

# Developing Biblically Focused Kids in an Unbiblical World

## A New Way of Thinking—Kids Are Bombarded by Postmodern Beliefs

George Barna says, "It's a whole different style of thinking and communicating. It's a completely different set of values based upon a very varied interpretation of the meaning of life and how to achieve success or significance in one's life."<sup>1</sup>

- There is no absolute truth—everything is subjective.
  - Postmodernism is not interested in truth. Its main characteristic is that nothing is true.
  - Postmoderns believe that reality or truth grows out of one's experiences and perspectives—something is not true until one chooses to believe it.<sup>2</sup>
  - There are no absolute values, including morals—everything is relative.
  - Postmoderns "cut and paste their beliefs and values from a variety of sources . . . because they're "very mosaic in every aspect of their life."<sup>3</sup>
  - Biblical Christianity is often attacked for having the "monopoly on Truth."
- Spirituality is "in"—but smorgasbord style.
  - Postmoderns reject organized religion but are highly spiritual. They want to experiment with all types of spiritual experiences.
  - They feel that a "higher power" exists but don't know what that is.
  - They are being led to believe that they should "tailor make" their own faith, using a variety of religions and concepts of God.
    - Panthiesm:** The belief that the universe and God are one and the same. The universe and everything in it *is* God, therefore He cannot be its creator.
    - Dualism:** "The doctrine that man has two natures, physical and spiritual;" there are good and evil aspects to the world."<sup>4</sup>
    - Deism:** God created the universe but has withdrawn and is no longer actively involved in the world and in our lives. God started it all but has left us on our own.

A study conducted by George Barna revealed that though most teens in evangelical churches today say they believe in the God of the Bible, 63% also believe Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and all other people pray to the same god, even though they use different names for their god.<sup>5</sup>

- “Tolerance” is a key word—but with a new twist.
  - Tolerance used to mean “putting up with something, even though you disagreed.”
  - The “new tolerance” means giving equal value and validity to all points of view.
  - Kids are being taught that “any system or statement that claims to be objectively true or unfavorably judges the values, beliefs, lifestyle and truth claims of another culture is, in effect, a power play by one culture to dominate other cultures.”<sup>6</sup>
  - In their tolerance, postmoderns reject authority. They believe there is no standard to determine right or wrong.
  - Postmoderns delight in differences and diversity.
  
- Materialism is a sought after lifestyle—it’s getting stuff but denies the existence of God altogether.
  - Definition of materialism: “A desire for wealth and material possessions with little interest in ethical or spiritual matters”<sup>7</sup>
  - The desire to possess things is a strong expectation of youth. They expect to have whatever they want, whenever they want it; and they spent \$179 billion dollars in 2006 to prove it.<sup>8</sup>
  - Young people are and will be accumulating debt at unprecedented levels.
  
- Individualism is highly valued—the focus is on customization.
  - Postmoderns demand personal choices to meet their own needs. “This generation is all about choice—being able to find something and make it your own.”<sup>9</sup>
  - Postmoderns reject traditional belief systems in favor of personal freedom.
  - Because there are no absolute moral standards, “whatever feels good” is acceptable.
  - This generation values highly their freedom of choice. They feel that each person should do what is right for him or her.
  - In 2007 the “YOUiverse” emerged. Now people can design the sole of their shoes, jeans, etc.

## **A New Way of Being—Kids' Behavior Is Shaped by the Culture**

### ➤ Kids Are Growing Older Younger (KAGOY)

- In the past 10 years children have become older younger. This is known as “age compression.”
- The traditional definition of a child: “Boy or girl age 0-14”. Today it is “boy or girl age 0-10.”<sup>10</sup>
- Adolescents before were in the 11-14 age bracket; today they are called “tweens”—8-12 year olds.<sup>11</sup>
- The effects of this can be seen in what children at younger and younger ages know about sexuality, materialism and violence.

### ➤ Kids are dependent on technology and are cyber literate—they are “digital natives.”

- They are tech-savvy, steeped from birth in a fast-paced world of digital data.
- They relate to their friends through instant messaging, text messaging and websites like MySpace, Habbo Hotel, etc.
- Some kids are being targeted by predators or “cyberbullies”
- Instant messaging was teens’ favorite way of communicating in 2006.<sup>12</sup>

### ➤ Kids are targeted by the media—advertising is a powerful shaper of kids.

- A child sees between 3,500 and 5,000 advertisements per day. These ads create a continuous need for products that will benefit the child so he/she will be accepted by peers.<sup>13</sup>
- Youth are described as “a marketer’s dream”—they are young, plugged in, consumer-driven and numerous.<sup>14</sup>
- The media continually challenges and erodes biblical standards.

### ➤ Kids are focused on relationships—they put personal relationships above all.

- 8-12 year olds are immersed in “friending,” the process of meeting virtual friends online.
- After school blogging clubs are becoming a big thing for tapping into relationships.
- They are family-oriented; desire to be part of the community.  
50% of American children are not living in a traditional home (male/female/married couple).

- Kids are experiential—they want to be actively involved as players.
  - Postmoderns do not want to be spectators—they want to be able to vote for their favorites on “American Idol,” be involved in TV programs, video games and other interactive games. They want to be active in the “YOUiverse.”
  - They want to experience things as opposed to just reading or hearing about them—they want to feel that something is their reality.
  - They want a variety of activities and they want to choose them.

## **A New Focus for Ministry—Be Intentional about Instilling a Biblical Worldview**

Rely on the work of the Holy Spirit as you minister to kids. We must trust God for guidance so that kids will go beyond just beliefs to deep convictions about God and His Word as the Holy Spirit works.

Focus on seven key areas for intentional teaching:

- 1. Intentionally teach the concept of God**—help them understand who God is.
  - Teach kids God’s attributes—They need to understand He is the One True God; that they can know and trust Him personally. He is sovereign, holy, omnipresent, omniscient, love, etc.
  - Teach kids the names of God—they need to know God reveals His character and love to us through His names. He is my peace, the One who provides all my needs, my shepherd, etc.
  - Teach kids about God’s character—He is triune, He is our Father, He is merciful, He is compassionate, He is personal, He cares for you, etc.
- 2. Intentionally share the Gospel message**—lead them to a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, the “Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6).
  - Keep in mind that salvation is the foundation for developing a biblical worldview—the Gospel is powerful and will transform the child’s life (Romans 1:16).
  - Remember that the child not only receives **new life** in Christ—he receives the **mind of Christ** (1 Corinthians 2:16). Now he has the ability to grasp biblical truths and to think and act as Jesus would.
  - Emphasize a **personal relationship** with the Lord—He is a **true friend** who will never leave them (Hebrews 13:5b).

**3. Intentionally communicate the Bible**—tell stories (with applications) since narrative is becoming the primary means of communicating beliefs.

- Be serious about teaching the Bible
- Use stories
- Use visual aids
- Help kids identify with godly Bible characters
- Make applications in the Bible story
- Involve kids in the story when possible
- Challenge kids to put into practice the biblical truth that was taught
- Follow-up in the next class

**4. Intentionally teach Scripture memorization**—plant the Word of God in their hearts and minds.

- Emphasize the memorization of Scripture beginning with preschoolers
- Emphasize that the Scriptures are the basis for all of life
- Help them know the Scriptures apply to their lives **now**
- Let kids know the benefits of hiding God's Word in their hearts

Dr. Emilie M. Storch says, "An early emphasis on Scripture memory can prevent problems because future trauma can be sifted through this grid. Children may be able to soothe themselves in the face of difficult life experiences later"<sup>15</sup>

**5. Intentionally teach apologetics**—equip them to defend their faith.

- Teach them to give a clear defense of their faith to anyone who might ask them why they are Christians (1 Peter 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:21).
- Help them develop **deep convictions** about God and His Word—believing is not enough.
- Teach them the answers to basic questions such as:
  - Who am I?
  - Where did I come from?
  - Where am I going?
  - What is true and what is false? Do absolute moral truths exist?

How should I conduct my life, or act?

Does God exist and if so, what is my response to Him?

Is the Bible accurate in all its teachings?

Is absolute truth defined by the Bible?

Is God the all-powerful and all-knowing creator of the universe?

Is Jesus the perfect Son of God who lived a sinless life?

- Teach them to live as “children of God”—without fault in a crooked and perverse generation, in which they shine like stars in the universe” (Philippians 2:15).

**6. Intentionally provide opportunities for them to experience their faith**—They want to be actively involved.

- Involve kids in projects
- Tap into their creativity
- Offer options
- Create a sense of community
- Seek to involve kids actively

In his article about the millennial generation Jim Toole says, “There has never been a generation in history that craves experiences like this generation, and there has never been a generation that has so many ways to satisfy those cravings.” (Senior Pastor, Christ Covenant Church, Shelby, NC)

**7. Intentionally build relationships**—They need a Christian role model.

- Get to know the kids and understand their world
- Use mentoring relationships as a strong method of discipleship
- Provide feedback about how God relates to every area of their lives
- Learn to listen to the needs of the kids
- Ask God to use you to give godly advice and help

## References

1. George Barna as quoted in "Youngest Generation Comfortable with Contradictions" by Jon Walker [www.pastors.com/article.asp?ArtID=3471](http://www.pastors.com/article.asp?ArtID=3471)
2. Josh McDowell, *Today's Youth Need Our Help to Go . . . Beyond Belief* [www.ag.org/enrichmentjournal/200604/200604\\_036\\_BeyondBelief.cfm/](http://www.ag.org/enrichmentjournal/200604/200604_036_BeyondBelief.cfm/)
3. George Barna. *Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001.
4. *Webster's New World Collegiate Dictionary*, Fourth edition. p. 439.
5. George Barna. *Third Millennium Teens: Research on the Minds, Hearts and Souls of America's Teenagers*. Ventura, CA: Bana Research Group, Ltd., 1999, p. 48.
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7. Dictionary, <http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn>
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9. *Ibid.* Gary Rudman, GTR Consulting, as quoted by Cecelia Goodnow.
10. Dr. Mary Manz Simons, *Trends that Impact Children and Their Families*. Children's Pastors Conference Workshop, Orlando, FL, February, 2007.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Cecelia Goodnow.
13. Walter Mueller, *10 Surprising Things You Need to Know about Today's Youth Culture*. Center for Parent/Youth Understanding. [www.cpyu.org](http://www.cpyu.org).
14. Cecelia Goodnow.
15. Dr. Emilie M. Storch. *The Importance of a Biblical Worldview in the Preschool Child*. [www.restingplacebooks.com/drstorch/ILOVEGODSWORD.html](http://www.restingplacebooks.com/drstorch/ILOVEGODSWORD.html)





# Resources for Developing Biblically Focused Kids in an Unbiblical World

CEF Press® Materials [www.cefpress.com](http://www.cefpress.com) 1-800-748-7710

## Visualized Songs

- "Trinity Song"
- "I Believe the Bible"
- "You Are a Wonderful God"
- "God's Power"

## CD's

- Kids Sing the Gospel 1
- Kids Sing the Gospel 2
- Kids Sing the Gospel Classics

## Lessons

- *Beginnings*
- *Our Awesome God*
- *Living God's Way: How to Develop Right Attitudes*
- *Big Questions about Prayer*

## Object Lessons

- "Christian Belief Object Lessons"
- "One Dozen Object Lessons for Children"

## 60-Day Wonder Devotional Books series

Resource	Information
<a href="http://www.beyondbelief.com">www.beyondbelief.com</a>	<b>Josh McDowell's</b> website resource for adults with a strong family focus. Great website for parents, teachers and missionaries.
McDowell, Josh. <i>Reasons for Skeptics to Consider Christianity</i> . San Bernadino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1981.	Resource book for adults. Great for parents, teachers, and missionaries. Excerpt from back cover: By tackling the tough questions skeptics often ask Christians, Josh McDowell and Don Stewart

	<p>provide an invaluable guide and resource tool in Reasons.</p> <p>Since Jesus was human, wasn't he fallible? Which version of the bible should I use? Is there evidence of instantaneous creation? Does the book of Genesis contain contradictory accounts of creation?</p>
<p>McDowell, Josh. <i>Beyond Belief to Convictions</i>. with Bob Hostetler, Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2002.</p>	<p>Resource Book for adults. Great for parents, teachers, and missionaries.</p> <p>Excerpt from back cover: In this comprehensive volume Josh offers the tools to correct our young people's distorted beliefs and lead them to deepened convictions about God and his Word. In classic McDowell fashion, he provides families and the church with a "relational apologetic"—rock-solid reasons to believe and a biblical blueprint for living out those beliefs in relationship with others.</p> <p><i>Beyond Belief to Convictions</i> gives us a clear plan for grounding our youth in a solid relationship with Christ and for unlocking the answers to the fundamental questions of life itself: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? When our kids embrace the Person of Truth, they will be fortified spiritually, morally and emotionally to stand strong in the face of today's culture.</p>
<p>McDowell, Josh. <i>New Evidence that Demands a Verdict</i>, Nashville, TN: Word, 1999.</p>	<p>Resource book for adults. Great for parents, teachers and missionaries.</p> <p>Excerpt from back cover: This fully updated volume further documents historical evidence of the Christian faith. This reference book is a compilation of notes prepared for Josh's lecture series, "Christianity: Hoax or History?" The entire book (over 750 pages) is laid out in outline form, which makes it easier for researchers, scholars and students to access. Use this resource as a tool for locating supporting "evidence" whenever the need arises.</p>

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Information</b>
<p>McDowell, Josh. <i>A Ready Defense: The Best of Josh McDowell</i>. <a href="#">Nashville</a>, TN: Nelson Reference, 1992.</p>	<p>Resource book for adults. Great for parents, teachers and missionaries.</p> <p>Excerpt from back cover:                      Now you can have the best of Josh's research in one easy-reference volume. Inside you'll find amazing evidence on archaeology, miracles, the resurrection of Jesus, creation, demons . . . and much more! Included is Josh's own story of how he as a confirmed skeptic came to believe in the Christ whose existence he had challenged.</p>
<p>McDowell, Josh. <i>Answers to Tough Questions</i>. with Don Stewart, San Bernadino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1980.</p>	<p>Resource book for adults. Great for parents, teachers, and missionaries.</p> <p>Excerpt from back cover:                      Josh McDowell and Don Stewart provide clear, powerful and persuasive answers to dozens of questions like: How can you believe a Bible that is full of contradictions?                      How do archaeological discoveries relate to events in Scripture?                      How do we know God exists?                      Is Islam compatible with Christianity?                      Why does a good God allow evil to exist?                      Josh draws on a wealth of Bible research and point-by-point logic refined during years of lecture tours, where he has answered thousands of questions offered by skeptics. You will find questions and answers on everything from the Bible, God and miracles, to world religions, believing faith, creation accounts and much more.</p>
<p>McDowell, Josh. <i>Is Christ Really God</i>. Holiday, FL: Green Key Books, 2006.</p>	<p>Resource book for adults. Great for parents, teachers, and missionaries</p>
<p>McDowell, Josh. <i>Children Demand a Verdict</i>. with Kevin Johnson, Holiday, FL: Green Key Books, 2006.</p>	<p>Resource book for adults. Great for parents, teachers and missionaries.</p> <p>Excerpt from back cover:                      “The foundations of the Christian faith have been undermined in the lives of our church-ed teenagers. But by grounding your children early in what you believe and why, you will protect them from these distorted beliefs and establish a firm foundation for their spiritual future.”</p>
<p><i>103 Questions Children Ask</i> by Josh McDowell</p>	<p>Resource book for adults. Great for parents, teachers and missionaries.</p> <p>This book contains thoughtful answers to these and other related questions children often ask about right from wrong.</p>

Resource	Information
<i>103 Questions Children Ask</i> by Josh McDowell	Inside you'll find: 103 questions (asked by real children) Other related questions (also asked by developing, inquiring minds) Key verses from the Simplified Living Bible Related verses Notes to parents, where appropriate
<i>Is the Bible Personally from God?</i> by Josh McDowell	Resource book for adults and children. Great for children group or personal study, parents, teachers and missionaries. Excerpt from back cover: Josh McDowell's <i>Is the Bible Personally from God?</i> workbook course gets at the heart of why God gave us his Holy Spirit and his Word. Scripture is a true revelation of what God is like so we can know him intimately. Understanding that the Bible is personally from God teaches our children that God is passionate about his relationship with us. And when they discover how God protected his Word to be the most historically reliable book ever written, they gain an unshakable confidence that what they read from scripture is personally from God.
<a href="http://www.leestrobels.com">www.leestrobels.com</a>	<u>Lee Strobel's</u> resource website for adults. More apologetically focused in content. Mostly material for older individuals, but useful for understanding different apologetic aspects.
<p>Strobel, Lee. <i>Off My Case for Kids: 12 Stories to Help You Defend Your Faith</i>. with Robert Elmer, Zonderkidz 2006.</p> <p>Strobel, Lee. <i>The Case for a Creator For Kids</i>. with Rob Suggs, Zonderkidz 2006.</p> <p>Strobel, Lee. <i>The Case for Christ For Kids</i>. Zonderkidz 2006.</p> <p>Strobel, Lee. <i>The Case For Faith For Kids</i>. with Rob Suggs, Zonderkidz 2006.</p>	Four volumes of apologetics specifically for children. Great for kids' group or personal study, teachers, parents or church leaders.
<a href="http://www.discoverymagazine.com">www.discoverymagazine.com</a>	Resource for children and adults. Great website for the child (aimed at ages 8-12, approximately) as well as teachers, parents or missionaries. "Discovery" is a colorful monthly magazine on Scripture and science for kids. Our aim is to show children that Christians have good reasons for believing what they do. "Discovery" encourages kids to develop a faith that is motivated by a genuine love for God and which is, at the same time, supported by evidences for that faith.

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Information</b>
<p><a href="http://www.tektonics.org">www.tektonics.org</a></p>	<p>Website resource for adults. Many articles on different apologetically focused subjects.</p> <p>Apologetics Missions Statement:</p> <p>Tekton Apologetics Ministries is committed to providing scholarly answers to serious questions which are often posed on major and minor elements of the Christian faith. We believe in the importance of sound Christian doctrine which is based on a careful exegetical analysis of Scriptures from the Holy Bible. We also believe that it is important to incorporate the findings of various theological and scientific disciplines in order to properly assess the veracity of scriptural evidences, and to carefully evaluate issues which are relevant to the Church as a whole.</p>
<p><i>Christian Worldview for Children</i> by Brannon Howse (found on <a href="http://www.christianworldviewnetwork.com">www.christianworldviewnetwork.com</a>)</p>	<p>Resource book for children ages 7 and up.</p> <p>This book is designed for an adult to read it to a child and then discuss the questions at the end of each chapter and close their study with a prayer. Coming from a biblical perspective, this book will be great for parents and Sunday school teachers.</p> <p>Nothing is more important than seeding deep within the heart and mind of a child core Christian convictions like Jesus is God; The reasons we know Jesus Christ rose from the dead; why we should be convinced the Bible is a true and accurate revelation from beginning to end and the absolute truth that Jesus is the only way to God. Unless our children know these and other key doctrines revealed in the Bible, they will not be thoroughly equipped for every good work.</p> <p>Although the word "doctrine" sometimes intimidates people, it is nothing more than a description of the will of God and the Gospel. If we have not trained the hearts and minds of our children to love sound teaching then we should not be surprised when three-fourths of them eventually walk away from the faith in college.</p>