



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Raising Spiritual Champions – Part 1

Guest(s): Dr. George Barna

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. I'm sure you've heard the expression, "Children are our future." Well, when was the last time though that you really thought about that? Whether you have kids of your own or not, you know they can be so precious one moment and really trying your patience the next driving you down to your proverbial last nerve. So how do we find comfort in knowing that today's kids and teens will work to create positive change and carry the church forward? Well, that is by building up their spiritual health and establishing a biblical worldview.

During the next half hour, Gary Bauer is going to be joined in conversation by Dr. George Barna, researcher with Arizona Christian University and author of the brand new book called Raising Spiritual Champions. But before we get started with today's program, I'm excited to announce the addition of the brand new Dobson Culture Center that's going to help fight some of those battles. The DCC is designed to help families and individuals engage culture with a biblical worldview. And the man taking the helm as senior director of the Dobson Culture Center is Dr. Owen Strachan. Dr Strachan, welcome to the broadcast. Welcome to the ministry and welcome to the war.

Dr. Owen Strachan: Yeah, there but for the grace of God, go I, in terms of the wreckage of teenage parenting, I'm so thankful for God's grace at this stage in the journey and for all of them. But in all seriousness, we've got to know that though our teens are facing fearsome odds in terms of the culture and what it's trying to indoctrinate them in, we have the antidote. We have exactly what they need. And if we will raise our kids in homes that are saturated with grace and truth in a John 1:17 way, we can know that our good God will work out his purposes for their good and his glory.

Roger Marsh: Well, amen, Owen Strachan. Thank you for helping me introduce the Dobson Culture Center to our listeners today. Be sure to look for more from Dr. Owen Strachan in the near future, not only on this podcast, but on podcast as well. Okay, now let's get to today's episode. Gary Bauer is with us and he's joined

today by an author who has just released a new book on this very topic of raising spiritual champions. Let's join Gary now as he introduces today's guest.

Gary Bauer:

Hello everyone. I'm Gary Bauer, the senior vice president of public policy here at the James Dobson Family Institute. I also host the Defending Faith, Family and Freedom podcast here at JDFI. I'm blessed to serve alongside my good friend, Dr. James Dobson and the whole JDFI team. Now, if you folks know Dr. Dobson and I know you do and his lovely wife Shirley, you know they've spent virtually entire lives helping people have strong marriages and helping them raise great children. And if you want to raise a great child, look, all of us want that child to be financially successful and be able to have a strong family of their own. But as Dr. Dobson has taught for many, many years, the most important thing is that your children have rich spiritual lives. And I don't know if everybody knows this, it's sort of instinctive I guess, but most children have developed their worldview before they even reach high school.

So if we don't reach our sons and daughters with the word of God and encourage their spiritual development at a young age, it's much harder to reach them when they're older. Our guest today on the program is George Barna. He has just released a timely new book on this really important subject. It's entitled, *Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind, and Soul*. George is a professor and a director of research and co-founder of the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University. He's also the senior research fellow for the Center for Biblical Worldview at the Family Research Council. He's written over 50 books and is a *New York Times* best-selling author. George has earned two master's degrees from Rutgers University and a doctorate from Dallas Baptist University. George and his wife Nancy, have three grown daughters and three grandchildren. Welcome to the program George. Dr. Dobson and Shirley send you their best regards.

Dr. George Barna:

Well please give them my best and thank you, Gary. It's great to be with you. Great to see you again.

Gary Bauer:

Yeah, same here. As I was saying, George, this topic is so important. If our listeners go to drjamesdobson.org and look at the resources there, almost everything they find on our page is related to building strong marriages, raising great children, how you provide spiritual guidance to those children. We deal with a lot of public policy issues and sometimes that bores people, but almost all the public policy issues we deal with at the end of the day get back to kids and our children and whether we're preparing them for a world and a time that increasingly is hostile to the Judeo-Christian worldview. George, when I was looking at the book and I was reading at the very beginning how you got into this topic, and I thought it was interesting because you sort of suggest that you think, God laid this topic on your heart a few years back that led you now to be, I think writing a couple of books on this overall subject. But could you share that with us about how you sort of serendipity went down this particular road?

Dr. George Barna:

Yeah, one day I looked in the mirror and I realized, oh, my gosh, this guy's getting old, whoever he is. And then I realized it was me. So it came to my attention, I probably don't have that much time left. But I know when the plug is pulled, I'm going to stand before God and have to give account for my life and I want Him to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And so I thought, well, then I've got to finish well, I got to finish strong. What would that mean? What would that look like? So I took the most recent roughly 200 national research studies I've done in the last few years and started making a list of what did I learn from all these, put it all together, narrowed it down, everything kept coming back to one issue which was worldview, which in a way makes sense because every decision that every person makes flows through their worldview.

And so I thought, okay, I'm going to devote the last years of my life to really focusing on worldview. I'd started looking at worldview more than 30 years ago, worked with Chuck Colson for a while, looking at that. He put out his book, *How Now Shall We Live?* And since then, I've been measuring it. But at Arizona Christian University, we consistently measure that every year in America. But then when I start thinking about, okay, let's say that I've only got time to write one more book. Maybe I'll have more than that, but I don't know, that's up to the Lord. But if I can only write one more book, what's the next most important thing that I can write about?

And that's how we can raise children to be disciples of Jesus Christ. And in order to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, you have to be able to think like Jesus, which comes back to your worldview. Why do you want to think like Jesus? Because we do what we believe. And so you want to think like Jesus so that you can act and live like Jesus. Because you do what you believe. And so that's how this book came about. We did seven original research projects to put all the information together in one place that's current and that hopefully is practical for parents to help them think through what they can do to help their child develop a biblical worldview so that they can become a disciple.

Gary Bauer:

George, a sentence in the preface just grabbed me by the throat and I want to read it. You're referring to this need to care about and do something about the worldview that our children are raised with. And you say this, "Our national refusal or failure to do so will almost certainly bring the Christian Church in the United States to collapse, if not near extinction, with all the related cultural ramifications of such a calamity." Now I know nobody's going to misunderstand you. The cause of Christ won't be lost. Christ wins. We all know how the ultimate book ends. But I'm sure most of our listeners love America and we have high expectations of the Church of Christ in America. And George, I spent almost my entire life working the halls of government and I was undersecretary of education for a number of years and one of the things that I've worried about is our country is founded on a central idea in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence that says, "All men are created equal and endowed by their government." No endowed by their creator.

That's the God of the Bible with certain inalienable rights among these life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. So I've been wondering and worried for years, if we end up with a country where a majority of people don't believe in the God of the Bible, how can America survive? Because the whole American experiment is based on the belief that that God is what makes us free men and women. So if you're listening today, folks, maybe you don't have children, maybe you don't have grandchildren. If you're an American that loves America in addition to everything else, you should understand how important it is for America's children to have this godly Christ-centered worldview.

Dr. George Barna: One of the things that is so important to me about what you've just said, Gary, is us recognizing that right now we live in that kind of period of time, perhaps for the first time in America's history where a majority of Americans tell us that they don't believe in the God described in the scriptures. Right now, only about 48% of Americans would say that they believe in a God who's all knowing, all powerful, who loves people, who's holy and righteous and just and who wants to be part of our lives today. So we're at that minority already. We're at a minority of people who read the Bible regularly. We're at a minority of people who believe that the Bible represents God's truth and that it's accurate and reliable and relevant to our lives today. We're literally in a period of history where perhaps for the first time, the culture is influencing the church.

Christians in our country more than Christians are influencing the culture. But the thing that always gives me hope, people say, I'm the prophet of doom. I'm pessimistic. I just say, "No, I'm realistic." I'm a fact guy. I'm trying to tell you what the facts are. You don't have to like them, you just have to deal with them. Well, one of the facts is that God never waits till he has a majority to turn a culture around. When He chooses to do it scripturally, we see many situations from Gideon on where He uses a small number of people, a remnant of true believers to turn around a larger group of people. And so I still have hope that the Lord is going to use a remnant in America to turn it around. But one of the realities when you read all those scriptural passages where God used a small number of people is that that small number was ready to fight for God.

They understood that they were in a war. They knew that they were His soldiers called to represent His cause, His ways, His truths. And my fear about the remnant in America today is that yeah, we're probably aware of the fact that there's a war going on. We're aware of the fact that we're outnumbered, we're aware of how powerful God is. But we may not be aware of the fact that we are the ones who God is counting on to raise up spiritual champions, to influence our neighbors, to change everything that's going on in government and everywhere else. In America today, I suggest that we've only got about 3% of our population who would be described as disciples based upon the six ways that Jesus defined disciples in the New Testament. And that 3% can totally change America. We can be part of that radical transformation bringing people back to Christ, but only if we recognize that that's our job, that's our duty, that's our obligation. It's on our shoulders and we got to move forward.

Gary Bauer:

We've all have talked to each other about, and in our churches, pastors have preached about the need for us all to pray for our children, and absolutely we have to do that. When I compare... And I grew up in a pretty tough blue collar town in the Midwest, and even with the problems and the temptations that were around me, they're nothing compared to what's pulling at our kids now in so many different ways. So of course, we need to pray for our children. But as you indicate George, we also have to act. I mean, the Bible is filled with stories of the heroes and heroines of our faith that prayed but also acted. David didn't see Goliath and say, "Oh, God, take Goliath down." He prayed for God's help so that he, David could confront Goliath and end up winning the battle. So for parents, we really can't surrender on this, can we? And we certainly can't turn it over to anybody else. I mean, it's going to be the church and parents that either do this or not.

Dr. George Barna:

Great point, Gary. And one of the things that I talk about in the book is that we've kind of slid into this approach to parenting that I call outsourcing. Which is where most parents are very busy and yet they love their kids dearly. And so they want to do right by their kids. The approach that most American parents are taking is to say, "Therefore, I'm going to hire all the best experts I can to help me raise my children. So I'm going to hire coaches and tutors and pastors and this whole other bunch of individuals who will come alongside and help them with their academics, with their athletics, with their spirituality, with their hobbies, all the different things their kids are involved in."

But the problem is every one of those outsiders is bringing in different worldview ideas for those children to be exposed to, either through conversation or observation. And worldview messages are being sent to our kids all the time through all of those things. We've got to be the filter that says, no, no, no, I'm going to manage every message that's coming into my kids' life as best I can. And to help them understand the ones that I can't block out, I'm going to interpret for them what they just heard, what that means and what we believe about that based on the scriptures.

Gary Bauer:

George, it's ironic because I think that early in American history, I suspect through the history of Christendom, we've instinctively understood that raising a child in the way you want them to go is essential to the job of being a parent. And we're probably dating ourselves here, but I still remember when there was prayer in school. Now, nobody thought that non-denominational prayer actually made somebody a believer in Christ. But what it did do was send a message to the kids in the class. They did that, and then they pledged allegiance to the flag. That didn't make you a patriot either, right?

But in both cases, it showed that adults thought those things were important. They thought love of country was important, and that adults thought that you as a child should want to seek and find with all your heart and soul God and have a personal relationship. So in that sense, the whole culture was on the same side. Today, as we've seen vividly in raucous school board meetings, there's a battle going on for the hearts and minds of our children. We wouldn't

turn our car over to a stranger. Why would we let strange bureaucrats in some school or somebody on social media, why would we allow them to turn our precious children into their worldview rather than the biblically based one that God wants us to teach them?

Dr. George Barna: It's a great question. And I think for me, when I think about that concept, it comes back to priorities. What are the priorities of the parent? Do they realize that the single most important thing they're going to do in their life is raise their children and that God has called them to raise them to be disciples of Jesus Christ? And so part of the way that my life is going to be evaluated by God is what I did with my three girls and what I'm investing in my three grandchildren. That's much more important than how many books I've written, how many speeches I've given. He's not going to care as much about that as he is about, but I put these people right in your home for 18 years, what did you do with them? And so that's critical. And there's of course, if you couldn't take care of what was going on in your own home, why would I turn you loose outside of your home?

And so parents have to recognize that's their primary responsibility. So that may mean that maybe you're going to have to look at your career a little bit differently. Maybe you're going to have to look at your finances a little bit differently. Maybe you're going to have to look at the media diet within your home a little bit differently. Maybe you're going to have to look at what friends and how many friends and which ones you spend time with is going to change accordingly. So all of that comes into play. The problem that we've got in America today, I think largely is that we become so selfish.

We don't really believe it's all about God. We believe our lives are about us. And so we're trying to make ourselves happy rather than recognizing that, wait a minute, I can experience the joy of the Lord, which is a much deeper, more profound experience than mere happiness, which is fleeting, changes according to circumstances. Joy is a lasting thing that the Lord will give me if I'm in deep relationship with him and if I'm committing my life to really serving him, particularly through how I'm raising my family.

Gary Bauer: George, it's interesting because Communist China, I mean China is run by the Communist party of China, and they understand this issue perhaps better than some in the church here in America understand it. The Chinese communists do everything they can to prevent Chinese children, even the ones born to parents who are Christian to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. I think in many areas of China, you're not even allowed to bring a child into a church because the Communist Party argues the child's mind shouldn't be turned at that tender age when they're so easily influenced to believe myths as the communist China would see it. And at the same time, they're keeping Christians from doing what you're arguing we need to do here in America. The Chinese communists are also taking those same children and at an earlier and earlier age teaching them the evil philosophy of godless communism. So our enemies around the world and

totalitarians have always understood the mind and hearts of children are how you control a society.

Dr. George Barna: One of the things that I note in the book is when I was doing some of the research for it, I found that there were a number of totalitarian leaders over the course of history, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, [inaudible 00:21:47], a few others who said, give me a child until they're seven or a couple of them said until they're nine and I'll have them for the rest of their life. They understood the importance of children, and yet we don't seem to have that same understanding of what's going on. And then you put that in the context of a communist China or Russia or other nations that have that kind of elite rule, and they basically have a Marxist worldview as their underpinning, which says that yes, we don't want people believing in God. We want them following what the state says, what the government says. And so they're doing their best to do away with God.

They'll do what... They don't believe in marriage. They don't want marriage to exist because what that gives authority to somebody other than the government. And so all of these things are being given to our culture in little bite-sized pieces, small doses, a little bit at a time. And our young adults are being exposed to that in elementary school, secondary school, college, and university years, certainly graduate school, and that's what they know. Who is going to fight back against that ideology? That's part of the role of the parent. That's why we need to know what's going on in their classrooms. We need to know what's being told to them in their churches, in their playground settings, on their baseball teams, little league teams. All of these are places where worldview is being communicated in little bits and pieces. And it's the parent who has to stand up and be the final filter for what gets through to their child without any kind of pushback.

Gary Bauer: George, this material, this is just incredible. This is a conversation America desperately needs to hear. And it's something that parents need to really come to grips with right now. There's so much more I want to talk to you about. Can I impose on you to maybe come back and do another show with us tomorrow on Family Talk?

Dr. George Barna: There's no imposition. I'd be honored to do that. Thank you. Yes.

Gary Bauer: That would be fantastic.

Roger Marsh: Well, we definitely heard some things today that parents and caregivers alike should really consider when it comes to who is influencing your children. There is so much more to get into on this topic, so be sure to join us again tomorrow when you'll hear part two of Gary Bauer's conversation with Dr. George Barna, here on Family Talk.

By the way, if you'd like to learn more about Dr. Barna or his book *Raising Spiritual Champions*, visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

One of the most important people in a child's life is their dad. And it's important to note that a father holds a lot of power in the lives of his children for good or for not so good. If you're a father and you'd like some encouragement for your fatherhood journey, be sure to sign up for a brand new free resource we have here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. It's the five-day email series called "Dads, It's Time to Step Up." Give us a week to help you on your journey of fatherhood. Our prayer is that you'll be more inspired in a world designed to beat down on dads so that you can be a better role model for your children and lead them closer to God.

Now to sign up, it's absolutely free. Just click the link on the bottom of today's broadcast page when you go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. This is a great resource to help you invest in the lives of your sons and your daughters. Again, go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk, and click the link at the bottom of the broadcast page for the free five-day email series called "Dads, It's Time to Step Up."

Well, I'm Roger Marsh and you've been listening to Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

Announcer:

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