

The Spiritual Development of Children

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The Barna Research Group, Ltd. is an independent marketing research company located in Ventura, California. One can receive research findings on a variety of topics on their web site (<http://www.barna.org>). I have found helpful and interesting information from the research conducted by the president, Dr. George Barna.

I will be quoting from Dr. George Barna's May 6, 2003 update "Parents Accept Responsibility for Their Child's Spiritual Development But Struggle With Effectiveness." You may read the [entire article](#) on their web site.

An integral part of Adventist education is to assist parents in the spiritual development of their children. In this research study Dr. Barna found that "Parents believe that they are primarily responsible for the spiritual development of their children, but few spend time during a typical week interacting with their children on spiritual matters." I suspect, unfortunately, this finding may be mirrored in our Adventist homes.

In related research Dr. Barna found "a majority of parents do not spend any time during a typical week discussing religious matters or studying religious material with their children", even though two-thirds of the parents attend religious services with their children at least once a month. One wonders whether the family altar is still erected in Adventist homes where the Bible/Bible stories are read and discussed.

Many of our schools have a significant number of non-Adventist students in attendance. It is our privilege to introduce some of these children to Jesus and to encourage them to accept Him as Lord and Savior of their lives.

In this research "the survey indicated that the two areas that parents acknowledged as weaknesses for their children were knowing how to study the Bible and memorizing Bible verses". I want to challenge each teacher to incorporate both these principles into the Bible program. Students must be able to study the Bible for themselves and to memorize portions of God's Word. Jesus overcame the temptations that came to Him by quoting scripture. The psalmist said "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" Psalm 119:11 NIV. "Work hard so God can say to you, 'Well done'. Be a good workman, one who does not need to be ashamed when God examines your work. Know what his word says and means." II Tim. 2:15 LB.

Ellen White warns "None but those who have fortified their minds with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict." *The Great Controversy*, pp. 593, 594.

What an awesome challenge and privilege to be instrumental in leading children to a personal relationship with Christ! May God help each of you, as you assist the parents, in the spiritual development of each student through personal Bible study and the memorization of the Words of Life.

Resources:

- White, Ellen G. The Great Controversy. Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1939.
- The NIV/Living Parallel Bible. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1982.
- Barna Research Online - <http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=138&Reference=B>