youth ages 10 to 18. The findings support the hypothesis that parental religious participation increases parental moral expectations and supervision of their adolescent children.”

“Several decades of social scientific studies have shown that in the lives of American adolescents religion is often a factor influencing their attitudes and behaviors in ways that are commonly viewed as positive and constructive. Various measures of religiosity are associated with a variety of healthy, desirable outcomes across a diversity of areas of concern, including juvenile drug, alcohol, and tobacco use, and delinquency.”

(Smith, Christian, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Reviews of Religious Research, 2003, Vol. 44:4, Pages 414-424)

“PARENTAL RELIGIOUS DEVOTION PROTECTS AGAINST MAJOR DELINQUENCY”

“Sociologists with the National Study of Youth and Religion, based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, announce the publication of ‘Linked Lives, Faith, and Behavior: Intergenerational Religious Influence on Adolescent Delinquency’ in the June 2003 issue of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. The article suggests that parental religiosity – including the frequency of religious service attendance, the importance of religion in parents’ lives and conservative Protestant affiliation – appears to protect against serious delinquency.”

(NO DOC)

“BUFFERING EFFECT OF RELIGIOSITY FOR ADOLESCENT SUBSTANCE USE”

“Recent investigations have indicated that religiosity is a protective factor with regard to health status. Epidemiologic studies have indicated that religiosity is inversely related to adult mortality rates, and lower rates of substance use among individuals with an involvement in religion have been suggested as contributing to this mortality differential (Levin, 1996; McCullough, Hoyt, Larson, Koenig, & Thoresen, 2000). A relation of religious involvement to lower rates of alcohol use and problems behavior among adolescents has also been observed in several areas of the United States (e.g., Bahr, Maughan, Marcos, & Li, 1998; Brody, Stoneman, & Flor, 1996), but at present there is limited understanding of the nature of the relation between religiosity and substance use as it occurs during adolescence.”

“Multiple regression analyses showed a significant interaction between life stress and religiosity. The positive relation between stress and anxiety/depression symptomatology was reduced among persons with a higher frequency of religious attendance, that is, a buffering effect. This effect was found both for a measure of general life stressors and a measure of physical health problems.”

“For substance use, the most consistent effects were for ethnicity, with

Caucasians showing the highest rates of alcohol and other substance use, Hispanics showing intermediate rates, and African Americans showing the lowest rates. Participants from both single-parent and blended families had somewhat higher rates of substance use compared with participants from intact families. Gender effects were not totally consistent but tended to show girls with higher rates of smoking and boys with higher rates of marijuana use.”

(Wills, Thomas Ashby; Yaeger, Alison M.; Sandy, James M., “Buffering Effect of Religiosity for Adolescent Substance Use,” *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* 2003, Vol. 17, No. 1, p24-31)

“SOCIOLOGISTS FIND THAT RELIGIOUSLY ACTIVE FAMILIES TEND TO HAVE STRONGER FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS”

“Sociologists with the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, have found that religiously involved U.S. families of early adolescents, those ages 12 to 14, are more likely to have significantly stronger family relationships than families that are not religiously active. The findings were released in the report *Family Religious Involvement and the Quality of Family Relationships for Early Adolescents*.”

“According to Christian Smith, principal investigator of the National Study of Youth and Religion, ‘The report demonstrates that youth from families who are heavily involved (five to seven days per week) in some form of religious activity during the week (such as attending church, praying or reading scriptures together) are significantly more likely than youth whose families do not engage in religious activities to participate in family activities such as eating dinner together and to not run away from home.’ Smith is professor and associate chair of sociology at UNC-CH. He coauthored the report with Phillip Kim, a Ph.D. graduate student in sociology at UNC-CH.”

(Smith, Christian & Kim, Phillip, “Family Religious Involvement and the Quality of Family Relationships for Early Adolescents,” 05-03-25)

“IGNITING A MORAL AND SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION”

“If you focus on our youngest two generations (the Mosaics and the Busters) to understand what they think and how they behave, you cannot help but notice a massive gap between what the Bible indicates is healthy and productive and what our young people have adopted as values, goals, beliefs, and lifestyles.”

“Most churches are timid and tired.”

“I wholeheartedly believe that the Mosaic generation is the key to igniting the moral and spiritual revolution that America so desperately needs. There are a few of us old geezers who can help shape and energize the movement, but it’ll be fought and won by the younger generations. My generation’s contribution was to so badly screw up reality that the choice is now more clear than ever: serve God or serve Satan. Spirituality affects every dimension of our lives; we either inform every choice with biblical faith or we pay the price.”

(Barna, George, “Igniting a Moral and Spiritual Revolution,” Youth Worker Magazine, May/June 2002)

“STRONG RELIGIOUS VIEWS DECREASE TEENS’ LIKELIHOOD OF HAVING SEX”

“TEENS’ ATTITUDE TOWARDS SEX HOLD MORE SWAY THAN RELIGIOUS VIEWS”

“Findings in Brief”

“Teens—particularly girls—with strong religious views are less likely to have sex than are less religious teens, largely because their religious views lead them to view the consequences of having sex negatively. According to a recent analysis of the NICHD-funded Add Health Survey, religion reduces the likelihood of adolescents engaging in early sex by shaping their attitudes and beliefs about sexual activity.”

“The study also found that parents' religious beliefs and attitudes toward sex did not *directly* influence teens' decisions to have sex. Rather, parents' attitudes toward sex seemed to influence their teens' own attitudes toward sex, and indirectly, their teens' behavior.”

“When teens do have sex, their beliefs about the consequences of sexual

activity become more permissive—meaning more positive or favorable—but their religious views do not change. In particular, adolescent girls who had sex reported that they were more positive about having sex in the future. However, the greatest predictor of whether teens would have sex—regardless of their religious views or attitudes--was whether or not they were dating.”

“Implications”

““A better understanding of why religious adolescents are less likely to engage in early sexual intercourse may help in designing prevention programs for this behavior,” said Duane Alexander, M.D., Director of the NICHD.”

“Background:”

“Earlier studies have found that strength of religious beliefs and participation in religious activities are more important than religious denomination in predicting whether a teenager has sex. While previous research has examined religious and sexual beliefs, and how they relate to sexual activity, most previous research was unable to distinguish the effects of religious attitudes and practices on sexual activity from the effects of sexual activity on religious attitudes and practices. This study uses information from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, a comprehensive survey of 90,000 seventh through twelfth graders. The survey measure the effects of family, peer group, school, neighborhood, religious institution, and community on behaviors that promote good health.

(Detailed information about the survey is available at <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/addhealth>.)

“Findings in Depth:”

“Religious beliefs influenced whether adolescents will have sex, especially for girls. However, such beliefs only had a minor influence on whether boys had sex. As might be expected, for both girls and boys, more permissive attitudes—meaning more positive or favorable—towards sex increased the likelihood that they would have sex. Having sex did not affect boys’ or girls’ religious beliefs. After having sex, however, girls’ attitudes about sex were likely to become more positive or favorable.”

“The study also found that teen boys are more likely to have positive attitudes about sex, so that having sex doesn’t significantly changed their attitudes, as it does girls.””

“Another finding is that adolescents’ own religious and sexual attitudes were more important predictors of their subsequent sexual behavior than were their parents’ attitudes toward adolescent sex.”

““Parents’ religious and sexual attitudes don’t directly affect their children’s decision to have sex, but they do influence the formation of their children’s own attitudes toward sex,” says Meier.”

(“Strong Religious Views Decrease Teens’ Likelihood of Having Sex,”
“Teens’ Attitudes Toward Sex Hold More Sway than Religious Views,”
NIH News Release, National Institute of Child Health and Human
Development, April 2, 2003,
www.nichd.nih.gov/new/releases/religious_views.cfm)

“RELIGION AND AMERICAN ADOLESCENT DELINQUENCY, RISK BEHAVIORS AND CONSTRUCTIVE SOCIAL ACTIVITIES”

“Number 1”

“Substance Abuse”

“Religious 12th graders are less likely than their non-religious counterparts to smoke cigarettes and less likely to start smoking tobacco at early ages. Religious 12th graders are also less likely to drink alcohol and are more likely to postpone their first time getting drunk. When they do drink, religious high school seniors are also significantly less likely to drink alcohol until they are drunk, compared to their non-religious peers. They also go to bars significantly less often than non-religious 12th graders.”
Religious high school seniors are less likely to have ever tried any kind of drug, including hard drugs, than their non-religious peers. They are also more likely to postpone first use of marijuana and often never try marijuana.”

“Safety and Danger”

“Religious 12th graders receive fewer traffic tickets and are more likely to

wear their seatbelts than less religious seniors. Religious high school seniors are also less likely to enjoy danger or to take risks.”

“Crime and Violence”

“Religiosity is associated with fewer violent incidents among youth, such as hitting teachers and getting into fights. Religious 12th graders are also less likely than non-religious seniors to commit a variety of crimes, including shoplifting, theft of more than \$50, vandalism, trespassing, auto theft, arson and armed robbery. Religious adolescents are also less likely to get in trouble with police.”

“School Problems”

“Religious 12th graders tend to be better-behaved at school. They are less likely than non-religious adolescents to be sent to detention, skip school or be suspended or expelled.”

“Constructive Activities and Supervision”

“Religious 12th graders are more likely to volunteer in their community and to participate in student government than their non-religious peers. They also play sports or exercise significantly more often than less religious seniors. The parents of religious 12th graders also tend to be stricter than those of less religious seniors, and their children are less likely to argue with them.”

“These relationships are statistically significant even after controlling for race, age, sex, rural versus urban residence, region, education of parents, number of siblings, whether the mother works and the presence of a father or male guardian in the household.”

“In sum, regular religious service attendance, high subjective importance of faith and many years spent participating in religious youth groups are clearly associated with safer, healthier, more constructive lifestyles for U.S. teenagers—even after holding constant the effects of nine other control variables.”

“What is clear in this report’s findings, however, is that, for whatever reasons, religiously involved U.S. teenagers engage in fewer risk behaviors, get into less trouble and participate in more socially constructive activities than do less religiously involved youth. That is an important starting point of knowledge for considering ways to enhance the quality of life of U.S.

adolescents.”

“Smoking”

“Furthermore, although one-fifth of all seniors smoke regularly, this is less likely to be true of students who attend religious services at least monthly and those for whom religion is very important.”

“First Time: Drinking to Get Drunk”

“Twelfth graders who attend religious services weekly, those for whom religion is very important and those who participated in religious youth groups for at least six years are all more likely to have never gotten drunk or to delay their first time getting drunk significantly longer than the nonreligious. This is also the case for Jewish and Mormon youth when compared to non-religious youth.”

“First Time: Drugs”

“Religious 12th graders are less likely to use, sell or be offered drugs. Fewer 12th graders (34 percent) report having been offered drugs in the past year than report having ever used drugs (51 percent). Interestingly, both weekly and rare religious service attenders are less likely to have been offered drugs; the same is true of students for whom religion is at least pretty important. Both Catholic and Jewish 12th graders are less likely than the non-religious to have been offered drugs.”

“First Time: Violent Behavior”

“Fighting, on the other hand, is more common overall: Nearly one-quarter of all seniors got into a fight in the past year. Religious service attendance is not significantly related to fighting, and only those who say religion is very important are significantly less likely than the non-religious to get into fights. Religious youth group participation and religious affiliation are also unrelated to fighting.”

(Smith, Christian and Faris, Robert, “Religion and American Adolescent Delinquency, Risk Behaviors and Constructive Social Activities,” A Research Report of the National Study of Youth and Religion, Number 1, 2002 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, www.youthandreligion.org)

“RELIGION AND THE LIFE ATTITUDES AND SELF-IMAGES OF AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS – NUMBER 2”

“Executive Summary”

“This report, based on nationally representative data, shows that religious U.S. 12th graders have significantly higher self-esteem and hold more positive attitudes about life in general than their less religious peers.”

“The religion factors most commonly related to these outcomes are religious service attendance and importance of religion, although religious affiliation and youth group participation were also important in many cases.”

“The 31 percent of all 12th graders who attend religious services weekly and the 30 percent of high school seniors for whom religion is very important are significantly more likely than non-attenders and the non-religious to”

- “have positive attitudes towards themselves”
- “enjoy life as much as anyone”
- “feel like their lives are useful”
- “feel hopeful about their future”
- “feel satisfied with their lives”
- “feel like they have something of which to be proud”
- “feel good to be alive”
- “Feel like life is meaningful”
- “enjoy being in school”

“In the case of religious service attendance, the data show occasional positive associations for high school seniors who attend religious services once or twice a month (18 percent of all seniors) compared to those who never attend (15 percent). In some cases, even 12th graders who attend religious services only rarely (35 percent) exhibit positive associations with these outcomes compared to non-attenders.”

“The data revealed some positive differences for the 30 percent of high school seniors for whom religion is pretty important on the variables for having something to be proud of, feeling hopeful about the future, believing that life is meaningful and tending toward conventional behavior. In the cases of enjoying school and feeling good to be alive, there are positive associations for all three importance of religion categories, including those for whom religion is only a little important (25 percent), compared to those who say religion is not important.”

“Attitude Toward Self”

“Religion is associated with positive self-esteem. Twelfth graders who attend religious services—no matter how often—are more likely to take positive attitudes toward themselves than seniors who never attend religious services. (Eighty-two percent of weekly attenders agreed or mostly agreed, compared to 68 percent of non-attenders.)”

“These relationships are statistically significant, controlling for race, age, sex, rural/urban residence, region, education of parents, number of siblings, whether the mother works and the presence of a father/male guardian in the household.”

“Enjoyment of Life”

“Most 12th graders (76 percent) say the ‘enjoy life as much as anyone,’ and this is even more likely to be the case for religious teens.”

“Hopelessness”

“Religious teens tend to have a brighter outlook on the future. Most 12th graders feel hopeful about their futures; 71 percent said they at least mostly disagree with the statement, ‘The future often seems hopeless.’”

“Good to Be Alive”

“Most high school seniors (84 percent) say, ‘It feels good to be alive.’ This percentage is even higher for religious 12th graders.”

“Meaningfulness of Life”

“Religious 12th graders are more likely to see meaning in their lives. Few high school seniors (17 percent) often feel life is meaningless.”

(Smith, Christian and Faris, Robert, “Religion and the Life Attitudes and Self-Images of American Adolescents,” A Research Report of the National Study of Youth and Religion, Number 2, from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, www.youthandreligion.org)

“RELIGION IN THE LIVES OF AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE – NUMBER 3”

“Levels of Adolescent Religious Behavior”

“Contrary to some popular images, religion plays a significant role in the lives of many adolescents in the United States, according to a number of surveys and public opinion polls (see Smith et al. 2002, 2003). For instance, in the early 1990s the Gallup organization reported that some 76 percent of adolescents (ages 13-17) believed in a personal God and that 74 percent prayed at least occasionally (Gallup and Bezilla 1992). Data from the Monitoring the Future project suggest that the overall level of religiousness among U.S. adolescents is relatively high (Donahue and Benson 1995). According to those data, the percentage of high school seniors attending religious services weekly dropped from around 40 percent (1976-81) to 31 percent by 1991 but has remained stable throughout the 1990s. Additionally, nearly 30 percent of 12th graders indicated that religion was a ‘very important’ part of their lives, a figure that has held steady since the inception of the project (Johnston, Bachman and O’Malley 1999).”

“Data from Monitoring the Future and other sources also suggest an important developmental component of adolescent religious involvement. In short, the frequency of attendance tends to decline between eighth and 12th grades (Potvin, Hoge and Nelson 1976; Benson, Donahue and Erickson 1989; Roehlkepartain and Benson 1993). In 1997, about 44 percent of eighth graders reported attending religious services weekly, as compared with 38 percent of 10th graders and 31 percent of 12th graders. This drop in attendance might reflect growing autonomy as teens mature. Among 12th graders, regular religious service attendance might be likely to result as much from individual volition as from influences of intergenerational transmission and parental socialization. At the same time, there are few age differences in religious salience. Moreover, a study of adolescents in Iowa found that while frequency of religious service attendance dipped during the high school years, levels of participation in other religious activities tended to rise over the same period (King, Elder and Whitbeck 1997).”

“In the 1990s, 76 percent of adolescents believed in a personal God.”

“Among adolescents, as among adults, religious involvement is patterned by gender and race. On average, girls are consistently ‘more religious’ than boys – i.e., more likely to attend services weekly and to report that religion is ‘very important’ to them – by several percentage points. Blacks are more likely than whites to attend religious services regularly (40 percent vs. 29

percent) and vastly more likely to indicate that religion has high importance in their lives (55 percent vs. 24 percent) (Johnston, Bachman and O'Malley 1999). Although much less is known (especially in comparative perspective) about the religious involvement of Latino and Asian-American adolescents, some data indicate that they, too, report greater involvement and commitment than non-Hispanic white youth (Benson 1993).”

“Religious Involvement”

“The sources behind the development of religious involvement in youth are several, though parents easily constitute the strongest influence. Some scholars go so far as to suggest that ‘religiosity, like class, is inherited’ (Myers 1996: 858). Parent-child transmission of religiosity and religious identity is indeed quite powerful. But it's not inevitable. On the whole, mainline Protestant parents are having greater difficulty retaining their children within the mainline Protestant fold than are evangelical Protestant parents (Smith 1998). Religious socialization also is more likely to occur in families characterized by considerable warmth and closeness (Ozorak 1989). Mothers are generally thought to be more influential than fathers in the development of religiousness in adolescent children (Benson, Masters and Larson 1997; Bao et al. 1999).”

“Overall, his analysis suggests that ‘adolescent religious development is triggered by home religious habits and religious education, while the (direct) influence of both parents and peers is less important than previously suggested’ (1992:146).”

“Scott Myers’ (1996) longitudinal analysis of parents and – 12 years later – their adult children revealed that while one’s religiosity is ‘determined largely by the religiosity of one’s parents,’ it also is fostered among families where parents enjoy marital happiness, display moderate strictness, support and show affection toward their children and in households where the husband is employed and the wife is not. Perkins’ (1987) study of college youth revealed that 69 percent of students with two highly religious parents reported a strong personal faith themselves, compared to only 39 percent of students with only one devout parent.”

“The quality of a teen’s relationship with pastors and parents plays a role in explaining alienation from religion.”

“Dudley and Laurent (1988) concluded that the quality of relationship with pastors and parents, as well as opportunities for their own religious involvement, self-concept and the influence of peer groups and mass media

each played a role in explaining alienation from religion in a sample of 390 youth.”

“Hunter suggests that 18- to 23-year-olds are most at risk for successful cult recruitment. Youth who are converted rapidly to more mainstream religions or religious traditions often are influenced by social pressures as well. Social bonds made possible through religion – whether traditional or ‘cultlike’ – are attractive. Choosing a strong religious identity also is stimulated frequently by role models (Parker 1985).”

“Seventy-eight percent of adolescents indicated that they have doubts about religion.”

“Religious ‘doubting’ among adolescents was the focus of Kooistra and Pargament’s (1999) study of 267 Catholic and Dutch Calvinist (Reformed) school students. First, religious doubting was common – 78 percent indicated currently having doubts. Catholic school students displayed considerably more doubt than the Reformed students, who were higher on several religiosity counts. Among the latter, religious doubting was associated with adverse life events, conflictual family patterns and emotional distress.”

“Physical and Emotional Health”

“Wallace and Forman (1998) explored religion’s influence on health lifestyle behaviors among a large, national sample of adolescents. Their study revealed striking and consistent relationships between multiple measures of religiosity (including importance of faith and attendance) and health behaviors such as diet, exercise and sleep habits, as well as seatbelt use.”

“More-religious youth consistently eat better, exercise more frequently, get more sleep and are more apt to use seat belts than less religious or nonreligious youth. Differences on these outcomes across categories of religious affiliation (liberal, moderate or conservative) mattered less than did simply having a religious affiliation at all. Those adolescents without any religious affiliation reported higher frequencies of health risk behaviors. The authors conclude that religious expressions and behavior during adolescence promotes long-term physical well-being.”

“Surprisingly few studies have been conducted on religion and suicide ideation among youth. The Search Institute’s Troubled Journey research

found suicide measure modestly (negatively) correlated with religious activity, religious service attendance and the self-reported importance of religious faith (Donahue and Benson 1995).”

“Using an undergraduate sample, Shortz and Worthington (1994) examined young adults’ recall of their patterns of coping with parental divorce. They found that religious individuals often attribute negative events to God. Students who believed that God’s anger with them caused their parents to divorce were more likely to have turned away from their religious tradition. Those students who viewed the divorce as part of God’s plan, however, seemed to positively employ religious coping mechanisms. In a study of Catholic high school students in St. Louis, researchers found that while first year students reported significantly higher personal religiosity than seniors, religiosity also corresponded with significantly lower distress and higher social adjustment (Mosher and Handal 1997).”

“Harker (2001) documents that religious service attendance, prayer and importance of religion were mediating factors in reducing levels of depression among first- and second-generation immigrant youth but not for third-generation immigrants.”

“She concludes that religion appeared to be an important part of positive adolescent well-being.”

“TEENS CHANGE THEIR TUNE REGARDING SELF AND CHURCH”

“Today’s teenagers, now dominated by the Mosaic generation, are more likely to state that they are satisfied with their life, look forward to a challenging future, feel intelligent and attractive, and can optimistically face tomorrow because they trust most other people. A majority of teenagers have given up on the anxieties related to abandonment; teens typically feel relatively secure about their life and their future.”

“There is evidence that spirituality has been mainstreamed into teen life without radically affecting the lifestyles and values.”

“1990 – 31% of teenagers were born again Christians. 2001—33%.”

“Taking matters a step further, the Barna statistics show that the percentage of teens who are evangelicals – i.e., those who are not only born again but also believe in the accuracy of the Bible, personal responsibility to

evangelize, believe in salvation by grace alone, and possess orthodox biblical views on God, Jesus and Satan – have declined from 10% in 1995 to just 4% today. This demise is attributable to growing numbers of teenagers who accept moral relativism and pluralistic theology as their faith foundation. This decline parallels a similar drop among adults: 12% were evangelicals in 1994, but just 5% fit the criteria today.”

“Mosaics are looking for an authentic experience with God and other people.”

“Music and other ambient factors may attract them once or twice, but those elements will not keep them coming back for more. There has to be sufficient substance, quality, hope, and genuine mutual concern and acceptance for them to return.”

“Barna points out that only a minority of teens is expected to remain involved in Christian churches after they reach the age of independence.”

“Teenagers have a genuine streak of compassion that influences their life. Churches that provide a conduit for serving the community will create more meaningful bonds with the Mosaic generation.”

(“Religion in the Lives of American Adolescents: A Review of the Literature – Number 3,” www.barna.org/cgibin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=111&Referen)

“TEENAGERS’ BELIEFS MOVING FARTHER FROM BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES”

“Most Claim to be Christian”

“86% of teenagers claim that they are Christians.”

“Only one-third describe themselves as ‘absolutely committed’ to Christianity, half say they are ‘moderately committed’ and the remaining one-fifth are less committed.”

“One-third of all teenagers (34%) as born again...current national level among adults (41%).”

“The most common affiliations of teenagers were with the Catholic church (22%), Baptist churches (16%), and mainline Protestant churches (19%). Only 4% said they usually attend a church that is part of a charismatic or Pentecostal denomination.”

“Good Feelings about Faith”

“Most teenagers have positive impressions of Christianity, faith and local churches. Eight out of ten say that their faith has helped them to achieve a greater sense of peace in life. Eight out of ten also stated that the Christian churches in their community add real value to the life of their community. And eight out of ten also claimed that religious faith is very important in their life these days.”

“Distorted Beliefs”

“Three out of five teens said they believe the Bible is totally accurate in all that it teaches.”

“Two-thirds stated that Satan is not a living being, but merely a symbol of evil. Six out of ten argued that a good person can earn eternal salvation through good deeds. A majority (53%) said that Jesus committed sins while He was on earth. The view that Jesus committed sins was endorsed by four out of ten born again teens (40%) and half of all teenagers (52%) who attend a Protestant church.”

“Straying from Adult Beliefs”

“82% said that their parents have been good role models of how to be a person of strong and meaningful faith. Since most adults possess numerous theological perspectives that stray from Scripture, such modeling may threaten rather than enhance the purity of young people’s Christian experience.”

“Potential Impact of the News”

“Parents, friends, music and pop entertainment – are largely responsible for the errant theological views of teens and cannot be counted on to restore biblical clarity. ‘The unintentional yet constant reinforcement of the inappropriate beliefs by the people and institutions they trust is making the job tougher and tougher for the Church. If biblical truth is going to prevail in American society, it will require a strategic, long-term coordinated effort

to convey God’s truth in ways that shake young people from their theological complacency and arrogance. Churches and individual believers cannot continue to minister in the same ways they have been doing for the past decade. The depth of the problem is beyond what churches, by themselves, can address. ...requires a more comprehensive and long-term solution.”

(“Teenagers’ Beliefs Moving Farther From Biblical Perspectives,” www.barna.org/cgibin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=74&Reference)

“SEX, LIES, AND TEEN GUILT”

“79% of teens who attended religious services said they would feel guilty about sex before marriage, compared to 44% of teens who did not attend.”

“Guilty or Not Guilty, by Religious Service Attendance”

“I’m going to read you a list of circumstances. For each one I read, please tell me if you would feel guilty or not guilty, even if nobody else ever knew about it. Would you feel guilty or not guilty about...?”

“% saying yes, would feel guilty”

“Total Attended in past week Did not attend”

“Neglecting your parents when they are old 92%
95% 90%”

“Stealing something 88% 92% 86%”

“Not paying a debt 83% 84% 82%”

“Lying to a friend 81% 89% 75%”

“Being disloyal to your group 80% 84% 76%”

“Cheating on a test at school 77% 85% 70%”

“Surfing for pornography on the Internet 77% 85% 70%”

“Swearing or cursing at a teacher 75% 83% 69%”

“Having sexual intercourse before you are married 59% 79% 44%”

(Linda Lyons, “Sex, Lies and Teen Guilt,” December 2002,
www.gallup.com/poll/tb/educaYouth/20021217b.asp?Version=p)

“YOUTH MORE CONSERVATIVE THAN THEIR ELDERS ON ISSUES INVOLVING RELIGION AND ABORTION, NEW UC BERKELEY SURVEY REVEALS”

“The report, released today (Tuesday, Sept. 24) by the campus’s Survey Research Center as part of the center’s Public Agendas and Citizen Engagement Survey (PACES), is based on interviews nationwide with Americans ages 15 to 92. It provides a comprehensive assessment of the generation gap in American political opinions.”

“**School Prayer.** Fifty-nine percent of adults ages 27 to 59 want public schools to allow prayer at official school activities, such as commencements. Among teenagers, 69 percent support school prayer.”

“**Religious conservatives.** Young Americans show somewhat more warmth towards religious conservatives than older adults. Individuals ranked their feelings for these groups on a scale from zero for ‘cold’ to 50-100 for varying degrees of ‘warmth.’ Although no age group showed much warmth to Christian fundamentalists, 33 percent of youths ages 15 to 26 gave them a rating over 50; 26 percent of Americans over 26 gave a similar score.”

(“Youths more conservative than their elders on issues involving religion and abortion, new UC Berkeley survey reveals,” Janet Gilmore, 24 September 2002
www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2002/09/24_youth.html)

“RELIGION AND THE LIFE ATTITUDES AND SELF-IMAGES OF AMERICAN ADOLSCENTS”

“This report, based on nationally representative survey data, shows that religious U.S. 12th graders have significantly higher self-esteem and hold

more positive attitudes about life in general than their less religious peers.”

“The 31 percent of all 12th graders who attend religious services weekly and the 30 percent of high school seniors for whom religion is very important are significantly more likely than non-attenders and the non-religious to”

- “have positive attitudes toward themselves”
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- “feel like their lives are useful”
- “feel hopeful about their futures”
- “feel satisfied with their lives”
- “feel like they have something of which to be proud”
- “feel good to be alive”
- “feel like life is meaningful”
- “enjoy being in school”

“High school seniors who attend religious services once or twice a month (18 percent of all seniors.”

“The data revealed some positive differences for the 30 percent of high school seniors for whom religion is pretty important on the variables for having something to be proud of, feel hopeful about the future, believing that life is meaningful and tending toward conventional behavior. In the cases of enjoying school and feeling good to be alive, there are positive associations for all three importance of religion categories, including those for whom religion is only a little important (25 percent), compared to those who say religion is not important.”

“The data show similar—although less consistent—results for religious youth group participation. U.S. 12th graders who participated in religious youth groups for at least six years are more likely to have positive attitudes toward themselves and feel that they have something to be proud of than those who never had participated in religious youth groups. Seniors who participated in religious youth groups for any number of years are

significantly more likely to feel good to be alive and to enjoy school than those who have never been in a religious youth group.”

“Catholic 12th graders differed most from the non-religious, being significantly more likely to have positive attitudes toward themselves, feel proud of something, feel hopeful, feel like their lives are useful, feel good to be alive, enjoy school and be conventional in their behavior. Baptists are more likely than non-religious youth to have positive attitudes toward themselves, feel proud of something, feel hopeful about the future and enjoy school. Youth in non-Baptist Protestant denominations are more likely to feel proud of something, are more likely to enjoy school and are more conventional than non-religious youth.”

“In summary, regular religious service attendance, high subjective importance of faith and years spent in religious youth groups are clearly associated with high self-esteem and positive self-attitudes even when statistical procedures control for the influences of numerous demographic and socio-economic factors.”

“What is clear in this report’s findings, however, is that religiously involved U.S. teenagers have more positive attitudes about themselves and life in general. This understanding is an important starting point of knowledge for considering ways to enhance the quality of life of U.S. adolescents.”

(“Religion and the Life Attitudes and Self-Image of American Adolescents,” Christian Smith and Robert Faris, A Research Report of the National Study of Youth and Religion, Number 2, www.youthandreligion.org)

“THE MEANING OF TEEN-AGED LIFE”

“Three-quarters (76%) of American kids said they would choose their lives the way they are, which may offer a sense of validation to parents. However, satisfaction tended to be lower among older teens. Eighty-one percent of 13- to 15-year-olds said they would choose their lives as-is, compared to 69% of 16-and 17-year-olds who said the same.”

(Jennifer Robinson, “The Meaning of Teen-Aged Life,” January 2003 www.gallup.com/poll/tb/educaYouth/20030128b.asp?Version=p)

“MAPPING AMERICAN ADOLESCENT RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION”

“From 1976 to 1996, the proportion of Protestant youth has declined by 10 percent.”

“Religious Service Attendance”

“American adolescents exhibit a great deal of variance in their frequency of religious service attendance. Analysis of the religious service attendance of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders (combined) shows that 38 percent attend weekly, 16 percent attend one to two times a month, 31 percent attend rarely, and 15 percent never attend religious services. (6) The youth of America, in other words, widely vary in their levels of involvement in participation in religious worship attendance.”

“Monitoring the Future has tracked the religious service attendance of 12th graders from 1976 to 1996. Figure 4, based on Monitoring the Future data, shows a largely stable pattern, with a slight but noticeable decline, however, in religious services attendance over the 20 years. Weekly religious service attendance in particular suffered, losing 8 percent over that time period. The categories attending never and rarely grew by 4 percent each during these 20 years.”

(“Mapping American Adolescent Religious Participation,” Christian Smith, Melinda Lundquist Denton, Robert Faris, Mark Regnerus, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41:4 (2002) 597-612)

“RELIGIOUS SERVICES ATTENDANCE”

“Headline”

“There is a racial gap in religious service attendance among older youth that continues to widen, with 45 percent of black twelfth graders attending religious services at least once a week in 2001 compared to 31 percent of white youth.”

(“Religious Services Attendance,” www.childtrendsdatbank.org)

“RELIGIOSITY”

“Headline”

“The percentage of eighth graders who report that religion plays a very important role in their lives has increased from 29 percent in 1991 to 35 percent in 2001.”

“Trends”

“Since the early 1990s there has been a modest increase in the percentage of youth reporting that religion plays a very important part in their lives, although they remain a minority. Among eighth graders, the proportion increased from 29 percent in 1991 to 35 percent in 2001. Smaller increases can be seen for tenth grade students (from 28 to 32 percent) and twelfth grade students (from 28 to 32 percent).”

“Differences by Race”

“Black youth are about twice as likely as white youth to report that religion plays a very important role in their lives. For example, among twelfth grade students in 2001, the rates were 57 percent and 27 percent, respectively.”

(“Religiosity,” www.childtrendsdatbank.org)

“WANT BETTER GRADES? GO TO CHURCH”

□ □ “Studies show that poor children who are active in a local congregation thrive in body and mind, as well as spirit.”

□ □ “In a recent study, researchers Mark Regnerus and Glen Elder Jr. demonstrate that when youth from low-income neighborhoods attend church, their academic performance improves.”

□ □ “The study, commissioned by the Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, relied on data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to examine the relationship between religion and academics in nearly 10,000 students. Regnerus and Elder found that the poorer the neighborhood, the more church attendance helped kids to improve academically. The findings held true even after controlling for obvious influences like a student's relationship with parents.”

□ □ “Furthermore, improving academic performance seems to flow more from ‘doing’ church than from merely believing. That is, the church's social life influences youth from poor communities more than doctrine does. In neighborhoods where libraries and schools are often depleted and after-school jobs are hard to find, the church is the main resource-rich presence in the community.”

□ □ “Church attendance also convinces low-income students that their lives matter, and that they have choices and hope for a better future.”

□ □ “Curbing violence”

o “Regnerus and Elder are not the only researchers to find a link between church and academic excellence. More than 600 studies identified by the Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society have also shown religion's positive effect on physical, mental, and social health.”

o “Using the same data set as Regnerus and Elder, Robert Crosnoe of the University of Texas identified 500 same-sex twin pairs and studied their emotional health. He discovered that a more religious or churchgoing twin demonstrates less emotional distress. The difference was most dramatic among twins from low-income communities.”

o “Students from poor neighborhoods who attend church are also less likely to engage in violent behavior, says Byron Johnson, director of the Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, which sponsored the Regnerus/Elder study.”

o “‘Religion is one of the best predictors of avoiding crime and delinquency,’ Johnson says.”

o “And the longer the church involvement the greater the curbing of violence, he says.”

(Amber Johnson, “Want Better Grades? Go to Church,” May 2002, www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/006/8.60.html)

“RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY, TEEN-STYLE”

(by Linda Lyons, Contributing Editor)

□ □ “In the most recent survey, 45% of American teens* and 44 % of adults** reported that they had attended church or synagogue during the last seven days.”

□ □ “Youth fellowship programs were by far the most frequently cited extracurricular activity at churches and synagogues. When teens were asked in a 1998 study^ why so many wanted to become involved in these small groups, 82% said they wanted to learn more about religion, 73% said their parents encouraged them to join, and 71% wanted a place to talk about what's important to them in their everyday lives. Teens do like to talk, (witness the popularity of cell phones and online instant messenger services) but when asked in February 2001^^ about the needs of young people today, 74% of teens said they needed to be ‘listened to -- to be heard.’”

□ □ “And what are teens doing during the regular weekly sermon? Apparently, they are not listening. Of those teens who attended services in the past week, most (84%) recall the delivery of a sermon but 55% of them couldn't recall the message of that sermon. According to Winseman, ‘...effective youth groups communicate the message in a language and medium that the kids can relate to. That's why most kids tune out most sermons -- they don't want theological jargon, they want the message in a language they can understand.’”

“*Findings are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross section of 454 teen-agers, aged 13 to 17, conducted July through September 2001. For this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the margin of sampling error is $\pm 5\%$.”

“** Results are based on telephone interviews with 1,024 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted March 17-19, 2000. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the margin of sampling error is $\pm 3\%$.”

(Linda Lyons, “Religious Activity-Teen Style,” April 2002,
www.gallup.com/poll/tb/religValue020020416b.asp?Version=p)

“BLACK TEENS: BETTER AT JUST SAYING NO?”

“High Levels of Religiosity”

“Assuming black teens aren't significantly less likely than white or Hispanic teens to admit their alcohol consumption, a number of theoretical factors are plausible. One, however, stands out – the level of religiosity among both black teens and black adults exceeds that of any other race or ethnicity. Historically, the church is the heart and soul of the black community, as reflected in church attendance figures among African Americans. In fact, on the nine questions in Gallup's Congregational Engagement survey that measures the extent to which faith permeates an individual's life, blacks score considerably higher than either whites or Hispanics. Resulting data indicate that 27% of blacks are spiritually committed, compared to 16% of whites and 11% of Hispanics^ (see ‘Spiritual Commitment, by the Numbers’ in Related Items).”

“(^Findings are based on telephone interviews with 729 adults members of a church, synagogue, or other religious faith community aged 18 and older, conducted October through November 2001.)”

“According to Dr. Byron R. Johnson, director of the Center for Research in Religion and Urban Civil Society (CRRUCS) at the University of Pennsylvania, numerous studies support these observations. A 2002 CRRUCS report, Objective Hope, reviews 150 recent studies examining the relationship between religiosity and drug or alcohol use. ‘The vast majority of these studies demonstrate that participation in religious activities is associated with less of a tendency to use or abuse drugs or alcohol,’ said Johnson. ‘These findings hold regardless of the population under study or whether the research was conducted prospectively or retrospectively. The greater a person's religious involvement, the less likely he or she will initiate alcohol or drug use or have problems with these substances if they are used.’”

(Lyons, Linda, Black Teens: Better at Just Saying No?” November 5, 2002
www.gallup.com/poll/tb/religvalue/20021105.asp?Version=p)

“RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT AND CHILDREN’S WELL-BEING: WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US (AND WHAT IT DOESN’T)”

“Substance Use”

"The evidence linking religious involvement and teen drug and alcohol use is strong and consistent. (7) This is perhaps as might be expected. After all, many religions specifically teach that a healthy body and a healthy spiritual life go hand in hand and actively proscribe unhealthy behavior – including drug and alcohol abuse." (8)

"One study of a high-risk sample of white high school-age males, for example, found that the rate of multi-drug use (alcohol, marijuana, barbiturates or methedrine, psychedelics, and cocaine) was more than three times higher among those who never attended church services, compared with those who did attend church services at least once a week. This was based on the teens' own reports. (9) In a more recent study, researchers found that religion played a bigger role in whether or not teens used drugs for those who lived in more distressed neighborhoods than for those living in lower-risk environments. (10) Teens in these neighborhoods who went to church and attended religious services were less likely to use drugs than were teens who were less involved with religion. Evidence about other measures of religiosity (for example, the personal importance of religion in a young person's life and his or her religious denomination) is less consistent, but religious youth are almost never found to be more at risk than nonreligious youth."

“Sexual Behavior”

"Numerous studies indicate that being involved in religion may help to steer teens away from early sexual activity. (11) More specifically, researchers have found that teens who exhibit high levels of religiosity (including church attendance, valuing religion, and holding strong religious beliefs) have lower levels of sexual experience and more conservative attitudes about sexual activity than other teens." (12)

"Research findings from early adolescence are consistent in supporting a positive association between religiosity and socially beneficial (or 'prosocial') and altruistic attitudes and behavior. (19) Religions and religious organizations generally promote the ideas of helping others and concern for the greater good by providing opportunities for community service. (20) Moreover, acceptance of the moral tenets of a religious faith may be instrumental in the development of a healthy sense of responsibility and even guilt that may lead adolescents to avoid wrongdoing or to make amends when they have done wrong." (21)

“(This brief summarizes a longer report, “Religion and Spirituality in Childhood and Adolescence,” Child Trends, 2002, January).”

“(7) For example, Moore, K., Hair, E., Bridges, L., & Garrett, S. (2002).”

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(Child Trends Research Brief, September 2002,
<http://www.childtrends.org/PDF/ReligiosityRB.pdf>)

“KIDS AND RELIGION”

“Does Religious Participation Influence Young People’s Behaviors?”

“The results of this comprehensive review are presented in two companion products: a research brief, ‘Educating America’s Youth: What Makes a

Difference,’ and ‘What Works,’ that summarizes key research and evaluation findings.”

“While available research on this topic is largely limited to Christianity and Judaism, it nevertheless shows:”

□ □ “Involvement with a religious institution is associated with lower adolescent drug and alcohol use and delays in sexual activity.”

□ □ “There is a connection between younger teens’ religious participation and more altruistic attitudes and behaviors, presumably reflecting both religious teachings and opportunities for participation in religious-related service activities.”

□ □ “Parents’ religious beliefs and practices were associated with risktaking among teens, even when other influences were controlled.”

□ □ “A connection was found between parental religious participation and lower levels of child behavior problems and with higher levels of adolescent social responsibility.”

□ □ “Religious institutions may play a role in providing physical and emotional support to individuals and groups in need and exerting social controls over adherents’ behavior, particularly in neighborhoods where other sources of social support, opportunity and control have broken down.”

“(The brief is available online at:
www.childtrends.org/PDF/ReligiosityRB.pdf.)
(www.childtrends.org/n_religiosity.asp)”

“Percentage of teens...who are not only born again, but also believe in the accuracy of the Bible, personal responsibility to evangelize, believe in salvation by grace alone, and possess orthodox biblical views on God, Jesus and Satan – have declined from 10% in 1995 to just 4% today.”

“...a similar drop among adults: 12% were evangelicals in 1994, but just 5% fit the criteria today.”

([www.barna.org/cgibin/
PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=111&Reference=B](http://www.barna.org/cgibin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=111&Reference=B))

“THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF YOUNG AMERICANS”

“The Cry of Youth Today—and The Response of Churches.”

1. “Less than half of American’s teens (43%) believe it is very important to have deep religious faith. One in three (33%) says it is somewhat important, and 23 percent believe religious faith is not very important. In this respect, a deep religious faith ranks only eighth as being very important on a list of nine values tested.” (p.v)

“By comparison, nine teens in 10 say it is very important to them to have personal peace and happiness (92%) and to be well educated (91%). Six in 10 teens or more, however, give high ratings to values associated with religion such as helping people in the community (66%) and working for peace (60%). Half of teens (52%) think it is very important to get married some day, and 45% would like to have children.” (p.v)

“Just as many teens believe that having lots of money (44%) is very important to them as feel they should have a deep religious faith (43%). Only 16 percent think seeking fame is very important for them.” (p.v)

2. “Friends, home, school, music, and television are rated ahead of religion and books as factors teen believe are having the greatest influence on their generation. Only 13 percent of the teens interviewed feel that religion has a great deal of influence; an additional 30 percent say it has some influence, and another 28 percent feel it has very little influence.” (p.v)

3. “Only one teen in four expresses a high degree of confidence in organized religion, lower than the figure recorded for the adult population.” (p.vi)

4. “A glaring lack of knowledge of the Ten Commandments and basic religious tenets is found among youth today. Many do not know the meaning of Easter.”(p.vi)

5. “A high level of credulity exists among young Americans and willingness to hold to scientifically the theologically unsound beliefs.” (p.vi)

“BASIC BELIEFS”

“Belief in God”

“Over the years past Gallup Youth Surveys have consistently reported that about 95 percent of the nation’s teenagers believe in God or a universal spirit. The latest survey shows that, far from being an abstract concept to teens, the God they believe in is thought by most (93%) to love them. Very few teens believe either there is no God (2%) or that if there is one, they are not loved by him (2%). The remaining 3 percent of teens say they are uncertain about whether or not there is a God who loves them. (p.2)”

“Teens Religious Behavior and Belief”

“1959-1961 1988-1993”

“Believe in God” 97% 95%”

“Believe in personal God who observes, rewards and punishes 83% 76%”

“Believes in life after death 79% 67%”

“The Bible is completely true/
literally true 62% 39%”

“Church or synagogue member 86% NA”

“Attended church or synagogue last week” 70% 50%
(p.3)”

“Beliefs about the Bible”

“One of the most dramatic shifts in religious beliefs in the country is how people view the Bible. Only 30 years ago, two-thirds of adults accepted the Bible as the actual work of God, to be taken literally word for word; only 32% view it that way today.” (p.5)

“RELIGIOUS PRACTICES”

“Church Attendance”

“ Undoubtedly, some teen attendance is heavily influenced, if not demanded, by parents, but when we explored this question in an earlier study, we found that the majority (61% of teens) said they went to church solely because they wanted to do so, and an additional 24 percent went both because they

wanted to go and because they knew it would please their parents.” (p.8)

“Teens, themselves, often endorse the idea that parents and their children should attend church together. A majority of teens (51%) say it is important for parents and children 12 years of age or younger to attend church together. An additional 33 percent think it is somewhat important. One third of teens say it is also very important that people their own age attend worship services with their parents, with 35 percent considering it somewhat important. Among those who are recent church attenders, 57% think it is important that parents and teens go to religious services together.” (p.8)

“Prayer”

“A majority of non-white teens (53%) say they frequently pray when alone. An additional 31 percent report they pray occasionally. By comparison, just 39 percent of white teens frequently pray when alone, and 32 percent do so occasionally.” (p.10)

“TRAINING AND INFLUENCES”

“Influence of Religion”

“How Much Influence on Teens?”

“Question: Do you feel today’s teenagers are influenced a great deal, some or very little by (these factors listed)?”

“Great deal Some Little Very little”

“Friends 87% 11% 1% 1%”

“Home 51 31 14 4”

“School 45 36 14 5”

“Music 41 35 17 1”

“Television 32 43 18 7”

“Movies 19 48 22 11”

“Religion 13 30 28 28”

“Magazines 9 41 32 17”

“Books 3 23 41 32”

“Topics Teens Often Discuss With Peers”

“Question: How often do you talk about these topics with your friends: very often, sometimes, rarely, or never... Question about what is right to do and what is wrong? Question about who we are, what does life mean, what is the universe. etc? Questions about is there a God, is there life after death, etc. September 1988 (Telephone)”

“Right or Existence Meaning Number of Wrong of God of life interviews”

“National 38% 23% 21% 500”

“Fatherlessness”

“In an America today, one-third of teenagers cannot talk about life with their father. When asked what relatives live at home with them, although 91 percent of teens mention mom, only 67 percent say that their father lives with them.” (p. 36)

“IDENTITIES”

“Priority of Religious Faith”

“Ratings of Importance.”

“Ratings of the importance of values was obtained through the following question: For each of the following please tell me if it is important, somewhat important, or not important to you.”

“Very Somewhat Not very”

“Important important important”

“Having personal”

“peace and happiness 92% 7% 1%”

“Being well educated 91 7 2”

“Helping people in”

“the community 66 31 3”

“Working for peace 60 34 6”

“Getting married 52 33 14”

“Having children 45 34 20”

“Having lots of money 44 37 19”

“Having a deep religious faith 43 33 23”

“Being famous 16 28 56”

“The findings are based on telephone interviews by the Gallup Youth Survey with a representative national cross section of 500 teenagers, 13 through 17, conducted between March and April 4, 1990.” (p.42)

“SOCIAL ISSUES”

“Suicide”

“Teens and suicide-44% of teen-agers say they know someone who actually tried to commit suicide.” (p. 62)

“What is the cause?”

“Which of the following reasons do you think causes teen-agers to think about committing suicide? Of these, which is the most important or number one cause?”

“Cause Most Important Cause”

“Drug Abuse 86% 19%”

“Getting Alone with Parents 84 13”

“Peer Pressure 82 16”

“Problems in Growing Up 81 24”

“Alcohol Abuse 71 3”

“Involvement in satanic cults 65 4”

“Teen Pregnancy 62 2”

“AIDS 56 5”

“Copycat behavior 42 2”

“Heavy Metal Music 24 1”

“Playing Dungeons and Dragons 17 *
(*Less than one-half of 1 percent)”

“Source: Based on telephone and mail interviews by the George H. Gallup International Institute and the Gallup Organization with a representative national cross section of 909 teen-agers, ages 13-19, during April & May of 1994 & sponsored by the Empire Blue Cross and Blue Shield. Could vary 1 to 3 percent. Points in either direction.” (p. 62)

“Hate Crimes”

“Crimes Teen Consider Very Serious:

- A husband beating his wife 93%
 - Rape 92%
 - Sexual Harassment 81%
 - Prostitution 74%
 - Hate crimes against people of different races 82%
 - Hate crimes against people of different religions 77%
 - Shoplifting 56%
 - Cheating on exams 44%
 - Spray painting graffiti on walls 43%
- (p.69)”

“Voluntarism”

“Nine teens in 10 say that doing charitable or voluntary work in the

community is very important (51%) or somewhat important (41%) factor or being a good citizen. Previous Gallup Surveys have consistently demonstrated strong linkage between religion and voluntarism, and so it is not surprising that attending religious services also is considered an important civic trait by three teens in four. Religious attendance is very important in the opinion of 36% and somewhat important by 37% of the teens. Rejecting the importance of religious attendance as a civic virtue are 18% of the teens who say it is of little importance and 8% who believe it is of no importance at all.” (p. 73)

“PRESCRIPTION”

“Young People See Few Religious Boundaries”

“Who Thinks All Religions Are Equally Good”

“Agree Disagree”

“National 64% 35%”

“Ages 13 to 15 61 38”

“Ages 16 to 17 69 31
(p. 88)”

“Teens: Teach Us to Tolerate”

“Teen Tolererance”

“Acceptance of people of different races and ethnic backgrounds” 92%

“Acceptance of people who hold different religious beliefs” 84%

“Acceptance of people who hold unpopular or controversial political or social views” 75%

“Acceptance of people with different sexual orientations, that is homosexuals or bisexuals” 57%
(p. 97)

“What Teens Want From Parents”

“Teens want a lot of things from their parents: happily, these do not include cars and a big allowance. Instead, teens want some fairly basic things, and they enumerated them for us in a recent Gallup Youth Survey. One area they rated as most important is sex education dialogues-teens in great numbers said they want this from their parents. Some 70% of teens said they believe it is very important for parents to educate their children about sex. Another 16% said it was somewhat important, so that the total of teens allotting some degree of significance to this issue is nearly 90%. And they are not simply talking about a quick conversation on the birds and the bees at age 12. All teens, but young women especially, feel it is important to continue a dialogue about sexuality all the way through the teen years.” (p. 98)

“What Teens want From Parents”

“How important do you think it is for parents to do the following for people who are your own age?”

“Very Somewhat Not so Important Important Important”

“Teach them about sex 70% 16% 14%”

“Give them a hug at least once a week 46 34 19”

“Help them with their homework 42 38 20”

“Go to church or other place of worship with them 38 35 27”

“Talk with their teachers regularly 32 42 25”

“Encourage them to bring friends home 32 44 23”

“Be active in school, like PTA 24 42 34”

“Have mother stay at home instead of working 10 24 66 (p. 98)”

“What I Want to Talk About With My Parents”

“The surprising news is that more teens want to discuss the one subject that is probably verboten in their homes-not sex, not religion, or politics, but

finances. Parents seem to believe that the subject is of no interest to their teens, will fill them with apprehension or is frankly none of their business. But nearly four teens in ten (38%) say this is the one subject they would most enjoy talking about more with their parents. They want to hear about the family coffers, and they would like information on investments and saving money. Slightly fewer teens, 35%, think the issue of finances comes up often enough in their homes, and 27% think money should be talked less often.” (p. 99)

“Teen Expectations:”

“Very Somewhat Not too confident confident confident”

“Will earn more money than your parents did 48% 39% 13%”

“Will have a better standard Of living than your parents 41 46 13”

“Will have better health and live longer than your parents 40 47 13”

“Have more leisure time than Your parents now have 37 45 18”

“Spend more time helping other people 39 46 15”

“Be more religious than your parents 22 43 35
(p.100)”

“Six Basic Needs”

“Six Basic Needs of Young People.”

1. “The need to believe that life is meaningful and has a purpose. During a time when sociologists observe a self-obsessive sense of person in America, most young Americans nevertheless believe is ‘very important’ that life be meaningful and have a purpose. Yet a high percentage of these same people believe that ‘most churches and synagogues today are not effective in helping people find meaning in life.’ Here is a basic need apparently being only partially met. The fact is, significant numbers of teens find churches to be irrelevant, unfulfilling and boring.”

2. “The need for a sense of community and deeper relationships. Many factors conspire to create separateness in our society-high mobility,

divorce and the breakup of families, and other factors. The world is becoming increasingly impersonal with the growth of megacities. ‘Radical individualism’ has taken hold in the religious lives of Americans—the large majority of Americans, for example, believe that one can be a good Christian or Jew without attending church or synagogue.”

“One of the poignant consequences to this separateness is loneliness. We discover from surveys that Americans are among the loneliest people in the entire world. As many as three persons in 10 say they have been lonely ‘for a long period of time’ in their lives, with half of these people saying that this experience has affected their thoughts ‘a great deal.’”

“Our churches, synagogues and other faith communities need to deal frontally with the separateness and acute loneliness in our society by encouraging corporate worship, as well as participation in small groups. A growing number of people, it would appear, are coming to the conclusion that small groups, rooted in prayer and Bible study, may be the best hope for a renewed church in the next century.”

3. “The need to be appreciated and loved. This is certainly a basic and fundamental need, yet as many as one-third of the American people have a low sense of self-worth or self-esteem, arising in considerable measure from not being loved or appreciated. Low self-esteem brings with it a host of social problems, including alcohol and drug abuse, child and spouse abuse, lawlessness and crime, and many other problems.” (p. 101)

“Significantly, we have discovered that the closer people feel to God, the better they feel about themselves. They are also satisfied with their lives more than are others; they are more altruistic; they enjoy better health and have a happier outlook. We also discovered that experiencing the closeness of God is a key factor in the ability of people to accept God’s forgiveness and to forgive others.”

4. “The need to be listened to—to be heard. The main theme of a book I wrote with Jim Castelli, entitled ‘The People’s Religion,’ is that religion in the future is more likely to be shaped from the bottom up and the top down—from the people in the pews rather than by the hierarchy. In a special survey we conducted for ‘The People’s Religion,’ we discovered that Americans overwhelmingly think that the future of the church will be shaped to a greater extent by the laity than by the clergy. This is also what the laity would like to see happen.”

“Those in the survey most eager to play a stronger leadership role in the church are young adults, and the well-educated, two groups of potential leaders churches can ill afford to lose or alienate.”

“In specific terms this means, for example, that the laity should play a great leadership role in the administrative function of churches, freeing up the clergy to perform what the laity expects of them-to listen to people’s religious needs and to provide spiritual counseling. When the unchurched in one survey were asked what would most likely draw them back into the community of active worshippers, the lead reason given was ‘if I could find a pastor, priest or rabbi with whom I could share my religious needs and doubts.’”

“The clergy need to listen more carefully to what the laity are saying, both in one-on-one discussions, as well as in group discussions. Incidentally, one way to enhance the listening process, I believe, is for churches to undertake carefully designed surveys of church members, as well as those who are now unchurched.”

5. “The need to feel that one is growing in faith. People want to deepen their faith, and the fact is we go through passages in our faith lives, just as we do in our secular lives. Seven persons in 10 say they have experienced a change in faith during their lifetimes.”

“Churches need to pay close attention to the passages people experience in their faith lives, and to religious experiences which often change the course of one’s life. People need to help in understanding the significance of these experiences and building upon them.” (p. 102)

“It would appear that, basically, people aspire to the good life. Significant numbers of people have given thought to living a worthwhile life, to their relationship to God, to the basic meaning and value of their lives, and to developing their faith.”

6. “The need for practical help in developing a mature faith. I believe that it is fair to say that clergy often tend to make assumptions about the depth of religious commitment in the lives of members of their churches. They assume that their members’ prayer life is more developed, and that people have a higher level of knowledge about their faith and the traditions of their denomination than actually is the case. Clergy therefore can find themselves in the unfortunate situation of trying to win support for programs and causes from a laity that is sometimes spiritually listless.

We pray and believe in the power of prayer, but our prayer life sometimes tends to be a hit-or-miss affair. We believe the Ten Commandments to be valid rules of life, but we are unable to name them. We would be hard pressed to defend our faith—we are uncertain about what we believe and why.”

7. “Ungrounded in biblical faith, many Americans of all are vulnerable and are drawn to a wide variety of bizarre spiritual movements. Through inattention on the part of churches, and lethargy on the part of the laity, the churches of our nations have permitted a huge spiritual vacuum to develop, one which is drawing in millions of unwitting and unsuspecting Americans.” (p. 103)

(George H. Gallup, Jr. “The Spiritual Life of Young Americans: Approaching the Year 2,000.” The George Gallup International Institute. Princeton, New Jersey.)

"RELIGION VIRTUES"

"Attending religious services helps low-income kids do better in school, suggests a study by sociologists Mark Regnerus of Calvin College and Glen Elder Jr. of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In a nationwide survey, the professors found that students from poor neighborhoods who attended services found role models in the congregation who inspired them to do well. Religious communities did not have as much influence over more affluent kids."

("Religion Virtues", Time Magazine, August 27, 2001)

"Factors associated with delaying sexual activity include church attendance, levels of parental and neighborhood monitoring, higher grade point average and concern about future vocation (Forste & Heaton 1988) (Bearman & Buckner 1999) (Joshua Mann, M.D., M.P.H., Joe S. McIlhane, Jr., M.D. and Curtis C. Stine, M.D., “A New Generation of Problems,” from Building Healthy Futures: Tools for helping adolescents avoid or delay the onset of sexual activity, The Medical Institute for Sexual Health, Austin, TX. 2000)

“RESEARCH RELEASED ON ROLE OF RELIGION IN TEEN

PREGNANCY”

"Survey data also released today indicate that morals, values, and /or religious beliefs affects teens decisions about whether to have sex more than concern about STDs, fear of pregnancy, or other reasons.”

"Approximately 90 percent of teens report being affiliated with a particular religious denomination."

"Survey data also being released today--Faithful Nation: What American Adults and Teens Think About Faith, Morals, Religion, and Teen Pregnancy"

("Research Released on Role of Religion in Teen Pregnancy", US Newswire, September 25, 2001)