



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Raising Spiritual Champions – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. George Barna

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute, supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome back to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. Remember the old Art Linkletter show, *Kids Say the Darnedest Things*? Well, kids certainly do absorb what's all around them. That's true. So parents and caregivers need to be mindful of what can influence the lives and minds of their kids. And it's especially confusing for kids if we as adults are not living out what we are asking them to do as well. So if we truly want the best for our children, we really need to consider our responsibility to God in raising our sons and daughters, and it is our duty and privilege to guide our children and open the door for them to having a personal relationship with the Lord.

Now, today, Gary Bauer is with us once again and he's joined, again, today by his guest, Dr. George Barna, who has recently released a new book entitled *Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Soul, and Mind*, which gets to the core of the importance of the spiritual health of our kids. And his book is backed by tons of empirical research as well, so now, let's join our own Gary Bauer and his guest, Dr. George Barna, right here on Family Talk.

Gary Bauer: Folks, welcome back to Family Talk. We're really excited today to continue our conversation with George Barna, who's written this really fantastic book, *Raising Spiritual Champions, Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind, and Soul*. George, let's get right in it. There's so much research you've done, but there's also the big, worldview picture that you lay out about why saving our children spiritually is going to be the most important thing we do. Now, if I'm remembering correctly, didn't you find that even among Christian parents there was a disturbing percentage that thought this central task of giving their own children a worldview could legitimately be left to others, whether it was the school or the culture or neighbors or relatives?

I mean, I don't recall all the other options, but that blew me away because I've spent my whole life telling parents, "Be active Christian citizens. Use dinner to mold your child, read to them at night, and look at what their teachers are

teaching them." Because as we just found out during COVID, quite often, it's stuff that we're not going to like very much. But what did the research find? Am I remembering that correctly, that there was a certain percentage of parents that said, "Well, yeah. I got some role in this," but there are other institutions too, like government, that should be involved?

Dr. George Barna:

Yeah, there are a number of different things we discovered that relate to that. One of those is that, first of all, only one out of every 10 Christian parents has a plan for how they're going to raise their children, which means that basically it's a random process. We're just reacting to circumstances rather than our priority, identifying what we want to accomplish in our children's lives. We also discover that more than two out of three Christian parents are letting people outside of their home and their church determine what the worldview of their children is going to be. They don't feel that that's their responsibility. They don't feel that they're capable of dealing with that. And so basically, what we've said is, "Yeah, let's turn our kids over to the culture. And as long as our children are happy and they're safe and they're becoming educated with some basics in life, we'll be able to move forward in a very appropriate manner," when, in point of fact, as you read the scriptures, that's not at all what Jesus has in mind for us.

We are to be the church, and that means that we've got to be inculcating these spiritual principles, biblical principles in the minds and hearts of our children. We've got to be holding them accountable for those things. We've got to be modeling these things for them. That was one of the other really fascinating things we discovered in the research, Gary, is that when we talked with eight to 12-year-olds, we did a big national survey with them, one of the things that we discovered, they were saying is they don't trust their parents. We said, "What do you mean you don't trust your parents?" They said, "Well," and I'm paraphrasing, obviously. Eight to 12-year-old kids aren't going to speak the way I do about it.

But basically, what they were saying is, "Look, I'm a kid. I'm trying to figure out how life works. And so I turned to my parents, first and foremost, because they brought me into the world. I live with them. I've trusted them up to this point. But now that I'm trying to put it all together, I'm listening very carefully to what they say. And then I'm trying to understand what that means so I watch very carefully what they do, and I see a disconnect between what they say and do. And so I figure I can't really trust them in this process of figuring out how to live because obviously, they haven't figured it out yet either. Because they've got this conflict going on between what they say and what they do, they're still experimenting. They're still trying to make sense of it all. So I'm turning to other places to help me get more insight."

And what we found is that's why the arts and entertainment media have such traumatic impact on our kids. Because when you've got a 24-minute program taking out the commercials, you've got a 90-minute movie, you've got a video game that you play for however long you choose, you're looking at a five-minute social media clip, you'll listen to a four-minute pop song, all of those are

communicating messages about how to live. How to think and, therefore, how to live. And it's so easy in a four-minute song, a 24-minute program, whatever the media vehicle may be, to be consistent. And so maybe you're sending Marxist messages, maybe you're sending postmodern messages, maybe you're sending secular humanist messages, satanist messages. All kinds of worldviews are being communicated through those vehicles. Kids don't see any conflict there, so they're saying, "Okay, that's something I can trust," and that's why it's so critically important that parents be the filter on the media that their kids are being exposed to.

Gary Bauer: That is really central. And you can't just assume that because that you told them not to go to this place online or that place online, that when they're up in their room and the doors close that they're doing what you asked them to do. I guess we could probably get into a big discussion about when a child should even have access to some of the social media stuff. But one of the things I want to touch on before we run out of time is ... And this blew me away, George, and I take a backseat to no one about being worried all the time. So you referred to newly-minute teens, so I'm assuming you're talking about kids 12 turning to be 13.

Dr. George Barna: Right.

Gary Bauer: And you said that nearly half of them fall into the category of don'ts. And the don'ts are, number one, children who don't know if there's a God, number two, children that don't believe in the existence of God, and three, children that don't care one way or the other, what the answer to that question is. And according to your research, that's nearly half of all America's rising teenagers. My friends, if that's accurate, if you think things are bad now, we're headed to a cliff. Elaborate on that a little.

Dr. George Barna: Well, that's just one example of what we're finding out with the young people being raised. This is the implications of parents not holding onto the reins and directing them in the proper way. Now, part of the problem that we've got is that when we looked at parents of children under the age of 13 today, only 2% of them have a biblical worldview. Only 8% of those who say that they believe when they die, they're going to go to heaven only because they confess their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior, only 8% of that group of parents has a biblical worldview. And the problem is you can't give what you don't have.

Gary Bauer: Right.

Dr. George Barna: Even if parents are trying to do a good job at raising their kids and giving them what they believe, for the most part, they don't believe what the scriptures teach, and so that's a problem as well. But when we look at our young people today, yeah. I mean, they're being given very minimal, intentional, spiritual guidance. They're kind of determining on their own how the world works based on all these other philosophies of life, these other worldviews being thrown at them. And it's kind of a smorgasbord, if you will. It's the kind of thing where when we look at Americans, we look at the worldview of adults. Right now, 92%

of Americans, the dominant worldview of that 92% is syncretism, which means that you've never sat down and thought through how life works. Instead, what you've done is you've said, "You know what? I'm going to take a few ideas from biblical Christianity. I'm going to take a few ideas from Marxism, a few ideas from eastern mysticism, a few ideas from Wicca," and all these different things.

We just put out a report where we found that the typical American adult has a worldview that's based on drawing ideas from nine other worldviews and combining them together into a customized worldview. While those very same people are the ones who are raising our kids today and they're allowing their children to do the same thing, now, their children, because of their media universe, are exposed to an even broader range of philosophical and spiritual ideas. So I'm expecting that these younger people, teenagers and preteens, are going to be drawing from even more than nine different worldviews. But the biblical worldview is being lost in the sauce. We're taking a few biblical ideas that make us feel good, make us feel comfortable, that make us feel secure. That's how we're determining our worldview, what makes us feel good, what seems right in our own eyes.

Gary Bauer:

George, it was very disheartening during the big battle over same-sex marriage to see how many young Christians fell for a very surface-only analysis of the issue, and the LGBTQ alphabet soup folks had a very smart approach to this. It was they just appealed to the idea of love. "Well, you can love who you want, but why am I not allowed to love who I want?" And a lot of young Christians, statistically and polling and so forth, fell for that. And now, we've seen as the years have passed, that once the country went down that road, the sales job that was done in the name of love has turned into an iron fist that says, "You will do this. You will celebrate Pride with us. You will let this be taught to your children in school."

There's no more of this love in the theme anymore. It's a very hard and very dangerous political agenda that's putting many of our children and our religious liberty at risk. I've also seen some polls recently about the number of people that say they're believing Christians, but say they can't find anything in the Bible about the issue of the sanctity of life or abortion. And so in some states, these voters, self-described as Christians, have actually voted for laws that would allow abortion all nine months of the pregnancy. So this failure does have real-life consequences for our country and from our public discourse, and even for our freedom, doesn't it?

Dr. George Barna:

Huge. Huge. I mean, again, it goes back to the reality that every decision that every person makes, every moment of every day of their life is based on their worldview. There's nothing more central to who you are and how you live than your worldview. So when we talk about helping to shape the worldview of children, it's because this is going to have payback for decades and decades and decades with each individual in the country. You look at America today, 266 million adults, every one of them has a worldview that's determining the

choices that they make all the time. You trace it back to what was developed before the age of 13.

So this parenting enterprise is the most critical thing that we're ever going to do in our lives and we've got to take it more seriously than we're taking it, and we can't afford to be outsourcing it to other people who are getting paid to do or believe or profess certain things. It's our job. And someday, I, as a parent, am going to stand before God and have to give account for what I did with my children.

Gary Bauer: Yes.

Dr. George Barna: So yeah, we've got to take it very seriously,

Gary Bauer: George, we can't make a revival happen or another great awakening, but are you seeing any signs that one might be underway that would help in this overall problem? I've been hearing about a couple of things going on university campuses where large numbers of college students are gathering and they're hearing messages about the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and there's been some mass baptisms. Do you think that even if our failures are obvious, that God might take it in his own hands and we could be the beneficiary of another great awakening among our youth?

Dr. George Barna: Well, I pray that that's the case. I know that typically, in any culture as you study it over time, it's a back and forth process. There's negative progress that's made, but then there's pushback on that so you move back towards something more reasonable. Hopefully, the youngest generation right now is moving back towards something more reasonable. But in order for that to take, we've got to always remember that the only people who can make disciples are disciples. And so the people in our culture right now who are disciples have a great responsibility, but also an incredible opportunity to be looking at those young people who are looking for better solutions, what I would call biblical solutions, and be there to help those young people understand what those are and what they look like and to encourage them, in terms of implementing that in their own lives. So yeah, I never give up hope. I mean, there's always a remnant. God wins in the end. We can be part of that remnant that brings about that positive movement forward.

Gary Bauer: Yeah, I remember Bill Bennett, one of the years I was with him, used to make this point that parents are the first and most important teachers a child has, and that's certainly true in a lot of different ways. I mean, vocabulary and a love of reading and so forth. But it's certainly true in this area of putting the child on the right spiritual path. And then I recall once, when I was getting ready to do a report at the Department of Education, that some researchers said, putting it in everyday terms, "Every child has to have somebody who's crazy about them, some adult in their life that puts that child in front of anything else. The prospect of a new spouse and a promotion at work, whatever it might be." And tragically, we have millions of children in America, I think, in some cases, even in

our churches, where the child doesn't have an adult that's putting that child before anything else.

Dr. George Barna: Well, and it's been interesting for me, Gary. Since this book came out, I've spoken on it a number of times in different places. And the most common question I'm getting from parents is, "Wow, I heard what you have to say. I feel bad about where I'm at right now because I recognize, now that you've put this in front of us, I do have a deeper responsibility than I thought. I'd like to do something about it, but I don't have a biblical worldview. What do I do? Where do I start? I'm incompetent in this. This is why I give my children away to others to raise, the schools and all the rest."

Gary Bauer: Yes.

Dr. George Barna: It's like, "What can I do? Where do I start?" And in the book, I've got this whole section on something I discovered in the research I call the seven cornerstones of a biblical worldview, which are seven very basic, spiritual principles, biblical principles that we can all understand. And what I discovered is that if you own seven very simple principles, they're part of your life, they're part of your identity, it's how you're living who you want to be, then 83% of those people have a biblical worldview. But if you reject even one of those seven, doesn't matter which one, if you reject any one of those seven core principles, the probability of you having a biblical worldview drops to 2%.

Gary Bauer: Wow.

Dr. George Barna: So that's not a full biblical worldview, these seven beliefs and related behaviors, but it's an incredible foundation on which you can build. And I tell parents, "You know what? Start with the seven cornerstones. It's easy for you to understand. You only have to be about 10 seconds ahead of your kids. They don't know what you're doing, what you know, where you're going. So read these things, study the scriptures related to them, figure out what it looks like in your life. Become a champion of these seven cornerstones and share that with your children and hold them accountable to that. And if you do that, you've given them a great launching pad for the rest of their life because they'll at least have that very solid foundation on which to build."

Gary Bauer: Well, George, that's a great place, I think, to stop with our conversation. This has been fantastic. I'm absolutely convinced that this book, this is God's timing. I mean, there's not a family in America that's not wrestling with these issues. *Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind, and Soul*. How can people get the book?

Dr. George Barna: A couple of ways. They could go to Amazon. It's available there. Or they could go to our website, culturalresearchcenter.com, and they can get it there.

Gary Bauer: Fantastic. George, as we close, we've given people some action items, but we also said that prayer remains important. And it's got to be both. We need to pray for God to make us the best parents we can be. We've got to pray that we'll raise children that can resist the temptations of modern life and live spiritually-rich lives following Jesus Christ. But we also have to act, obviously. But as we sign off, George, would you mind leading all the parents and grandparents listening in in a closing prayer here?

Dr. George Barna: Oh, yeah. Thanks. Lord, we are so grateful that You've given us the opportunity to influence the lives of children. It's a big responsibility and we haven't always taken full advantage of that. I pray that You would open the minds and hearts of everybody who hears this program, really every parent and grandparent, anyone who influences children in America, to take time, to stop and think about, "What am I doing with the children whose lives I influence, whether they're my children, my grandchildren, kids on a ball team that I manage, students who I tutor after school, whoever it may be that we can influence?" Even if it's just influencing other parents for what they're going to do with their children, help bring us back to you. You are the center of everything, and so enable us to recognize that You're in charge.

We live because You put us here. You've given us particular opportunities and responsibilities. Help us to understand those better. Help us to go back to Your Word to find truth. That's the only place we're going to get what we need to understand and interpret our daily lives, and to move forward in ways that honor and glorify You. That's our job, Lord. That's our privilege, is to know You as our Lord and Savior and to do what we can to serve You in ways that will change the world for Your glory, that will advance Your kingdom. We pray that you'll use each one of us to do that, but we know we have to make the step. We have to take the action. Give us the desire to be the kind of person that You can use to transform this culture one life at a time. And we thank You for all this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Gary Bauer: Amen.

Roger Marsh: Well, what a heartfelt prayer from our guest today here on Family Talk, Dr. George Barna. Remember, if you'd like to share this two-part conversation with a friend or a loved one, please visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And while you're online with us, you can also get more information about Dr. George Barna, the Arizona Christian University Cultural Research Center, and his new book, *Raising Spiritual Champions*. As we've been hearing over the past couple of programs here on Family Talk, parents need to lean into the spiritual upbringing of their children. I want to emphasize the significant role that a father has in raising his son as well. What a beautiful design that God made that fathers lead their sons into manhood.

And we have a new resource right now to help fathers along this great journey. It's courtesy of Mark Hancock, the CEO of Trail Life USA. It's a powerful new devotional entitled *Trail Ready: 101 Devotions for Dads with Boys*. Now, we

have a copy waiting just for you. To receive yours, all you have to do is visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk and click the link at the bottom of today's broadcast page. We'll be happy to send you a copy as our way of thanking you for a donation of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. You can make that request online, or you can call us at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825.

Now, before we leave the air for today, I am excited to announce the introduction of the brand new Dobson Culture Center. The DCC, as we call it, is designed to help families and individuals live life with a biblical worldview. Joining me now is the senior director of the Dobson Culture Center, Dr. Owen Strachan. Owen, 50 years ago, the biggest problem that parents with school-age children were facing were cutting in line, talking in class, and chewing gum when they weren't supposed to. What are some of the issues that you're going to be focusing on at the Dobson Culture Center today?

Dr. Owen Strachan: Yeah, the stakes have gone up ever so slightly from chewing gum in class. That is very true, Roger. Fundamentally, today, you think about how kids are really targeted. Kids are in the crosshairs of what is sometimes called the culture war. And we think, just as one example there with regard to transgenderism and how lots of kids nowadays, if they're on media, if they have a phone, if they're on screens, they're facing content, that in a lot of cases they're not even searching for, that is teaching them that, "A boy can become a girl and a girl can become a boy, and it's a really good thing to blur your sex and it's open-minded to embrace all of that. And if your parents or your church are teaching you anything other than that, well then you're in a repressed state and you're really a victim of a bad home."

And what we need to be very clear about is that there's wisdom not in following the world, not in logging onto some YouTube channel or something like that that is teaching lies, but what we need is the goodness of the biblical worldview, and that's where kids are going to thrive and flourish.

Roger Marsh: Well, thank you, Dr. Owen Strachan, and we are going to be looking forward to seeing great things coming from the Dobson Culture Center very, very soon. I'm Roger Marsh thanking you for listening today and making Family Talk a part of your day. Thanks for your prayers and faithful financial support of our ministry as well. And be sure to join us again tomorrow for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.