



✦ VOLUME 2 ✦

HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE IS TRUE?



KEN HAM & BODIE HODGE
GENERAL EDITORS

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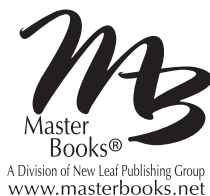
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Why Are Young People Walking Away from Our Churches?

Ken Ham



During the past 30 years of traveling the world and speaking in churches, I have been deeply burdened by distraught parents pleading for advice on how to reach their children who were brought up in the church but who no longer attend. “How can I reach them? How can we get them back to church?” I have been asked time and time again.

I have often thought how I would like to get into the heads of these young adults who have left the church to understand how they are thinking. What caused them to walk away from the church they were brought up in?

Thirty years of teaching thousands of children and adults in churches has given me a big-picture understanding of a number of issues — some of which greatly trouble me while some thrill me. For instance:

1. I have met so many young people who do not see the church as relevant and do not consider the Bible a real book of history that can be trusted.
2. I have found that most parents have delegated the training of their children to the Sunday school, youth group, or other Christian organization.

3. Whenever I ask a church audience if they have any questions, I find that they usually ask the same questions regardless of what country or church (conservative or liberal) I visit: How can we know the Bible is true and is God's Word? Where did God come from? Where did Cain get his wife? Can't Christians believe in millions of years, the big bang, and evolution as long as God was involved? Are the days of creation ordinary days or millions of years, and does it really matter? How could Noah fit all the animals on the ark? To name but a few.

As I saw such patterns across America, Australia, Europe, and the United Kingdom, I was sure there must be a connection. Could it be that the lack of teaching apologetics in our churches, youth groups, Sunday schools, and Bible studies is a major reason why young people leave the church? But how do we determine if this is so, and when in their lives is this becoming an issue?

As I talked with parents, an overwhelming number of them admitted they did not know how to answer their children's questions — whether about dinosaurs, the age of the earth, or the origin of the Bible. I also found that most parents believe their children's Christianity will not come under attack until college.

A supporter of Answers in Genesis wanted to help us obtain real data from a respected and trusted researcher, who could do a statistically valid study that had to be taken seriously.

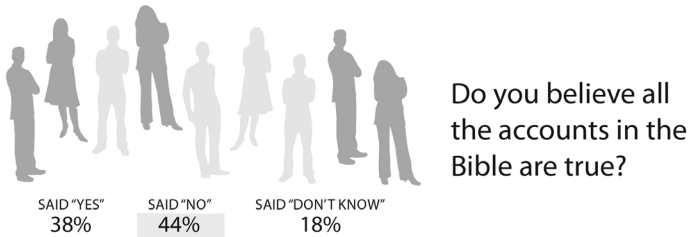
So we contracted with Britt Beemer, from America's Research Group, to formulate questions and survey one thousand 20-somethings (ages 20–29) who had gone to church regularly as children but no longer attend. They had to have come from a *conservative* church background so the results would reflect what is happening to children from Bible-believing churches. And what did we find?

A Look at the Numbers

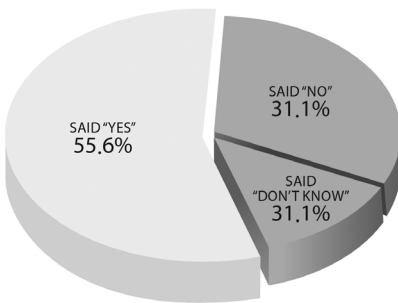
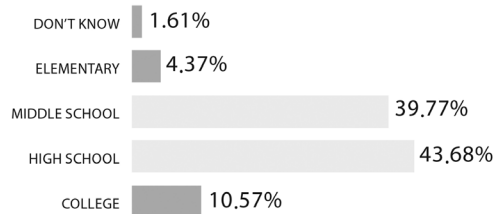
The Survey Results . . .

When

The study found we are losing our kids in elementary, middle school, and high school rather than college.



If you don't believe, when did you first have doubts?



Would you say questioning was the beginning of your doubt in the Bible?

Why

Overall, the answer is the lack of teaching apologetics. The younger generations are not being raised to be able to answer the skeptical questions of our time, and so they begin doubting from a very early age whether they can trust the Bible.

Consider that most kids in Christian homes attend a state school (nearly 90 percent according the survey results), where they are being taught the religion of secular humanism (with evolution and millions of years and no God).¹ When Christianity was removed from the classroom, religion was not kicked out. Christianity was simply replaced with the godless religion of secular humanism (i.e., man's opinion rules as the ultimate authority rather than God).

1. Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, with Todd Hillard, *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit the Church and What You Can Do to Stop It* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009), p. 170.

Generations of children are being taught secular humanism in state schools, and then they go to church and question Christianity — but they do not receive answers based on the authority of God’s Word. This is one of the main reasons kids are walking away from Christianity and gravitating to secular humanism.

What to Do About It

Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear (1 Peter 3:15).

Introduce apologetics (meaning “give a defense”) curricula at all levels in church programs and at home. Parents need to take responsibility for their children’s education and teach them from the moment they are born.

We need to answer the questions our kids have about the Bible (hence this and other book series such as the New Answers Books). Many times, even parents need to be trained to answer these questions so they can effectively train their children and grandchildren.

What Do the Twenty-Somethings Want from Church?

They want Bible teaching. It is not music that will bring them back to church but solid teaching that makes the Bible relevant. This was encouraging to find out. Many churches have become more like “social clubs,” while Bible teaching and apologetics are almost extinct within many churches. Knowing that the 20-somethings want to hear what the Bible has to say should be an encouragement to most parents and church leaders.

Sometimes people have a tendency to think that kids *do not want* to know answers to questions about the days of creation, how we know the Bible is true, the 66 books of the Bible, Noah’s ark, and so on, so they simply make them “side issues” of little importance. But they are not side issues; these are important and relevant issues to the youth of the next generation.

Are Sunday Schools Able to Handle the Situation?

Those who attend Sunday school are more likely to think God used evolution to create human beings, premarital sex is acceptable, and church is not relevant.²

2. Ham and Beemer, *Already Gone*, p. 39.

One of the shocks of the study was that, of these 20-somethings surveyed, those who went to Sunday school were more likely to be anti-church and defend gay marriage and abortion than those who didn't go to Sunday school. Again, the basic reason comes down to being taught the Bible as a book of fictional "stories" rather than real history that can be defended in this scientific age.

When many of these kids walked away from the church, they resented the church for not providing answers and viewed it as place of false doctrine. This is why many who have walked away from the church today are the most vocal in opposing the church, God, the Bible, and Christianity.

Analyzing the Survey Results

As I have been explaining the survey results during interviews, some radio hosts have asked me, "But why the disconnect — after all, surely the churches are teaching the gospel to these children."

My answer is something like this:

Yes, that is true, but let's consider where we get the message of the gospel. How do we know Jesus rose from the dead? We were not there to see the Resurrection, and we do not have a movie of it, so how do we know it happened? We know because we trust the authority of the book from which we get the gospel — the Bible.

We take the words of that book as God-breathed, letting them speak to us from God. But these young people have been brought up in a culture where Genesis, in particular, has been attacked. They have been taught the world was formed in millions of years through evolution. And sadly, most Christian leaders (Sunday school teachers and others) have told these kids that Genesis doesn't matter, that they can believe in secular history over millions of years, as long as they trust in Jesus. Ninety percent of these kids go to a public school where God, the Bible, and prayer have been thrown out. They are being educated in a secular philosophy — in naturalism and atheism.

These children have been led to doubt that the Bible can be trusted in the beginning. They are not being taught how to take a stand for its authority from the very first verse. They are not taught the answers to the skeptical attacks on the Bible. So when

the message of Jesus is taught to them, they don't really believe it because they don't believe the book from which it comes. The next generation in the church needs to be taught not just what to believe as Christians, but also *why* we believe what we do, and how to answer skeptical questions. Let's begin equipping the next generation to stand solidly on the authority of God's Word!³

3. For a complete treatment of the statistics from this study, see Ham and Beemer, *Already Gone*.