

Cultural Research Center



2026 American Worldview Inventory – Report #3

Examining the Recent Spiritual Progress and Regress of Gen Z

Research from Dr. George Barna and the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University
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Is Gen Z—the youngest adult generation in America—experiencing revival?

The latest report from Dr. George Barna and the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University considered that question by looking at findings from three separate surveys of Gen Z over the past four years (2022 to 2026).

And the answer? It’s complicated.

In some ways, Gen Z has witnessed a significant uptick in key spiritual indicators during that time period. More are claiming to be Christians (up five percentage points), and substantially more say they are “deeply committed to practicing their religious faith” and more are reading their Bibles on a weekly basis (up 17 percentage points and 10 percentage points respectively).

But at the same time, a number of other important measures are going the wrong way.

For example, skyrocketing numbers of Gen Z adults now embrace socialism over capitalism—up 17 percentage points from 22% to 39% in the past four years. And we see a similar erosion in support for traditional marriage, with an 18-percentage point increase in the number of Gen Z adults who say that the marriage of one man to one woman is simply one possible choice of many, but not necessarily God’s plan for humanity, nor a morally superior choice compared to other relational options.

Perhaps most tellingly, another dozen-plus spiritual indicators remain unchanged—including nine foundational worldview measurements such as their understanding of God, of human nature, and the Bible—leaving Gen Z with a biblical worldview level of just 1%—the lowest of any American generation.

When it comes to the question of revival, the most optimistic view may be that Gen Z seems to be spiritually open and actively seeking, but as a generation, there currently are few signs of deep or lasting positive shifts in their biblical foundation or overall worldview.

Changes in the Last Four Year

Have the last four years produced change in the worldview or spiritual life of the adult portion of Gen Z? Some people have claimed that since the murder of Christian activist Charlie Kirk, spiritual revival is happening among the youngest adults of the nation. But is there credible evidence of widespread spiritual transformation occurring among the leading edge of Gen Z, currently 18 to 23 years of age?

Comparing three surveys conducted by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University (CRC), under the direction of veteran researcher George Barna, a new report provides insight into some of the changes that have taken place over the past four years. During that time, the oldest one-quarter of what has become known as Gen Z (people born between 2003 and 2021) has transitioned from high-school-aged teens to young adults old enough to legally vote.

In fact, some changes in religious beliefs and behavior can be identified in CRC's surveys of the Gen Z population conducted in 2022 and in 2026. Based on an examination of 32 indicators related to faith and worldview, we see eight instances of statistically significant, biblically positive change; seven examples of significant but biblically negative shifts; 15 factors showing no change; and two attributes reflecting both positive and negative changes.

Positive Changes

There was only one change in favor of biblical beliefs. There was a 10-point increase in the percentage of Gen Z that now contends they were created by God, in His likeness, but are undermined by sin and therefore need to be saved. That belief rose from 40% while the group were teenagers to 50% today. That remains the lowest percentage among any adult generation, but is now more in line with the perspectives of their predecessors, the Millennials (52%).

Interestingly, there were seven behaviors identified that showed statistically significant movement *toward* biblical activity.

The most substantial increases were in regard to claiming to be deeply committed to practicing their religious faith (up 17 percentage points) and a nine-point increase in those who said they are most likely to rely upon the Bible when deciding if something is right or wrong. Note that even with that increase, just 28% of Gen Z claims to be most likely to turn to the scriptures for moral guidance in any given situation.

This is definitely an improvement, but still strikingly low. Roughly similar numbers of the generation said they are most likely to rely primarily on their reason and feelings, and almost as many cited other people as their primary guides for moral decisions.

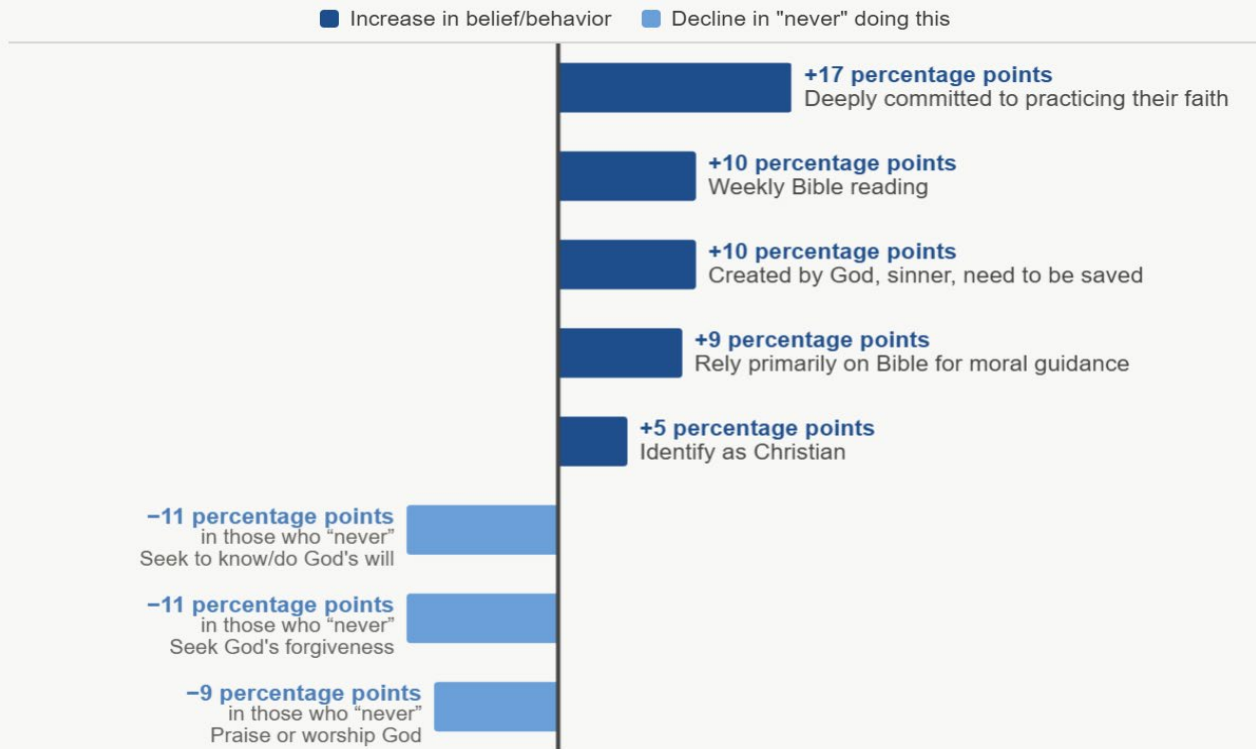
The relationship of Gen Z and the Bible has captured substantial attention since Charlie Kirk's death, with industry reports of increased Bible sales and plentiful anecdotes circulating regarding young adults reading the Bible. CRC's tracking indicates a 10-point rise in weekly Bible reading over the past four years.

Other behavioral improvements are related to shifts from "never" engaging in a biblical behavior to "occasionally" engaging in such activity. These behavioral shifts include seeking and doing God's will, as well as acknowledging their sins and seeking God's forgiveness—the surveys showed an 11-point decline for each of those related to "never" doing so. A similar decline was seen in Gen Z regularly "intentionally making time to thank, praise and worship God"—a nine-point drop in "never" doing so.

The final, positive behavioral shift was a five-percentage point increase in the proportion of Gen Z adults who now describe themselves as Christians (moving from 49% to 54%). That still leaves Gen Z far below the levels registered among Americans in older generations: Millennials (65%), Gen X (73%), and Baby Boomers (79%).

Gen Z: Biblically Positive Shifts, 2022–2026

Percentage-point change across eight indicators moving toward biblical belief and practice



Source: *American Worldview Inventory, 2022, 2026*; George Barna, Cultural Research Center, Arizona Christian University.

* Left bars = decline in "never" group (positive direction). Right bars = increase in positive belief or behavior.

Negative Changes

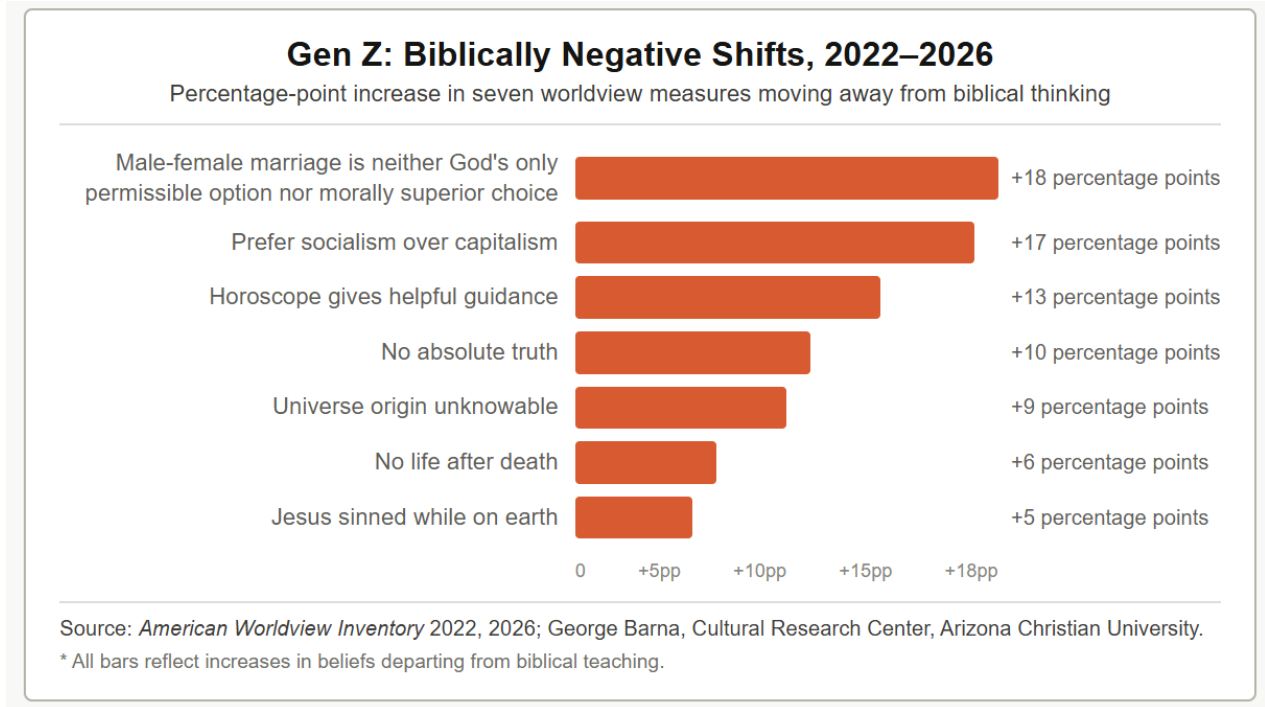
Six of the seven negative changes seen in the research represent movement in beliefs, all of them indicating movement *away* from biblical thinking in the past four years.

Five of the seven negative changes were double-digit shifts. The largest was an 18-point increase in Gen Z adults saying they deem the marriage of one man to one woman to be simply a personal choice that works in some cultures but not others, but is not necessarily God's plan for humanity nor a morally superior choice to other relational options.

A similar movement occurred regarding their economic perspective. In the last four years, there has been a 17-point increase in the number of America's youngest adults who say they prefer socialism to capitalism, rising from 22% to 39%.

The other double-digit changes were a 15-point gain in young adults believing Jesus Christ sinned while He was on Earth; a 13-point increase in Gen Z of those who say they often receive helpful guidance from their horoscope; and a 10-point rise in the number who believe there is no absolute moral truth, and that all truth is determined by each individual.

Additional statistically-significant changes show young people moving farther from biblical truth. Those changes include a nine-point rise in the belief that we will never know how the universe came into existence; and a six-point increase of those who say there is no life after death experience, we simply cease to exist.



No Change

The largest share of beliefs and behaviors tracked over the past four years did not change. This is expected, since people’s worldview is typically formed before they become teenagers, and rarely changes substantially after that formation period.

There were nine foundational faith-related beliefs that showed no signs of shifting:

- People are basically good at heart
- History has no meaning for how we live today
- Success is best defined in ways other than consistent obedience to God
- One’s idea about their purpose in life
- The basis of truth
- Belief about the sinfulness of humankind
- The inherent value of human life
- Whether the Bible is true, relevant, and reliable for life these days
- is the existence and core nature of God

There were an additional four behaviors whose incidence did not change over the past four years.

Those included the proportion of Gen Zers who label themselves as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (currently at 24%); praying at least once a week (43%); weekly church attendance (33%); and getting even with those who do something wrong against them (44%).

Perhaps most significant of all were two macro-level measures that did not change.

The first of those was the percentage of Gen Zers who possess a biblical worldview. Four years ago, that incidence level was 1%, and it remains stuck there today.

The other measure is the percentage of young adults who registered biblical responses to all of the questions concerning the “seven cornerstones of a biblical worldview”—that is, the spiritual foundations on which one may effectively develop a full biblical worldview. (More information about the seven cornerstones can be found [here](#).)

The earlier survey found only 1% of Gen Z gave biblically-consistent answers to questions about the cornerstones. While that figure rose to 2% in the most recent study, that fluctuation is well within the margin of sampling error and therefore cannot be considered to be a real change.

Positive and Negative Movement

There were two areas of life that appear to be in flux among a significant number of young adults.

One area pertains to wealth. There was significant growth in the numbers of Gen Zers who said having money and other forms of wealth is simply what they have earned or deserve; or that such wealth reflects outcomes that are random and disconnected from any identifiable spiritual force or external plan or purpose; or that such wealth has been entrusted to them by God to manage for His purposes.

The fact that more than one-third of young adults has shifted their point of view on this matter in just four years' time may relate to their coming of age and having to handle significant amounts of money for the first time in their life. That responsibility may be forcing some of them to reconsider their philosophy of wealth and the commitments they make regarding such resources.

The other factor that showed increases in both biblical and unbiblical perspectives related to their direction and commitments in life.

On the one hand, there was an increase of eight percentage points in young adults who said they are committed to serving God and humanity by consistently seeking to apply biblical principles while using their gifts in acts of service. On the other hand, there was also an 11-point increase in those whose life focus is to consistently use science, reason, and personal goodness to maximize their personal potential and make the world a better place. There was also a smaller but noteworthy jump in those whose primary commitment is to earning a place in Heaven by persuading God their laudable personal behavior justifies that eternal invitation.

A More Recent Comparison

Another way of examining the spiritual change within Gen Z is to compare the *2025 American Worldview Inventory* data with the 2026 edition. These studies were sandwiched around the murder of Christian activist Charlie Kirk in September of 2025. The pre-assassination survey was conducted in May of 2025—roughly four months before Mr. Kirk was killed. The most recent

American Worldview Inventory was completed in January of 2026, about four months after his death.

While a large share of the beliefs and behaviors evaluated in both 2025 and 2026 did not change, there were 15 measures for which statistically significant shifts were identified. The two behaviors most often focused upon in media accounts of Gen Z’s religious transitions are church attendance and Bible reading.

The Cultural Research Center data support a small, positive change in both of those behaviors among young adults. Gen Z’s weekly church attendance increased by five percentage points. That growth appears to have taken place largely among young adults who were already attending a Christian church, but were doing so less frequently. The proportion of Gen Z who “never” attend church services, either in-person or online, remained unchanged.

The other behavior that has gained a lot of attention is Bible reading. From May 2025 to January 2026, the proportion of Gen Z adults who read the Bible once a week or more was statistically unchanged. However, there was a five-point decline in the number of 18- to 23-year-olds who reported “never” reading the Bible.

Intriguingly, two other measures—taking time each week to thank, praise and worship God, and consciously seeking to know and do God’s will—showed a softening of resistance among Gen Z. The percentage saying they “never” do each of those practices dropped by about five points.

The rest of the changes identified during that eight-month window were highlighted by five unfortunate but noteworthy shifts among Gen Z adults, and one change that is encouraging:

- 21-point jump in preferring socialism over capitalism
- 18-point increase in believing that identifying moral truth is up to the individual, and there are no moral absolutes that apply to everyone, all the time
- 18-point surge in believing that Jesus Christ sinned while He lived on Earth
- 16-point rise in claims of being deeply committed to practicing their faith (whatever that faith may be)
- 15-point boost in belief that good people can earn eternity in Heaven
- 11-point improvement in the number saying they intentionally try to avoid sinning because they know it offends God

Do the Data Support Claims of National Revival?

“Revival” is a term used to identify a period of widespread spiritual awakening or a new beginning that moves people decisively toward God and His ways, and produces tangible evidence of lives that have been radically transformed by God.

Is the United States experiencing a time of revival now among its youngest adults?

The research gives a lukewarm affirmation of revival, at best. While there are a few tepid signs of spiritual interest or growth that have emerged among young adults, there is not much evidence to suggest a broad-based movement of God’s spirit through that generation.

The survey results show that most of the spiritual efforts recently undertaken by young adults are narrow in scope, and lacking a comprehensive and compelling philosophical change. In contrast, a hallmark of revival is a prolonged intensity—even urgency—among those engaging in the quest for authentic biblical faith, accompanied by a lingering hunger for deeper understanding and philosophical consistency.

The disclaimer to such a judgment about the absence of revival is that real transformation does not happen overnight. It takes a decade or more for a person to initially form their worldview. In most cases, it will not be overhauled in just a few months. It may be premature to conclude that revival is not happening today based on the early returns for that generation. But the low levels of spiritual change observed among Gen Z so far suggest that revival is not yet underway.

George Barna, the long-time researcher of trends related to faith and culture, conducted the research and elaborated on the results.

“While the survey findings are so far unpersuasive regarding an outbreak of revival within Gen Z, those disappointing outcomes may point us to a more important question,” Barna noted. “Are American Christians ready to enthusiastically and thoroughly evangelize and disciple the young people who demonstrate authentic interest in biblical Christianity? Given the shockingly small number of biblically defined disciples of Christ the surveys identify, maybe the most strategic issue to address is whether the Church is sufficiently prepared to handle the possibility of widespread spiritual exploration by young adults.”

Barna pointed to the story in Chapter 8 of the Book of Acts, in which an Ethiopian official displayed interest in the scriptures, but became frustrated in reading the passages and expressed his need for someone with mature faith to explain them. (Acts 8:26-39)

“The same discontent experienced by the Ethiopian seeker is a relevant challenge to today’s Church. Our research indicates that many young adults are seeking an authentic Christian experience, initially through religious practices, such as attending church services. Many of them are attempting to evaluate what Christianity has to offer without understanding the biblical principles that promote and support those religious practices,” he said.

“My past studies have shown that when people engage in religious action without an understanding of the underlying philosophy that led to those behaviors in the first place, the practices eventually lose their appeal, the initial spiritual commitment fades, and then interest in the faith itself also wanes.”

According to the CRC researcher, in a society that no longer actively supports a biblical belief and behavior system, revival is unlikely to gain a toehold unless the Church is prepared to holistically build upon moments of spiritual opportunity, such as that produced by the Kirk assassination.

“For the existing Church to advance revival, it would benefit from a period of spiritual renewal among the body of believers,” Barna commented. “That community must be prepared to not only teach biblical truth and call for repentance, but to also model a robustly biblical way of thinking and living that is profoundly different than what the world has to offer. When that exists, then the necessary support system for lasting revival will be in place.”

Barna also addressed questions about the nature of the changes observed in the leading edge of Gen Z during the past four years.

“Spiritual transformation may be introduced by changes in religious behavior,” the ACU professor explained, “but for those behavioral changes to become rooted, there must be an understanding of why such behaviors matter. Without making the connection between beliefs and behaviors, unrooted behaviors will become empty routines and the individuals are likely to revert to prior, comfortable habits. Unfortunately, if we study the beliefs that are changing within Gen Z, they tend to push people farther from biblical truth, not closer. That condition leads to an unfavorable prognosis, although God can generate transformation in any way He chooses, at any time that pleases Him.”

“Our ongoing research about effective discipleship underscores the importance of a handful of disciple-making practices that America’s churches generally do not emphasize,” Barna concluded.

“If the Church will genuinely befriend the young adults expressing interest in biblical Christianity, engage them in meaningful and honest dialogue linked to biblical principles, and model the lifestyle that made Jesus so attractive to the people He mentored, seekers will be more likely to embrace the Christian faith and way of living,” he explained. “Without those connections and examples, based in love and truth, institutional Christianity becomes just another religion competing for numbers.”

About the Research

The data referred to in this report are taken from three national surveys conducted by the Cultural Research Center. The most recent is the 2026 edition of the *American Worldview Inventory (AWVI)*, an annual survey that evaluates the worldview of the U.S. adult population (age 18 and over). The 2026 edition used a national sample of 2,000 adults whose background reflects that of the U.S. adult population. The data was collected using a multi-mode approach incorporating interviews conducted both by telephone and online. The 2025 data is based upon that year’s edition of the AWVI, also based on interviews with 2,000 adults. The 2022 survey was conducted among a nationwide sample of 400 teenagers, ages 13 through 17, drawn from across the nation. Those surveys were administered online through a research panel.

A survey of 2,000 randomly sampled individuals is considered to have a maximum sampling error of approximately plus-or-minus 2 percentage points, based on the 95% confidence interval. A survey of 400 randomly sampled individuals is considered to have a maximum sampling error of approximately plus-or-minus 5 percentage points, based on the 95% confidence interval. Additional levels of undeterminable error may occur in surveys based upon non-sampling activity.

Generations are a social construct, so various research groups define generations differently. The Cultural Research Center bases its study of generations upon the following guidelines. Baby Boomers were born from 1946 through 1964. Gen X includes people born from 1965 through 1983. Millennials are people born from 1984 through 2002. Gen Z is comprised of those born from 2003 through 2021.

About the *American Worldview Inventory*

The *American Worldview Inventory* is the first-ever annual national survey conducted in the United States measuring the incidence of both biblical and competing worldviews. Each year’s reports, released to the public at no cost via CRC’s website (www.CulturalResearchCenter.com) throughout the year of the survey, are also compiled in book form and produced at the beginning of each

subsequent year, published by Arizona Christian University Press. Those books are available at CRC's [Publications page](#) or on Amazon.

About the ACU Worldview Assessment

The [ACU Worldview Assessment](#) is a powerful online tool designed to measure and strengthen a person's worldview. Developed by Dr. George Barna and based on 40+ years of research, this 15-minute assessment reveals how a person's beliefs and behaviors align with biblical truth—and how to grow spiritually.

The ACU Worldview Assessment measures worldview beliefs and behaviors in five basic categories (Bible, Truth, and Morals; God, Creation, and History; Faith Practices; Sin, Salvation, and God Relationship; and Lifestyle, Behavior, and Relationships). It also evaluates the “Seven Cornerstones” of the Biblical Worldview. Dr. Barna's exhaustive worldview research shows that if these seven basic worldview concepts—or cornerstones—are in place, a person is far more likely to possess or develop a biblical worldview. Only the ACU Worldview Assessment identifies and measures these worldview-building basics.

The ACU Worldview Assessment is a *practical tool* for evaluating and improving worldview. And there is a specifically tailored version of the ACU Worldview Assessment for every need:

- **The ACU Worldview Assessment for Individuals** -Designed specifically for adults to identify their worldview and discover areas for spiritual growth and personal worldview development.
- **The ACU Worldview Assessment for Students** – Created by Dr. Barna in collaboration with ACU professors and other educational experts, to measure the worldview of students in grades 4, 8, and 12, using a pre- and post-test format. The student assessments are specifically designed for each grade level, making the questions age-appropriate and easier to understand, while maintaining the integrity of the results.

Dr. Barna's extensive research into childhood worldview development shows that an individual's worldview is essentially formed by age 13. This highlights the importance of strategic worldview training, especially in Christian schools, using the ACU Worldview Assessment to measure worldview development along the way.

- **The ACU Worldview Assessment for Churches, Ministries, and Groups** – This version of the assessment is designed for use by churches, ministries, and other groups of adults.
- **The ACU Worldview Assessment for Colleges and Universities** – Designed in a pre- and post-test format tailored for Christian colleges and universities to use each academic year to assess the worldview of their students, and understand the effect of their university's teaching and community on their student's worldview development.

Visit www.ACUWorldview.com to experience the ACU Worldview Assessment. And learn more about the new assessment in our full report, [“Arizona Christian University Unveils Groundbreaking Worldview Assessment from Dr. George Barna and the Cultural Research Center.”](#)

About the Cultural Research Center

The Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University in Glendale, Arizona, conducts the annual *American Worldview Inventory* as well as other nationwide surveys regarding worldview and cultural transformation. National studies completed by the Cultural Research Center (CRC) have investigated topics related to family, values, lifestyle, spiritual practices, and recent election-related activity and political views.

One of the groundbreaking efforts by CRC has been the worldview-related surveys conducted among the ACU student population. The first-of-its-kind *ACU Student Worldview Inventory* is administered to every ACU student at the start of each academic year, and a final time just prior to graduation. The results of that student census enable the University to track and address the worldview development of its students from a longitudinal perspective.

Research studies conducted by CRC are led by Dr. George Barna. Barna is a veteran of more than 40 years of national public opinion research, having previously guided the Barna Group (which he sold in 2009), and the American Culture and Faith Institute. His research findings have been the subject of more than 60 books he has authored or co-authored, many of which have become national bestsellers. His most recent bestseller is [*Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind and Soul*](#) (Arizona Christian University Press, 2023).

Like ACU, CRC embraces biblical Christianity. The Center works in cooperation with a variety of Bible-centric, theologically conservative Christian ministries and remains politically non-partisan. Further information about Arizona Christian University is available at www.ArizonaChristian.edu.