

# Facing The Future In America

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The mission of the church of Christ remains unchanged even though the world has and is changing since its issuance in the first century. The Lord said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The well-known Barna Research Group, named for its creator George Barna, released a study of what they called “Third Millennium Teens” in which they estimated what American teenagers believe across six categories.

- 65 percent don’t believe Jesus is the Son of one true God.
- 58 percent believe all faiths teach equally valued truths.
- 51 percent don’t believe Jesus rose from the dead.
- 65 percent don’t believe Satan is a real entity.
- 68 percent don’t believe the Holy Spirit is a real entity.
- 70 percent don’t believe an absolute moral truth exists.

Why is our attendance down? Why are there fewer Bible studies being conducted? Why are there more older people than younger people in our services? Why are there fewer men qualified for leadership roles in the church? Why is there so much divorcing? Why are there more single parents? Why are our class sizes shrinking? Why are there more empty seats in the auditorium? Why is there an acceptance of denominational division? An undeniable connection exists between the findings of the research group and observable tendencies in the church today.

What, if anything, can be done to address this situation? A phrase popularized by President John F. Kennedy is, “Better to light a candle than curse the darkness.” “Several people are associated with this proverbial saying, notably John F. Kennedy. It was first spoken in public by Peter Benenson, the English lawyer and founder of Amnesty International, at a Human Rights Day ceremony on 10th December 1961. The candle circled by barbed wire has since become the society’s emblem” (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/207500.html>). Certainly one person cannot do everything nor is he or she expected to, but one person can do something. And, what each person can do he or she ought to do (James 4:17). A few suggestions or reminders may prove helpful in this connection.

- “Be thou faithful unto death,” Revelation 2:10.
- “Study to show thyself approved unto God,” 2 Timothy 2:15.
- “Pray without ceasing,” 1 Thessalonians 5:17.
- “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,” Hebrews 10:25.
- “Seek ye first the kingdom of God,” Matthew 6:33.
- “Let us do good unto all men,” Galatians 6:10.
- “Be thou an example of the believers,” 1 Timothy 4:12.
- “Earnestly contend for the faith,” Jude 3.