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## The Battle For the Bible Today

The situation is not encouraging. The minds of Americans regarding their spiritual understanding are getting harder to penetrate with the searching light of the Scriptures. **George Barna**, quoted on his website in a kind of year-end summary of the spiritual state of things in the United States, said:

*“The problem facing the Christian Church is not that people lack a complete set of beliefs; the problem is that they have a full slate of beliefs in mind, which they think are consistent with biblical teachings, and they are neither open to being proven wrong nor to learning new insights. Our research suggests that this challenge initially emerges in the late adolescent or early teenage years. By the time most Americans reach the age of 13 or 14, they think they pretty much know everything of value the Bible has to teach and they are no longer interested in learning more scriptural content. It requires increasingly concise, creative, reinforced, and personally relevant efforts to penetrate people’s minds with new or more accurate insights into genuinely biblical principles.”*

These realities pose a great challenge to a Church committed to the teaching of the Bible as the reliable source for truth and guidance in life. How shall we respond to the current mindset that seems so uninterested and resistant to new spiritual input from the Bible? Barna’s suggestions probably are the best we can do...*increasingly concise, creative, reinforced, and personally relevant efforts.* For the local church, that will include the following:

- 1. Don’t give up the centerpiece of biblically-rich preaching.** The main event of most churches is a service in which a previously-prepared preacher dissects a portion of scripture. It is what Paul referred to as the “foolishness of preaching.” Though we are tempted to de-emphasize it in favor of other forms today...the question Paul raises “How shall they hear without a preacher?” still haunts us. The times require, however, that we be creative and interesting for the masses...yet still have a strong dose of scripture in our messages.
- 2. Pay close attention to children’s ministry in both style and substance.** Before their 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, kids in the church should be instructed by enthusiastic and interesting teachers. In addition to significant scriptural content, they need to be shown how the Bible practically applies to daily life, and be constantly reminded that spiritual learning and growth is a life-long process.
- 3. Rethink adult education options.** Too many eggs have been placed in the basket of non-directed, unsupervised small group Bible studies in churches all over. A more systematic, carefully trained corps of adult teachers who will comprehensively teach the Bible and make it come alive and applicable for adults needs to arise in the Church.
- 4. Public testimony about the power and relevance of Scripture needs to be made.** Leadership must always be looking for those who will stand up and tell how the Bible is the most important source of learning and direction in their lives...through their own personal study and through corporate worship, classes, and Bible studies. Constant exposure to these kinds of personal stories in the context of public worship will help young and old to realize the value of continued spiritual exploration in the Bible.

Will the above measures solve the problem? There is no guarantee because we have been warned about a time when people will not sit still for sound doctrine. But...our response must be one of faithfulness to our calling as ministers of the gospel and those convinced that the Word of God is “sharper than any two-edged sword.” God bless you as you faithfully proceed!

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