

The report begins on the following page

STATE OF THE CHURCH AND FAMILY

2010 ANNUAL REPORT

The State of the Church and Family
2010 Annual Report

© 2010 Orange

a division of the reThink Group

www.whatisorange.org

All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced,
copied or transmitted without written permission from The reThink Group.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from Dave Kinnaman, Barna Group	4
Letter from Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof, Orange.	5

Section I The State of Orange

How Families Intersect the Church

1.1 Parent and Church Involvement	8
1.2 Children as Catalysts for Spiritual Growth.	9
1.3 Church Preferences	10
1.4 Perceptions, Expectations of Church	11
1.5 The State of Orange – Demographic & Theolographic™ Insights	14
The State of Orange – Orange Analysis and Application.	16

Section II The Parenting Environment

How Parents See Their Role and the Influences on Their Parenting

2.1 Peers & Mentors for Parents	21
2.2 Adult Mentors for Children.	22
2.3 Developing Plans for Children	24
2.4 Finding Guidance.	26
2.5 The Parenting Environment – Demographic & Theolographic™ Insights.	28
The Parenting Environment – Orange Analysis and Application	31

Appendix

1. The State of Orange – Research Data	40
2. The Parenting Environment – Research Data	41
3. About the Research.	45
4. Research Definitions	45

A note from: David Kinnaman | Barna Group

The report you are about to read is a research-based examination of U.S. parents, and how these families interact with local churches and faith communities. The basis of the report is a scientific, nationwide study of parents, conducted by the Barna Group and commissioned by Orange. Interviews were conducted with individuals who currently have young children under the age of 18 living at home (no empty-nest parents were included).

There are several perspectives that might be helpful as you review the research findings, analysis and insights in this report:

First, although the study is sufficiently accurate for media or other observers of American religion, this report was designed primarily for church leaders. It provides a tool with which to understand the broader national context and for leaders to clarify their assumptions about and goals for ministry to parents.

Second, throughout the report we examine parents of all faiths and all churchgoing levels. We also breakdown the data and compare churched parents versus unchurched parents. (Churched parents are defined for this research as those who reported attending a church in the week preceding the survey; unchurched adults are those who have not been to a worship service in at least six months.) A definition of terms and a description of the research are included at the end of the report.

Third, the research uncovers a mix of both encouraging and challenging realities for faith leaders. Find ways to evaluate what you are doing well and not so well in the face of some hard data. And remember that small percentages of parents can represent millions of homes nationwide and perhaps thousands of families in your community.

Finally, let me describe our work with Orange. Given their consistent interaction with local church leaders, representatives of Orange helped to identify what indicators should be measured—and Orange commissioned (i.e., paid for) most of the costs of the large-scale research. From there, the Barna team developed the survey questions, conducted the interviews, tabulated and analyzed the final results. At various places throughout the report, you will read the Orange Analysis and Application, which gives you the Orange perspective on the findings. Technically, these sections do not speak for the Barna Group, and neither does our analysis voice the views of Orange. I only mention this to assure readers that we have each done what we do best: Orange encouraged us to conduct, design and report the research independently.

In the end, research should facilitate better decisions. Keep in mind that if you serve families in some capacity through a local church, you are not responsible for all the problems facing families in our nation. But you are accountable for the health, vitality and depth of your own work with families. We hope this project helps you in this important calling.

David Kinnaman
President | Barna Group
Ventura, California
www.barna.org

A note from: Reggie Joiner & Carey Nieuwhof | Orange

After both major sections of this report, you'll see a section entitled Orange Analysis and Application. This section of the report is written to help Orange Thinkers assimilate the findings and relate them to the Orange strategy. We hope it will be helpful in assisting you to determine what to do as a result of these findings.

Like us, you'll discover findings in the report that surprise you and that both affirm and challenge what you're doing. We think that's healthy. The best insights consistently challenge the status quo—even the status quo we as leaders have created. We hope to explore aspects of the report later this year. Also, every year we intend to do more polling. With this in mind, consider "The State of the Church and Family 2010 Annual Report" as the opening of a longer and ongoing conversation.

Ultimately, our shared goal is to be as effective as we can be in combining the efforts of church leaders and parents around a synchronized strategy to build faith and character in our sons and daughters.

To that end, we know the learning will be mutual. We'd love to hear from you as you glean new insights from the data. Contact us with your findings and questions and make sure to interact with us on www.orangeparents.com and www.orangeleaders.com.

Please know that this analysis assumes at least some basic understanding of Orange. That's easy enough to acquire as you attend the Orange Conference or thumb through *Think Orange* or *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity*—two books about the Orange philosophy.

We also know each one of you who reads this report will try to do something unique: you will try to implement the strategy in your community. As you'll see in the pages that follow, there are measurable differences in the findings depending on what part of the United States you live in and whom you are trying to reach. Church leaders working in an inner city in the Northeast face a different landscape than church leaders working in an affluent suburb in the South. What's exciting to us is that each of you will be trying to help real families in vastly different settings. Please share with us what you're learning so you can help other churches in similar situations.

Finally, as you pore through the report, you'll realize that there is a lot of data here—more than we can do justice to in even a fairly lengthy analysis. Stay tuned. We'll be offering some more material around this study online at www.orangeleaders.com and via podcast in future months.

In the meantime, we hope you find these insights and the analysis that follows helpful.

Reggie Joiner
Founder | Orange
Atlanta, Georgia
www.orangeleaders.com

Carey Nieuwhof
Co-Author | Parenting Beyond Your Capacity
Barrie, Ontario
www.orangeleaders.com

The State of Orange

How Families Intersect the Church

1.1 PARENTS AND CHURCH INVOLVEMENT

Indicator 1

Church attendance is higher among parents (48%) than among non-parents (40%).

Indicator 2

More than two out of five unchurched parents (45%) had attended a church service with their children in the past two years.

Overview

One of the defining characteristics of Americans is their spiritual expression; much of that activity is driven by the priorities of parents. Nearly half of all U.S. parents (48%) are active churchgoers, reporting attendance at a church in the last week. This proportion is slightly higher than the percentage of non-parent adults (40%). Three-quarters of all parents (75%) said they had attended a worship service with their children at least once in the last two years. While there is debate about how accurately people report church attendance, at the very least it suggests that millions of people perceive themselves to be involved in a church. It could also reflect a heightened desire to be perceived as a churchgoer since that is something other people might expect to be socially desirable for the sake of their children.

Rather than being purely “in” or “out,” some parents are loosely connected with a faith community. One-quarter of parents are marginally churched (25%), meaning they have attended in the last six months but do not attend regularly. Only about three out of 10 parents (28%) are unchurched (defined as not attending in the last six months). Even among those parents who are unchurched, nearly half (45%) had been to a church worship service—not including weddings or funerals—in the last two years.

What it Means

Millions of parents’ connection to a church is in a state of flux. Church involvement is not a binary, on-or-off proposition for most Americans. It is a continuum of involvement, with most parents having some marginal connection with a church.

Survey Question - Indicator 1 & 2

In the last two years, did you attend any churches or houses of worship with your children, not including for special events like weddings or funerals?

INDICATOR 1 FAMILIES AND CHURCH ENGAGEMENT

	active churchgoer	marginally churched	unchurched
all adults	44%	27%	28%
parents	48%	25%	28%
not parent*	40%	31%	29%

* those who do not have children under the age of 18 living at home

INDICATOR 2 INVOLVEMENT IN CHURCH OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS

	yes
all parents	75%
churched	95%
unchurched	45%

1.2 CHILDREN AS CATALYSTS FOR SPIRITUALITY

Indicator 3

Many parents say that having children helped them to reconnect to a church (17%).

Overview

A common assumption is that when people have children they become more focused on their faith and connection to a church. The survey supports this idea in some ways and does not in others. Children do, in fact, act as a catalyst for millions of parents; yet, this is not the most common or normative experience for parents. Half of parents (50%) reported that having children did not affect their connection to a church. Unchurched parents were less likely to report being affected by the presence of children (60%), but even many churched parents (41%) said that children did not change their level of church engagement.

Among those who reportedly experienced change after becoming a parent, about one-sixth of parents (17%) said that having a child helped them reconnect with a church after a long period of not attending. Another one-fifth of parents (20%) said they were already active but had become more involved.

Parenthood rarely sparks brand-new experiences of faith for people: only one out of every 20 parents (5%) said that having children helped them become active in a church for the first time.

INDICATOR 3 - CHILDREN AS SPIRITUAL CATALYSTS

	helped you become active in a church basically for the first time	helped you reconnect to church after a long period of not attending	helped you become more active than you already were	caused you to become less involved in church	little or no influence on your connection to a church
all parents	5%	17%	20%	4%	50%
churched	5%	20%	30%	1%	41%
unchurched	5%	14%	8%	8%	60%

What it Means

Most human beings seek equilibrium in their lives. While parenthood can reset people's priorities in life, having children is not an automatic faith-starter for most adults. Of course, this equilibrium might also reflect the possible perception that going to church is important for the sake of their children, but is of lesser value to them personally.

Survey Question - Indicator 3

Some people say that having children helped them become more active and connected to a church or faith community. For you, personally, did having children:

1. help you become active in a church basically for the first time
2. help you reconnect to church after a long period of not attending
3. help you become more active than you already were
4. or cause you to become less involved in church
5. or did having children make little or no influence difference for your connection to a church

Total may not equal 100% due to "other" and "not sure" responses.

1.3 CHURCH PREFERENCES

Indicator 4

About one-fourth of parents (28%) strongly prefer “small, intimate” church settings.

Indicator 5

About one-fifth of parents (22%) strongly prefer “large churches with lots of options” for families.

Overview

Parents were asked to rate the appeal of two different types of church settings—“small and intimate” versus “large with lots of options for parents and children.” Neither format generated a ringing endorsement, with only 28% of parents expressing strong interest in a small church and 22% strongly preferring a large church.

Large churches were often met with skepticism. One-third of parents said they were not interested in these types of congregations, compared with one-quarter who were not interested in small churches.

Unchurched parents were an interesting mix of preferences. There are many different types of unchurched parents—from those who have strong preferences either for or against these types of churches to those who really do not know what they want. Neither small (15%) nor large (11%) congregations were strongly preferred, though the largest segment of unchurched adults said they would be “somewhat” interested in these formats.

What it Means

For most parents, the size of the church does not appear to be an important consideration in what type of church they attend. There are some who have a negative reaction against large churches, while fewer seem to have the same degree of disinterest in small churches. Still, the overall finding is that parents are not sure what they want out of a church until they find something that works for them.

Survey Question Indicator 4 & 5

Just thinking about your role as a parent, what should the ideal church be like? Would a church that is [small and intimate] be very, somewhat, not too, or not at all appealing? Would a church that is [large with lots of options for parents and children] be very, somewhat, not too, or not at all appealing?

INDICATOR 4 - CHURCH PREFERENCE: SMALL AND INTIMATE

	very	somewhat	not too	not at all	not sure
all parents	28%	42%	8%	15%	7%
churched	38%	40%	8%	7%	7%
unchurched	15%	40%	9%	28%	9%

INDICATOR 5 - CHURCH PREFERENCE: LARGE WITH LOTS OF OPTIONS FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

	very	somewhat	not too	not at all	not sure
all parents	22%	41%	12%	21%	4%
churched	31%	40%	13%	11%	5%
unchurched	11%	40%	11%	33%	4%

1.4 PERCEPTIONS, EXPECTATIONS OF CHURCH

Indicator 6

Parents are not always clear how churches can help them as parents; the most common responses included advice and guidance (21%) and moral and emotional support (12%); few parents said that a church could help them receive biblical teaching or scripture knowledge (5%).

Indicator 7

Slightly less than half of parents (45%) who have had recent church experience said the leaders of the church have made the church's expectations of parents "very" clear.

Indicator 8

Most parents do not perceive churches to be "discouraging" because they have to face high standards and tough goals as parents; still, one out of seven parents (14%) said this is a barrier.

Indicator 9

About one-quarter of parents (28%) said they believe a church would be a good resource during times of family crisis.

Overview

Many parents are not able to articulate how they expect churches to help them parent. When asked to identify how a church or faith community could help them in their parenting, two-fifths of parents were not sure (10%) or said they needed nothing from churches (29%). The specific requests from parents were advice or guidance (21%), moral or emotional support (12%), teaching about the Bible or scripture (5%) and counseling (4%).

For their part, many churches seem to be remiss in effectively communicating to parents what they expect of parents. Among those who had experience with a church in the last two years as a family, less than half (45%) said the church was "very clear" about what they expected of parents. Among the unchurched parents with recent experience at a church, only one-quarter (27%) said the expectations of the church's leaders were made clear to them.

Perhaps because there is often a lack of clear expectations, most parents do not seem to feel overwhelmed by facing high standards and tough goals from the church. Nevertheless, one out of seven parents (14%) said they feel such pressure from their involvement in churches and have been discouraged by these standards and goals.

Finally, the research explored whether parents would be likely to turn to a church during a family crisis. Parents have mixed feelings about this alternative. One-quarter of parents (28%) said they would be "definitely" likely to do so; another 31% indicated moderate interest. The gap between churched and unchurched parents' interest in definitely using a church as a resource during a family crisis was significant—46% versus 8%.

What it Means

When no one is clear about expectations—neither parents nor church leaders—it is difficult for anyone to experience healthy outcomes—families or congregations. One of the implications of this research is that people do not generally look at "the church" itself as the answer to their parenting problems or family crises. In other words, the church feels like a generic solution when most people are facing specific problems. Connecting to people's needs has to be done through relationships, accessibility, and relevant solutions and content for families.

1.4 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

1.4 PERCEPTIONS, EXPECTATIONS OF CHURCH (continued)

Survey Question - Indicator 6:

What do you expect a church or faith community to provide to help you in parenting, if anything?

(ASKED AS AN OPEN-ENDED QUESTION. RESPONSE OPTIONS NOT GIVEN TO RESPONDENTS.)

INDICATOR 6 - WHAT DO PARENTS WANT CHURCHES TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR FAMILY?

	nothing/ wouldn't seek help from church	advice/ guidance general	support/ moral and emo- tional	biblical teaching/ knowl- edge	counsel- ing	moral guid- ance/ values	spiri- tual guid- ance/ support	help in parent- ing/ how to raise kids	not sure	other
all par- ents	29%	21%	12%	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%	10%	5%
churched	12%	16%	16%	7%	8%	3%	6%	2%	8%	6%
un- churched	54%	6%	5%	3%	1%	5%	2%	2%	11%	3%

Survey Question - Indicator 7:

Based on your recent experiences at church, have the leaders of the church made it clear what they expect of you as a parent or not? IF YES, ASK: How clear is it to you what the church expects of you: very, somewhat, not too, or not at all clear?

INDICATOR 7 - ARE CHURCH LEADERS' EXPECTATIONS CLEAR TO PARENTS?

	very	somewhat	not too	not at all	not sure
all parents	45%	18%	3%	33%	1%
churched	50%	17%	3%	29%	1%
unchurched	27%	22%	5%	46%	*

*BASE- churched in the last two years

Survey Question - Indicator 8:

As a parent, do you agree or disagree that being a part of a church discourages you because you face high standards and tough goals for parents? FOLLOW-UP: Do you agree or disagree strongly or somewhat?

INDICATOR 8 - DOES CHURCH DISCOURAGE PARENTS?

	agree strongly	agree (strongly + somewhat)	disagree strongly	disagree (strongly + somewhat)	not sure
all parents	5%	14%	49%	80%	6%
churched	5%	13%	59%	86%	2%
unchurched	5%	17%	41%	72%	12%

1.4 PERCEPTIONS, EXPECTATIONS OF CHURCH (continued)

Survey Question - Indicator 9:

Overall, how likely are you to turn to a church for help when facing a family crisis? Are you: definitely likely to, probably, probably not, or definitely not likely to?

INDICATOR 9 - ARE PARENTS LIKELY TO TURN TO CHURCH DURING A FAMILY CRISIS?

	definitely	probably	probably not	definitely not	not sure
all parents	28%	31%	26%	14%	1%
churched	46%	34%	14%	4%	1%
unchurched	5%	19%	45%	26%	2%

1.5 THE STATE OF ORANGE – DEMOGRAPHIC & THEOLOGRAPHIC™ INSIGHTS

Here are 12 research discoveries from Section 1 when it came to demographic and theolographic™ patterns:

1. Moms were more likely than dads to say church leaders have made their expectations clear and to believe that a church would be a good place to turn in a family crisis.
2. Older parents (those over the age of 45 years) were more likely to be discouraged by church standards and by the lack of clear communication from church leaders.
3. Parents with children ages five and under were the most likely to report that parenthood was a spiritual catalyst for them, raising the possibility that older parents' recollection of this transformative moment wanes. Parents of young children were also more likely than average to prefer large churches with lots of options.
4. Downscale adults were among the least likely to have brought their family to church in the last few years (44% compared with 85% of upscale adults). The downscale segment was also most likely to voice concern about unclear expectations. They were also more likely than average to want to attend a large church.
5. Unmarried parents were also less likely than married parents to have taken their children to church in the last two years (61% versus 80%). Otherwise unmarried parents' preferences and views about churches were similar to that of two-parent families, although married parents were more likely to see the church as a resource during crises. It is worth noting specifically that divorced parents were particularly skeptical of large churches.
6. Residents of the Northeast were less likely to have attended church as a family—although a majority of this region still has done so. They were also less likely to describe parenthood as spiritually focusing for them, as were parents in the West.

-
7. Black families were among the most likely to report attending church in the last two years (82%), while whites (77%) were slightly less likely to do so and Hispanics were among the least likely to do so (68%). Hispanic parents strongly preferred large churches but also admitted more than average that they feel discouraged by the high standards pressed for by church leaders.
 8. One of the strongest correlations was the below-average ratios of politically “liberal” families. They were among the least likely to have attended church in the last two years, to describe children as a jumpstart to their church involvement, to prefer large or small congregations, to feel expectations are clear from church leaders, or to want to turn to a church to solve a family problem. (Note: these parents self-described their sociopolitical views as “liberal:” it is not the same thing as party affiliation.)
 9. Evangelical parents were quite distinct from the norms on most of the indicators, being nearly universally churching in the last two years (99%) and preferring either small or large churches more than the average (although they pick small, 43%, more often than large, 34%). They are generally comfortable with the church’s expectations and feel that they are likely to turn to a church in a crisis. The only area in which they were lower than average was being spiritually sparked by having children; presumably most evangelicals were already quite engaged before having children.
 10. Catholic parents were surprisingly likely to say that having children helped to propel them to greater connection with the church (55% versus an average of just 43%).
 11. Non-mainline Protestant parents were slightly more likely to prefer small and intimate churches over large and option-filled congregations (35% versus 23%).
 12. Not surprisingly, the size of a church that parents attend correlates with their stated preference for church. For instance, 44% of small-church attenders prefer small churches and 36% of large church attenders would strongly prefer a big congregation. Still, people are not exclusive about their tastes, with 23% of small church attenders saying they would also strongly endorse a large church. Conversely, 20% of large church attenders would be very comfortable in a small church.

The State of Orange

Orange Analysis and Application

Key Insight

1. There is a greater awareness and connectedness to church than we expect, but less engagement.

In Orange circles, we talk about parents who are aware, connected, engaged and invested. This study helps us better quantify what that looks like. Three quarters of the population has attended a worship service in the last year. That puts them beyond simply being 'aware' (outside the church but open to it) and into the 'connected' category (attend general church events).

The challenge is to move people from occasional attendance and marginal connectedness to engagement. You likely see this when you look at your church database. The total number of people in your database is much larger than your weekly attendance. This is true not just in older churches that measure 'membership,' but in most growing churches too. People just don't come every Sunday anymore; but even over half of the 'unchurched' families attended church at some point in the last two years.

We believe that when church leaders elevate community, they greatly increase the chances of people engaging in their ministry and strategy. Where people make a personal connection, their likelihood of returning increases. This can happen through relationships with parents, students, and children. The key is to move people from spectator to participant, and community is a tremendous catalyst in that transition.

Possible Next Steps

- Think through how you can relationally connect with occasional attenders. How well are your group leaders connecting with students and kids, and how well are parents connecting with their friends who are already attending? The more intentionally you introduce parents to a wider circle of influence, the greater their chance of engaging.
- Invite them to take a step. Invite the occasional attenders to an event that will help them understand your strategy. Invite regular attenders to engage their 3,000 hours of influence at home.

Questions for further reflection

- Why is it that so many people who have an affiliation with our church feel that marginal attendance is adequate?
- What means do we currently have in place that help parents take a next step? How effective are they?
- What clearer steps could we introduce to help parents move from being aware to connected, or from connected to engaged?

Key Insight

2. It will take a strategy to reach parents.

Clearly, the assumption that families will rush back to church the moment they have children is inaccurate. Some families do, but the vast majority don't. Even churched parents say for the most part, having children did not significantly change their level of involvement at the church.

Our guess is that church leaders often think this is truer than it is because we tend to hear from the parents who actually do return to church for the sake of their kids. Perhaps we just don't have enough meaningful contact with more marginally connected parents or unchurched parents to see what's really happening in the wider community.

So if parents don't automatically flock back to your church and engage in your ministry because they've had kids, what will it take? We're sure there's more than one answer, but our experience suggests they come back when they are inspired by a compelling vision and strategy. So as you develop one, look for creative ways to communicate it.

Parents may be unaware that you provide a wider circle of influence to help them and their children. They might not know that as they look for advice and guidance, your church is constantly helping parents and children develop strategic relationships and pursue a faith perspective that will affect how they see the world around them.

As you help them understand why they might partner with you, you might see them actually embrace your ministry. After all, your ministry has sought to embrace them intentionally and strategically. They may just not know or understand that.

Possible Next Steps

- Instead of simply making parents aware of your church or your family ministry, make them aware of how you can help them as parents; articulate your strategy in a way that is memorable and compelling. It may come as a surprise to many of them that you even have a strategy to help them win as parents.
- Review how you communicate with parents. What messages do you send them? Do you mostly tell them that you're there? Or do you tell them why you're there? Why would they care about what you're telling them? When you begin to answer that question, you're close to communicating in a relevant way
- Communicate more intentionally how you can help parents with their hours of influence with their children. People gravitate to people who can help.

Questions for further reflection

- Why do we assume parents will automatically come back to church when they have kids? What other assumptions do we make that may not be accurate?

Key Insight

3. Parents are not clear about your strategy.

This might be the huge red flag of the study. Most parents have no idea what the church is about or how it can help.

Less than half the parents who regularly attend church know what their church expects of them. And even among those who say they are clear about their church's expectations, it's not clear how accurate their understanding is. If you have a family ministry strategy, most people don't understand it. Many aren't even aware of it. And even those who say they understand it might have a vastly different understanding than other parents or church leaders do.

Clearly this is an opportunity for alignment. Many Orange leaders have spent time aligning their staff and key volunteer teams. And that's wonderful. But maybe it's time to expand that activity. What would it look like to have an entire community aligned around parenting and family ministry? What would happen if your staff team, volunteers and hundreds of parents shared a common understanding, a common vocabulary and understood what everyone was trying to accomplish as we build faith and character into our sons and daughters?

To make that happen, churches need a clear and easy communication approach to family ministry. This may take some time to get your team on the same page and condense the plan into an easy to communicate and understand format for parents. But it would be worth the investment.

Possible Next Steps

- Clarify the vision and approach to family ministry for parents in your congregation and community.
- Explain how the strategy works from birth to college. Most parents won't realize you have a comprehensive, coordinated plan for their family throughout their entire formative years. Show them that your children's ministry and student ministry actually work together to ensure a cohesive plan for their kids.
- Use announcements in your church to communicate your parenting and family ministry strategy not just information about your next event.

Questions for further reflection

- How clear are we when we communicate to parents?
- If we could only communicate three to five things to parents, what would we say?
- Of the parents who say that they understand your approach to family ministry, how many do you think actually understand it at a deep level?
- What steps can we take to ensure that parents understand why we do what we do?

Key Insight

4. Parents aren't nearly as concerned about the size of your church as you are.

The study shows that small churches are fine and large churches are fine. Parents, for the most part, will attend either. We wonder (because we're also church leaders) whether we, as church leaders, obsess too much about how many resources we have or don't have.

Student and childrens' pastors can get caught in the numbers game as easily as senior pastors. We might think parents are impressed by the numbers of kids who show up, but the size of your youth group or its event attendance doesn't determine success. Parents see the value of another adult voice and a wider circle, not just in the size of your ministry or the number of kids at your events. Community and influence matter more to parents than events and attendance numbers.

We hope this is good news for all concerned. It's tempting for small churches to think that they really can't compete because, well, they're not a large church. It's also easy for large churches to think that they are winning, because after all, they're a large church and they have a significant ministry. The reality is parents don't care much about either. They just want a church that can help.

This means all of us have more potential impact than we're realizing. There's potentially much more opportunity for both large and small churches.

Possible Next Steps

- Talk with your team about whether you suffer from a sense of inferiority because you are a small church, or whether there are barriers you've imagined because you are a large church.
- Moving forward, plan and budget as though your small size or current success wasn't an issue.

Questions for further reflection

- What other "false" barriers are there in your mind that might prevent you from seizing the opportunity all around you?

The Parenting Environment

How Parents See Their Role
and the Influence on Their Parenting

2.1 PEERS & MENTORS FOR PARENTS

Indicator 10

Only 23% of parents said they place a high priority on having a parenting mentor or advisor.

Indicator 11

Seven out of 10 parents (69%) said they have the right amount of influence from parents who are in the same stage of life; just one-sixth of parents (17%) would like more input from parenting peers.

Overview

Few parents are strongly convinced they need parenting mentors, yet neither do parents reject the priority of such advisors. Only one-quarter of parents (23%) said they place a high priority on finding other adults who can serve as mentors or advisors about parenting. Still, only about one-sixth of parents (17%) said that having parenting mentors was “not at all important of a priority.” This leaves most parents in the middle ground, saying that they are not convinced of the value of mentor parents, but not willing to write off this resource completely. The difference between active churchgoers and unchurched parents was only slight: churchgoing parents were marginally more likely to prioritize parenting mentors.

The survey explored whether parents feel they have sufficient input from other parents who are at the same stage of life. For the most part, parents said they have plenty of contributions from parenting peers. In total, seven out of 10 parents (69%) said they have the “right amount” of influence from such peers. Those who wanted “more input” (17%) were not quite twice as common as those who wanted “less” (10%). Regardless of churchgoing status, most parents feel that their access to parenting peers is the right amount. The difference is that—among those who believe their access to parenting peers is out of balance—unchurched adults are likely to want less input, while churchgoing parents are more likely to want more of these types of friendships.

INDICATOR 11 - DESIRE FOR INPUT FROM OTHER PARENTS

	want more input	right amount	want less input
all parents	17%	69%	10%
churched	19%	73%	6%
unchurched	11%	69%	13%

What it Means

Parents prefer to make their own way, like most Americans. The research shows that parents have developed their own sense of independence about their family. Perhaps one way to help parents is not by simply raising the importance of supportive relationships, but by helping them to evaluate how well their current support network is working.

Survey Question - Indicator 10

Some parents make it a point to find other older adults who can serve as mentors and advisors about parenting. Others do not feel this is important. Overall, how much of a priority is finding mentors for your parenting: Is that an extremely important priority, pretty important, only somewhat important, not too important or not at all important of a priority?

INDICATOR 10 - THE PRIORITY OF PARENTING MENTORS

	extremely	pretty	only somewhat	not too	not at all
all parents	23%	22%	25%	12%	17%
churched	25%	24%	28%	11%	11%
unchurched	18%	23%	20%	13%	24%

Survey Question - Indicator 11

When it comes to your own parenting, do you feel you need more input or less input from other parents who are at your stage of life? Or do you feel that you have about the right amount of input from other parents?

2.2. ADULT MENTORS FOR CHILDREN

Indicator 12

Most parents (63%) said they have tried to help their children develop meaningful relationships with other adults outside the home in the past year.

Indicator 13

Only one-quarter of parents (28%) strongly prioritize helping their children to develop “meaningful relationships with other adults outside of the home.”

Indicator 14

Church engagement is second on the list of activities parents do to help children find healthy adult non-family relationships; however, just 13% of parents identify this activity as something they have done in the past year to help their children have healthy inter-generational relationships.

Overview

Most parents believe it is important to create opportunities for their children to interact with other adults outside the home. More than three out of five parents (63%) said they have done something in the past year to attempt to facilitate such relationships.

However, other research indicators raise questions about the depth of commitment parents have to this outcome. First, their willingness to prioritize helping children develop meaningful relationships with other adults is actually much lower than might be suggested based on their behavior. In other words, most parents say they do it, but it is not really a front-and-center priority for many of them. Just one-quarter of parents (28%) said they place an extremely high priority on their children having “meaningful relationships with other adults outside of your home.”

Second, when asked to identify the types of activities that they have found to be helpful in nurturing deeper connections, most parents are unable to identify many specific or intentional behaviors. The most common such activity—spending time with extended family, grandparents or other relatives—was mentioned by just one-sixth of parents (18%). Other things that parents do include involving their children in a faith community or youth group (13% of parents mentioned this), taking part in extracurricular activities like sports or scouts (10%), spending time with other non-related adults (6%), engaging children in volunteerism or community service (5%), or having the children interact with the parents’ adult friends (4%).

In terms of attitude, the difference between churched and unchurched adults was minimal: churchgoing parents were only slightly more likely than were unchurched adults to place a premium on helping their children to cultivate meaningful non-family adult relationships. However, two-thirds of churchgoers (67%) said they had taken action to help their children connect with other adults, while only about half of unchurched parents (55%) had done this. Much of this gap is explained by churchgoers’ willingness to rely on church involvement as a viable way to create intergenerational relationships for their offspring (24% of churchgoers do so, compared with just 2% of the unchurched).

What it Means

Sometimes people say things are important to them but then sit on the sidelines, failing to take action. Intergenerational relationships are different: American parents seem to take some action to help their children have healthy relationships with other adults, even if sometimes unintentional. However, they are not likely to put a premium on these intergenerational connections. Parents are “backing their way” into effectiveness in this arena, without really knowing why or how to get the most out of these relationships.

2.2. ADULT MENTORS FOR CHILDREN (continued)

Survey Question - Indicator 12:

Have you done anything in the last year to help your children develop meaningful relationships with adults outside your home?

INDICATOR 12 - RECENT ACTION ON CULTIVATING INTER-GENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS FOR THEIR CHILDREN

	yes	no
all parents	63%	21%
churched	67%	32%
unchurched	55%	42%

Survey Question - Indicator 13:

How high of a priority is it for you as a parent for your children to have meaningful relationships with other adults outside your home? Is that an extremely important priority, pretty important, only somewhat important, not too important or not at all important of a priority?

INDICATOR 13 - THE PRIORITY OF INTER-GENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS

	extremely	pretty	only somewhat	not too	not at all
all parents	28%	31%	27%	9%	4%
churched	28%	32%	28%	9%	3%
unchurched	21%	33%	29%	9%	6%

Survey Question - Indicator 14:

What have you done to help your children develop closer relationships with other adults outside your home?
(ASKED AS AN OPEN-ENDED QUESTION. RESPONSE OPTIONS NOT GIVEN TO RESPONDENTS.)

INDICATOR 14 - WHAT PARENTS DO TO HELP DEVELOP CHILD'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ADULTS

	time with family/ relatives/ grand-parents	involvement with church/ youth group	extracurricular activities (sports, girl/boy scouts)	community service/ volunteerism/ helping other	introduce them to other adults/ let them spend time with them	interaction with parents' adult friend/ acquaintances
all parents	18%	13%	10%	5%	6%	4%
churched	16%	24%	9%	7%	5%	3%
unchurched	18%	2%	10%	3%	9%	3%

2.3 DEVELOPING PLANS FOR CHILDREN

Indicator 15

Many parents lack an intentional, long-term view of how to best raise their children; half of all parents (46%) said that they do not have a plan in place for their children, instead trying to do their best with their children based upon immediate needs.

Indicator 16

Most parents (72%) believe that a church or faith community would be a helpful resource to help them develop a parenting plan.

Overview

One of the consistent findings of Barna research on the subject of parenting has been that most American parents are not particularly intentional about the outcomes they are trying to achieve with their children. The Orange study supplements this insight, showing that many parents admit they do not have a plan of any kind in place, and admit that they simply try to do their best based upon the immediate needs of the children. About half of parents (49%) said they have a plan or idea in mind of what they children will become as a person. Churchgoers were only slightly more likely than were unchurched parents (52% versus 44%) to have any semblance of a parenting plan in place.

A follow-up survey question was asked to determine whether parents believe that a church is a good place to help develop a parenting plan. Most parents believe that it would be; nearly three-quarters said it would be very helpful (39%) or somewhat helpful (33%) to them. Unchurched parents were naturally less interested than were churchgoers in relying upon a church in developing a parenting plan; still, almost half of unchurched adults (46%) said they were open to such assistance. In terms of attitude, the difference between churchgoers and unchurched adults was minimal: churchgoing parents were only slightly more likely than were unchurched adults to place a premium on helping their children to cultivate meaningful non-family adult relationships. However, two-thirds of churchgoers (67%) said they had taken action to help their children connect with other adults, while only about half of unchurched parents (55%) had done this. Much of this gap is explained by churchgoers' willingness to rely on church involvement as a viable way to create intergenerational relationships for their offspring (24% of churchgoers do so, compared with just 2% of the unchurched).

What it Means

The research confirms that churches have an opportunity to help parents become more proactive and to embrace a long-term view of their parenting. Still, as described in other elements of this research, church leaders often have difficulty getting on people's radar as a trusted resource or clearly communicating expectations. Also, getting parents to embrace intentionality will take overcoming many obstacles. The fact is that addressing immediate needs "works" for many families. Other significant barriers include the perceptions that planning is restrictive or that children should chart their own destiny.

Survey Question - Indicator 15:

As a parent, which of the following best describes your approach: (1) you have a plan or goals in mind based on what you hope your children will become as a person or (2) you do your best with your children based on immediate needs?

INDICATOR 15 - DO PARENTS HAVE A PLAN?

	have plan	do best you can
all parents	49%	46%
churched	52%	43%
unchurched	44%	50%

2.3 DEVELOPING PLANS FOR CHILDREN (continued)

Survey Question - Indicator 16:

Do you think the leaders of a church or faith community would be a good resource to help you develop a parenting plan of some type? IF YES, ASK: How helpful do you think a church would be in developing a parenting plan: very, somewhat, not too, or not at all helpful?

INDICATOR 16 - IS CHURCH A HELPFUL RESOURCE FOR DEVELOPING A PARENTING PLAN?

	very	somewhat	not too	not at all	no plan	not sure
all parents	39%	33%	1%	24%	2%	2%
churched	57%	32%	1%	6%	2%	2%
unchurched	19%	27%	3%	46%	2%	3%

2.4 FINDING GUIDANCE

Indicator 17

During times of family crisis, parents are most likely to turn to their own parents or their spouse for help. Only about one-fifth of parents (22%) have turned to faith-related resources, like God, church or the Bible, during such times.

Indicator 18

There is no single source that parents have to teach their children right and wrong; the most common were values from their family, the Bible, their own sense of standards, and lessons they have learned in the past—though none of these were particularly common responses. Only 34% of parents mentioned faith-related options as the basis for teaching right and wrong.

Indicator 19

Parents are most likely to turn to faith-related alternatives in order to facilitate spiritual or character development for their children, with the most common resources being church (40%), grandparents (20%), and the Bible (10%).

Overview

When it comes to finding guidance during times of crisis, the largest share of parents admitted they returned to an unlikely resource during a recent family crisis—they asked their own parents for help (a resource mentioned by one-third of parents, 37%). Going to a parent was even more common than talking with a spouse (20%), asking God for help (14%), or turning to a friend (6%). Just 2% identified a spiritual leader as a recent resource and 5% mentioned a church. Only about one-third of churching parents said they had turned to a church, pastor, or to God during a recent family crisis, which was higher than the 9% among unchurched adults.

Furthermore, parents pull from a variety of sources to find guidance for teaching their children right and wrong. The most frequent responses were the values that come from their family (35%), the Bible (29%), their own sense of what's right (19%), and lessons they have learned in the past (19%). Others said they turn to personal feelings (10%), God or Jesus (7%), the law (4%), what is acceptable or desirable to others (3%), or the Golden Rule (2%). In total, only one-third of parents (34%) mentioned some type of spiritual or Christian input on this matter. Churchgoing parents were significantly more likely to mention the Bible than were unchurched parents (49% versus 6%), representing one of the biggest gaps in the research.

Finding guidance for spiritual or character development was most likely to come from spiritual sources such as church (40%), the Bible (10%), a pastor (7%), or youth/children's ministries (2%). Another one-fifth of parents mentioned the grandparents (20%) as an important part of the equation.

What it Means

Family of origin is an overlooked source of influence on families. Grandparents are often turned to for help when parents are dealing with problems, teaching children right from wrong, and developing the character of young people. Churches are much less likely to be seen as a resource during crises. Churches are slightly more valuable to parents when it comes to teaching right from wrong. Among the types of guidance parents are looking for, congregations are the most strongly positioned to help develop the character and spiritual lives of children.

2.4 FINDING GUIDANCE (continued)

Survey Question - Indicator 17:

Think about the last time you faced a family crisis. Who or where was the first place you turned, if any, for help?
(ASKED AS AN OPEN-ENDED QUESTION. RESPONSE OPTIONS NOT GIVEN TO RESPONDENTS.)

INDICATOR 17 - WHERE PARENTS TURN DURING FAMILY CRISES

	parents	friends	pastor	church	spouse	God, Jesus, prayer	not sure	all Christian*
all parents	37%	6%	2%	5%	20%	14%	7%	22%
churched	32%	3%	5%	10%	17%	21%	5%	35%
unchurched	40%	10%	0%	*	24%	9%	11%	10%

* reflects percent who provide any faith-based or Christian response, including pastor, church or the Bible

Survey Question - Indicator 18:

Where do you find the standards or guidelines, if any, for teaching your children what is right and wrong?

INDICATOR 18 - WHERE PARENTS FIND GUIDELINES FOR RIGHT & WRONG

	the law	acceptable, desirable	Bible	values from family	golden rule	God, Jesus	personal feelings	own sense	lessons from past	not sure	all Christians*
all parents	4%	3%	29%	35%	2%	7%	10%	19%	19%	5%	34%
churched	4%	2%	49%	31%	2%	9%	7%	16%	16%	3%	55%
unchurched	3%	1%	6%	38%	3%	5%	12%	23%	22%	9%	9%

Survey Question - Indicator 19:

Parents are most likely to turn to faith-related alternatives in order to facilitate spiritual or character development for their children, with the most common resources being church (40%), grandparents (20%), and the Bible (10%).

INDICATOR 19 - WHERE PARENTS FIND SPIRITUAL OR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

	church	pastor	youth/child ministries	grand-parents	school	Bible	other	not sure	all Christians*
all parents	40%	7%	2%	20%	2%	10%	5%	7%	59%
churched	53%	9%	2%	11%	1%	14%	2%	3%	79%
unchurched	24%	3%	2%	31%	2%	5%	5%	13%	34%

2.5 SECTION II – DEMOGRAPHIC & THEOLOGRAPHIC™ INSIGHTS

Here are 10 research discoveries from Section 2 that relate to demographics and theolo-
graphics™:

1. Younger parents are more likely than average to want help from parenting mentors and from other peers at the same stage in life. These new parents were also more interested than the norm in having meaningful adult relationships for their children.
2. A very similar pattern held true among parents of children under the age of six: they wanted more input on parenting from peers and mentors, and they wanted adult relationships for their children to a higher degree than parents of other ages.
3. Upscale adults were twice as likely as downscale adults to have a plan in place for their children (64% versus 32%). Downscale adults were an intriguing mix of contradictions. On the one hand they wanted mentors and peer support; they also believe that churches would be a good source for helping them create a parenting plan. However, lower-income, lower-education adults were less likely than average to have taken action to help their children find meaningful adult relationships, and they were less likely to mention faith-related resources as a source of moral guidance.
4. Unmarried parents are more likely than average to want help from peers and parenting mentors, but they are less interested in moral insight from faith-related sources (such as church or the Bible). Divorced parents were among the most likely to have tried to find adult mentors for their children.
5. Parents in the Northeast emerged as skeptical of churches and faith-related input on each of the indicators in this section where spiritual factors were in play. Interestingly, parents in the Midwest and the South were no more likely than the norm to identify faith-related input as important to them on the research indicators.

-
6. Black and Hispanic parents preferred parenting mentors. However, Hispanic parents were among the least likely to help their children find adult mentors. African-American parents were above-average in having a plan in mind for their children; for believing that a church could help enhance their plan; for identifying faith-related sources in a time of crisis; and for mentioning faith-related elements of their moral perspective as parents. Hispanic parents were below-average on these latter two indicators.
 7. Political “conservatives” are less interested than average in having more input from other parents at the same stage of life. They are more likely than liberals to rely on a church to help their children find meaningful adult connections. Conservatives were also likely to identify confidence in faith-related resources when naming where they would turn in a crisis, how they define right from wrong, and where they turn for spiritual and character development.
 8. Evangelicals are the most likely parenting segment to rely on the church for their children’s adult connections, which in general is a high priority for them. Evangelicals were among the most distinct from their peers based upon the large percentage gap observed in the research; they are far and away more likely to mention faith-related elements in reference to each of the indicators in this section that relate to spirituality (14, 16, 17, 18 and 19).
 9. Catholics gravitate toward finding others who can mentor them in parenting. These types of parents are much less likely to see the church as good place to help their children find adult mentors, to turn to faith in a crisis, or to look to spirituality for moral guidance. However, Catholic parents are likely to say they want the church to help provide character development for their children.
 10. When parents attend larger churches they are more likely than smaller-church attendees to believe that the congregation is a good source for intergenerational relationships. Those parents who attend churches of 500+ attendees were among the most likely to believe that a church is a good resource for coming up with a parenting plan. They were also above average in being willing to mention faith-related preferences when it came to help in times of crisis, guidelines for morality, and finding character development for their children.

The Parenting Environment

Orange Analysis and Application

Key Insight

1. Parents see the value in a wider circle.

It is incredibly good news for church leaders that most parents—churched and unchurched—see the value in a wider circle of influence for their children.

While parents may find they have enough input from other parents their age, they certainly are open to wider influences for themselves, and clearly see the need for their children to have adult influences in their lives.

Even though many parents do not instinctively gravitate toward the church as a resource, most parents think the church could be helpful in creating a parenting plan. That provides opportunity.

Churches that continue to elevate community and activate the family will continue to help parents see that the faith community can be part of the wider circle.

Possible Next Steps

- Clearly communicate why you model your children and student ministry around small groups. Explain that having another voice saying the same things a parent would say can be a positive influence in the life of their child. You might also communicate the benefits of having peers running in the same direction.
- Show parents how kids serving in and beyond the church connects them to a wider circle of influence.

Questions for further reflection

- While parents feel the instinctive need for a wider circle of influence for their family, how can you help them realize the full potential of what a greater community can bring their family?
- Are the parents in your community who might feel they have adequate input from their peers and mentors satisfied with the quality of that input?
- Are those who are currently leveraging other outside relationships for their families doing this strategically? Do they have an end in mind? How can you help them with that?

Key Insight

2. Parents need a partner to turn intention into cohesive action.

The data shows that more people have a desire to do something for their children than are actually doing something for their children. And even among parents who are taking action, there's no strong indication that what they are doing is strategic or has a long term goal in mind.

In a sense, this should be no surprise, because it's always hard to turn intention into action. Just try to move from wanting to lose weight to losing weight. It's not easy.

And yet parents take action all the time. They join the local YMCA. They find piano teachers and enroll in softball and dance lessons. They find partners to help them raise a family every year. While that may not have a long-term goal behind it either, it's at least action. So it should not be too much of a stretch to have a church help them turn intention into action when it comes to a parenting strategy.

Essentially, when you have an integrated family ministry strategy, you have an action plan. This is your doorway into a true partnership with parents at all age levels—from infant through to college.

But the question is, do parents see this? Do they know you have a plan? They may need help, but if they don't think of you as help, you may not ever truly connect. Mere attendance at church does not create a partnership—engagement in some way creates a partnership. And engagement in your strategy can help turn intention into action.

What can you do to help them see that?

Possible Next Steps

- Reconsider the language you use about your church when you talk to parents. What phrases, terms or idioms could you use to help parents think of your church as a partner, in the same way they think of the local YMCA or piano teacher as a partner?
- Consider distributing copies of Parenting Beyond Your Capacity to parents. It communicates the Orange vision in a comprehensive but easy-to-understand way. We actually wrote it for parents to show them how your ministry can be part of a cohesive strategy to raise their kids.

Questions for further reflection

- How much of our overall family ministry plan is vision without action? How much of it is action without vision? How can we fuse the two?
- What's preventing parents from seeing us as a full partner?

Key Insight

3. Challenge the status quo.

We want to say this carefully, but it would seem that there's an opportunity for church leaders to challenge common assumptions and practices among parents. This approach can work in tandem with the insight above, that parents need a partner to help turn intention into action.

Now please hear us: We need to do this with a great deal of humility. As the study indicates, it's not like the church has done an impeccable job of helping families in the past. And it's not as though all of us who are enthusiastic about our new strategies and plans are going to hit the mark well or hit it every time. We're going to make mistakes. (Ironically, admitting that and approaching parents with an attitude of humility and openness may help bridge some of the trust gap and indifference that's evident from the research.)

But with the right attitude in mind, consider this: Almost half of all parents say they have no plan in raising their kids; they simply do the best they can. And even among the parents who say they have a plan in mind to help their child become what they desire, you might wonder whether their plan is well thought out or cohesive.

This is a great opportunity for leaders to speak into the lives of parents. If we actually have a clear and compelling approach to helping families, this is a chance to help families realize more is possible. We can cast vision about beginning with the end in mind in raising their kids. We can speak clearly into parents lives about the value of a wider community building into their family. We are able to explain why we've refined the message to core truths that each child and student can receive at appropriate stages in their lives.

The more we are able to explain our strategy and approach clearly, the more it will become apparent to parents that their own approach might need rethinking. And (this is where humility is needed), we might ask parents to think through the effectiveness of their own plan. How much of it actually is an intention rather than a strategy or plan? How much of it is clear? And even if it's clear in their minds, is it producing what they hoped it would produce?

Despite ambivalent feelings toward the church, the vast majority of parents believe that a church would be a helpful resource to help them develop a parenting plan. This might be your opportunity to challenge assumptions as well as explain an alternative.

Possible Next Steps

- Plan an Orange Sunday or a parenting series that can help parents see what you can do. But don't just cast vision, have clear next steps for parents and real opportunities for parents and church leaders to work together.
- Focus less on special events or activities (occasional parent nights or big attraction-type events) and more on weekly environments and ministries that will deliver a consistent partnership with parents.

Questions for further reflection

- What does the "status quo" consist of for church and un-churched parents in my community? What is healthy about it? What is unhealthy?
- When was the last time parents realized we provided an alternative to their vision?
- If they saw our vision and strategy, would they find it more compelling than the one they currently have? Why or why not?

Key Insight

4. Parents still have misgivings about church.

As the report points out, suspicion and ambiguity about how helpful a church connection might be persists among some parents. All the marketing in the world probably won't overcome that. The question is, what might instill confidence and trust?

This might be an opportunity for churches to narrow the focus and find the best connection point with new families. One of the best ways to overcome latent suspicion or trust is to help people see that a given ministry has truly helped families and kids.

If you have one practice, strategy or environment in your church that has a great track record with parents, it might be with a pathway to help connect parents you haven't yet reached. In terms of overcoming suspicion or ambiguity, introducing them to a family experience, Sunday morning environment, or student service project that has a proven track record of helping families can erase doubt quickly and turn a desire into a reality. And most of us have one environment or ministry that we would consider our best venue. Why not direct people there first?

Another way to help instill confidence and build trust is to help parents build relationships with other parents and church leaders. People appreciate meaningful community. What if you encouraged some of your families who love what's happening in their home to connect with new families? Church staff that are also excited about what's happening can also dialogue with new families and families that are not engaged. You might even host a reception that would put some of these people in the same room, encouraging them to share stories and approaches with each other.

This might not overcome all the suspicion that's out there, but it can instill confidence. And as people get to know other people, trust can develop at more meaningful levels.

Possible Next Steps

- Identify which ministry areas have the best track record with kids, students and parents. Invite families to connect with those environments as a point of first contact.
- Think about creative ways to have parents who love what you're doing tell other parents, or to have non-engaged parents interact with church leaders or other parents. A personal explanation can be very helpful.

Questions for further reflection

- What is the aspect of our children or student ministry that works best with families? Why does it work best? How can we cooperate with that reality?
- Among our parents, who "gets" what we're trying to accomplish? How can we have these parents share their stories with others?

Key Insight

5. Parents are more open to your influence at certain stages and in certain circumstances.

While parents generally might be more open to an intentional family ministry strategy than you think, notice that there are certain stages where interest is even higher.

Young parents, parents of younger children, unmarried parents, parents with a Roman Catholic background and other sub groups were more likely to desire help from an outside influence. There are also noteworthy regional trends and trends among lower income families, African-Americans and Hispanics that have implications for church leaders. Each of these will help you understand how to cooperate with parents in your situation.

This means it might be easier to create a meaningful partnership with some groups of parents than others—a bigger appetite for assistance can create greater participation among parents. People who want it more tend to use it more.

And that could bring momentum to your entire family ministry strategy. It's one thing to have church leaders championing a cause—another thing to have dozens or hundreds of parents enthusiastic about it because it's working in their home and in their Sunday experiences. If they became early adapters in your congregation—either of the strategy or (if you're already Orange) the next phase of your strategy—it would be a way to get an idea to gain acceptance among families in your congregation not because it's a great idea, but because it's actually working. If you started among those who have the greatest appetite, you might be able to better whet the appetite of other parents.

One final thought: While the study suggests young parents are the most open to your influence, it doesn't mean they're the only ones listening. It's important to realize that parents of pre-teens and teens also could use intentional engagement. Middle school and high school is a season of life when many students pull back from their parents, and many parents—unsure of what to do—pull back as well. You could help create greater engagement of teens and parents of teens in your community. That might produce fewer dropouts, and at a minimum, it's a great opportunity for you to help parents and teens engage each other and leaders at a meaningful level.

Possible Next Steps

- Focus on the best early adapters in your congregation and let me spread the word virally to other parents. Personal relationships to help connect parents together in a wider circle. This might be a great way to begin.
- Without ignoring other groups of parents, focus your outreach efforts on families who are most searching for partners in your community.
- Encourage parents of teens and teens in your community to stay engaged with each other and a wider circle of influence.

Questions for further reflection

- Who has been most responsive to our efforts in the past? How can we come alongside them in the future?
- Which group of parents might we be missing? In our effort to reach everyone, what 'someone' are we missing?

Conclusion

There are so many other insights you can glean from this data. Our ongoing dialogue will provide an environment for greater understanding. While there's a lot to think about, we also hope this is enough to get you started.

We hope that you can use these insights to begin to connect better with parents and to communicate clearly what you can do help families win. It's encouraging to know that parents are open to a wider circle of influence, that parents are open to a plan for their children, and that they think large and small churches can help.

While there is still much to learn, study and understand, remember that there is so much you can do right now to help parents partner with your church. Come alongside them and help them in tangible ways, and you will begin to realize the potential of an ancient partnership God intended church leaders and parents to have.

Appendices

APPENDIX ONE

THE STATE OF ORANGE – RESEARCH DATA

THE DETAILS - HOW VARIOUS POPULATION GROUPS DESCRIBED THEIR PARENTING VIEWS AND PRACTICES

CATEGORY	SUBGROUP	INDICATOR 2	INDICATOR 3	INDICATOR 4	INDICATOR 5	INDICATOR 7	INDICATOR 8	INDICATOR 9
		have attended church with children, past two years	having children was a spiritual catalyst	prefer church that is small and intimate (very appealing)	prefer church that is large w/ lots of options (very appealing)	church's expectation of parents made clear (very)	church discourages you with tough goals/standards (total agree)	likely to turn to church for help with crisis (definitely)
all parents		75%	43%	28%	22%	45%	14%	28%

DEMOGRAPHICS

gender	moms	72	43	28	22	49	10	33
	dads	77	42	27	21	40	19	23
age of parent	under 35	70	47	30	25	51	10	31
	35 to 44	76	40	25	20	45	14	27
	45+	78	42	30	19	38	18	25
age of children	under 5	73	47	29	26	46	12	27
	5-9	82	43	28	19	40	14	26
	10-12	79	43	29	20	45	19	31
	13-17	74	38	29	18	45	17	27
education	HS or less	65	43	26	19	47	18	25
	some college	80	48	30	26	46	11	30
	college	84	38	27	20	41	12	31
socioeconomics	upscale	85	38	25	20	38	8	28
	downscale	44	48	22	31	27	19	17
married	married	80	44	28	21	45	13	30
	unmarried	61	39	25	23	43	17	23
	ever divorced	70	43	28	11	51	12	24
region	Northeast	68	35	22	26	45	13	24
	South	78	47	31	22	44	12	33
	Midwest	74	48	30	19	43	16	22
	West	79	36	26	21	46	17	30
ethnicity	white / Caucasian	77	42	29	18	43	12	28
	black / African-Amer.	82	49	27	28	54	18	29
	Hispanic / Latino	68	46	27	32	43	21	31
political views	conservative	89	44	31	27	51	14	43
	moderate	70	44	28	19	47	16	23
	liberal	66	35	20	15	27	11	15
political affiliation	Republican	84	44	28	21	49	9	38
	Democrat	79	48	30	27	36	18	26
	independent	71	40	28	12	44	9	21

CATEGORY	SUBGROUP	INDICATOR 2	INDICATOR 3	INDICATOR 4	INDICATOR 5	INDICATOR 7	INDICATOR 8	INDICATOR 9
		have attended church with children, past two years	having children was a spiritual catalyst	prefer church that is small and intimate (very appealing)	prefer church that is large w/ lots of options (very appealing)	church's expectation of parents made clear (very)	church discourages you with tough goals/standards (total agree)	likely to turn to church for help with crisis (definitely)

THEOLOGRAPHICS™

churched status	churched	95	55	38	31	50	13	46
	unchurched	39	24	15	11	28	16	6
faith segment	evangelicals	99	35	43	34	61	6	68
	non-evang. born again	89	55	32	24	47	13	37
	notional	70	44	25	22	39	15	17
denomination	non-Christian	38	14	15	7	19	17	10
	Catholic	77	55	27	22	42	20	23
	mainline Protestant	87	46	31	31	41	8	25
church size	non-mainline	87	45	35	23	49	13	39
	100 or less	81	44	44	23	51	15	32
	101-499	88	53	26	23	45	10	33
effect of kids on personal spirituality	500+	97	59	20	36	47	12	37
	new / reconnect	82	NA	41	31	53	19	34
	more active	94	NA	28	26	46	15	39
	no difference	67	NA	23	16	40	12	23

APPENDIX TWO

THE PARENTING ENVIRONMENT – RESEARCH DATA

THE DETAILS - HOW VARIOUS POPULATION GROUPS DESCRIBED THEIR PARENTING VIEWS AND PRACTICES

CATEGORY	SUBGROUP	INDICATOR 10 strongly prioritize having parenting mentors*	INDICATOR 11 want “more” input from par- enting peers	INDICATOR 12 taken action in last year to help your children have adult rela- tionships	INDICATOR 13 strongly priori- tize having adult mentors for children*	INDICATOR 14 rely on church as way to help kids get closer to other adults
all parents		23%	17%	63%	28%	13%

DEMOGRAPHICS

gender	moms	25	19	65	31	15
	dads	21	16	60	24	12
age of parent	under 35	29	27	65	35	12
	35 to 44	20	14	62	24	13
	45+	21	13	63	27	15
age of children	under 5	26	24	66	35	13
	5-9	21	20	69	30	14
	10-12	19	16	62	21	16
	13-17	22	16	59	26	14
education	HS or less	24	22	60	27	14
	some college	23	18	61	28	14
	college	22	12	68	29	13
socioeconomics	upscale	20	11	70	31	14
	downscale	26	27	54	27	13
married	married	21	15	63	28	14
	unmarried	29	25	62	27	11
	ever divorced	25	19	69	31	16
region	Northeast	23	11	63	28	6
	South	24	21	58	25	13
	Midwest	20	14	64	29	17
	West	25	20	68	31	17
ethnicity	white / Caucasian	20	16	72	30	14
	black / African-Amer.	35	20	64	28	19
	Hispanic / Latino	30	21	40	19	10
political views	conservative	26	13	67	32	20
	moderate	24	20	64	25	12
	liberal	19	20	55	23	8
political affiliation	Republican	21	12	69	28	22
	Democrat	26	23	55	25	10
	independent	19	18	66	29	10

CATEGORY	SUBGROUP	INDICATOR 10 strongly prioritize having parenting mentors*	INDICATOR 11 want "more" input from par- enting peers	INDICATOR 12 taken action in last year to help your children have adult rela- tionships	INDICATOR 13 strongly priori- tize having adult mentors for children*	INDICATOR 14 rely on church as way to help kids get closer to other adults
----------	----------	--	--	--	--	--

THEOLOGRAPHICS™

	churched	25	19	67	28	24
	unchurched	18	11	55	21	2
faith segment	evangelicals	27	17	72	36	34
	non-evang. born again	28	22	66	31	20
	notional	21	14	59	27	7
	non-Christian	21	18	62	22	1
denomination	Catholic	30	21	56	31	4
	mainline Protestant	23	13	62	23	20
	non-mainline	25	18	69	28	22
church size	100 or less	28	17	66	30	13
	101-499	23	17	65	28	19
	500+	29	15	68	30	29
effect of kids on personal spiritu- ality	new / reconnect	29	23	70	30	14
	more active	31	28	67	21	22
	no difference	18	10	60	31	9

* extremely important priority

THE DETAILS - HOW VARIOUS POPULATION GROUPS DESCRIBED THEIR PARENTING VIEWS AND PRACTICES

CATEGORY	SUBGROUP	INDICATOR 15 have plan or goals in mind for children	INDICATOR 16 church would be a good resource for parenting plan (very)	INDICATOR 17 would turn to a faith-related resource for help in crisis	INDICATOR 18 faith-related source for guidelines on right/wrong	INDICATOR 19 faith-related resource for spiritual, moral, character development
all parents		49%	39%	22%	34%	59%

DEMOGRAPHICS

gender	moms	48	42	22	38	62
	dads	49	35	22	30	57
age of parent	under 35	45	41	16	29	56
	35 to 44	49	39	24	36	60
	45+	52	36	26	37	63
age of children	under 5	44	44	16	34	61
	5-9	49	36	20	40	61
	10-12	47	45	20	39	63
	13-17	52	36	24	36	60
education	HS or less	36	40	21	26	57
	some college	53	37	26	41	62
	college	61	39	18	40	60
socioeconomics	upscale	64	34	17	43	63
	downscale	32	51	26	21	49
married	married	48	39	21	36	60
	unmarried	49	38	25	27	56
	ever divorced	50	32	24	30	59
region	Northeast	45	32	15	30	52
	South	45	43	28	37	59
	Midwest	54	33	16	30	61
	West	52	43	24	37	64
ethnicity	white / Caucasian	48	37	20	36	60
	black / African-Amer.	60	51	43	45	64
	Hispanic / Latino	43	47	14	26	57
political views	conservative	51	52	33	55	70
	moderate	45	37	18	27	58
	liberal	51	19	16	20	44
political affiliation	Republican	53	46	25	47	70
	Democrat	52	37	29	36	63
	independent	44	28	12	26	52

THEOLOGRAPHICS™

churched status	churched	52	57	35	55	79
	unchurched	44	19	8	7	32
faith segment	evangelicals	54	64	55	98	85
	non-evang. born again	49	50	34	47	65
	notional	48	30	10	20	60
	non-Christian	50	14	4	6	27
denomination	Catholic	43	33	9	27	67
	mainline Protestant	52	39	20	32	60
	non-mainline	51	47	39	54	70
church size	100 or less	48	42	24	38	61
	101-499	48	43	29	46	72
	500+	45	54	33	52	77
effect of kids on personal spirituality	new / reconnect	43	53	20	38	70
	more active	46	54	36	51	75
	no difference	52	29	17	27	51

APPENDIX THREE

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The report is based upon a nationwide tracking study, called OmniPollSM, conducted by the Barna Group. The telephone interviews were derived from a random sample of 670 parents selected from across the continental United States, age 18 and older, from January 26 to February 10, 2010. Interviews were conducted with respondents on landline telephones and cellular phones. The maximum margin of sampling error associated with the aggregate sample is ± 3.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Minimal statistical weighting was used to calibrate the aggregate sample to known population percentages in relation to several key demographic variables.

The Barna Group (which includes its research division, The Barna Research Group) is a private, non-partisan, for-profit organization that conducts primary research on a wide range of issues and products, produces resources pertaining to cultural change, leadership and spiritual development, and facilitates the healthy spiritual growth of leaders, children, families and Christian ministries. Located in Ventura, California, Barna has been conducting and analyzing primary research to understand cultural trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors since 1984. If you would like to receive free e-mail notification of the release of each new, bi-monthly update on the latest research findings from The Barna Group, you may subscribe to this free service at the Barna website (www.barna.org). Additional research-based resources are also available through that website.

APPENDIX FOUR

RESEARCH DEFINITIONS

“Churched” parents—for the purposes of this survey—are defined as those who have been to a church in the last week prior to the survey interview.

“Unchurched” parents are those who have not been to a worship service for six months or more, not including special events like weddings or funerals.

“Born again Christians” are defined as people who said they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today and who also indicated they believe that when they die they will go to heaven because they had confessed their sins and had accepted Jesus Christ as their savior. Respondents are not asked to describe themselves as “born again.”

“Evangelicals” meet the born again criteria (described above) plus seven other conditions. Those include saying their faith is very important in their life today; believing they have a personal responsibility to share their religious beliefs about Christ with non-Christians; believing that Satan exists; believing that eternal salvation is possible only through grace, not works; believing that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; asserting that the Bible is accurate in all that it teaches; and describing God as the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect deity who created the universe and still rules it today. Being classified as an evangelical is not dependent upon church attendance or the denominational affiliation of the church attended. Respondents were not asked to describe themselves as “evangelical.”

“Downscale” individuals are those whose annual household income is less than \$20,000 and who have not attended college.

“Upscale” people are those whose annual household income is \$75,000 or more and they have graduated from a four-year college.

© 2010 Orange

www.WhatIsOrange.org