



Reach Them While They're Young

by David Boyd

Wow! What a whirlwind Barna's new book *Transforming Your Children into Spiritual Champions* has created in Christian circles! Most children's leaders like yourself have concurred with this research long ago!

A week or so ago, I decided to check out Barna's data at Central Bible College (CBC), where I had the privilege of teaching about 100 juniors and seniors who would soon be graduating and becoming the next generation of pastors, leaders, and missionaries.

I spoke to the group about the various key thoughts contained in Barna's latest research, especially the statistics stating that over 80 percent of our Christian leaders today were reached and discipled as children.

Quite often the statement "children today are our leaders of tomorrow" is made almost like a cliché. Barna's research states these facts in a much more critical way. He states through his research that the vast majority of pastors, missionaries, and denominational leaders today were won to Jesus

as children. Somehow the journey to full-time Christian service seems to start at an early age. This seems logical since people won later in life have their course and values already set.

As a very "unscientific" case study, I asked the 100 CBC students in the room to stand if they served God as a child.

We wanted to see if the facts Barna found out about our current pastors and missionaries



around the nation would still be holding true with this next generation studying for the pastorate. To our amazement, nearly the entire room stood. We were all stunned. It was true with this group too. The vast majority of these juniors and seniors in Bible college had indeed been won to Christ as children. There were a few in the room who had gotten saved as youth or adults, but over 80 percent had been discipled as children.

Does it take a lifetime of growing up in God to put a young person on a path that makes him follow the ministry as a life call? Obviously Barna is on to something. It seemed that the longer a person follows Christ, the deeper and longer lasting the commitment to Him and His call. The earlier the commitment to Him, the more willing a person is to receive and accept God's call. A handful of individuals were reached as youth, and thankfully were following God's call. We can't lessen the effort to reach young people (especially younger teens) while they are still reachable and pliable, but the hard evidence Barna states in his book tells us that tomorrow's leaders will be in our children's ministries today.

It is my recommendation that all children's leaders get this book for their pastors, their church boards, and their key children's ministry teams. I challenge you to make every effort to disciple children as deeply as possible. Don't be content with children who only come to one Sunday morning large-group service a week. I am a

