

- The main group studied in the book is “outsiders,” those looking at the Christian faith from the outside. This group includes atheists, agnostics, those affiliated with a faith other than Christianity (such as Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Mormonism, and so on), and other unchurched adults who are not born again Christians. (Pg 17)
- Two terms describe the primary generations we studied: Mosaics (born between 1984 and 2002) and Busters (born between 1965 and 1983). (Pg 17)
- There are about twenty-four million outsiders in this country who are ages sixteen to twenty-nine. Outsiders are becoming less and less a “fringe” segment of American society. Each generation contains more than the last, which helps explain their growing influence. Outsiders make up about one-quarter of Boomers (ages forty-two to sixty) and Elders (ages sixty-one-plus). Among adult Mosaics and Busters, more than one-third are part of this category, a number that increases to two-fifths of sixteen-to-twenty-nine-year olds. (Pg 18)

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **DISCOVERING UNCHRISTIAN FAITH**

- Fewer than one out of ten young adults mention faith as their top priority, despite the fact that the vast majority of Busters and Mosaics attended a Christian church during their high school years. (Pg 23)
- In 1996, 85 percent of outsiders were favorable toward Christianity’s role in society. Even the perceptions of the youngest generations mirrored this finding. (Pg 24)
- Now, however, nearly two out of every five young outsiders (38 percent) claim to have a “bad impression of present-day Christianity.” One-third of young outsiders said that Christianity represents a negative image with which they would not want to be associated. One out of every six young outsiders (17 percent) indicates that he or she maintains “very bad” perceptions of the Christian faith. This group is at least three times larger than it was just a decade ago. (Pg 24)
- Among those who expressed an opinion about born-again Christians, negative opinions outnumbered positive perceptions by more than a three-to-one ratio (35 percent to 10 percent). (Pg 25)
- Among those aware of the term “evangelical,” the views are extraordinarily negative (49 percent to 3 percent). (Pg 25)
- We found the three most common perceptions of present-day Christianity are antihomosexual (an image held by 91 percent of young outsiders), judgmental (87 percent), and hypocritical (85 percent). Out of the top 12 perceptions of Christianity, nine of the dozen views were negative. (Pg 27)
- The most common “favorable” impression is that Christianity teaches the same basic idea as other religions; more than four out of every five young outsiders embrace this description. Three-quarters believe that Christianity has

“good values and principles,” and most outsiders indicate that Christians are “friendly.” (Pg 27)

- The vast majority of outsiders within the Mosaic and Buster generations have been to churches before; most have attended at least one church for several months; and nearly nine out of every ten say they know Christians personally, having about five friends who are believers. (Pg 31)
- People’s impressions have been forged through a wide range of inputs: experiences at churches (59 percent of young outsiders said this influenced their views) and relationships (50 percent) are the most common ways their views about the Christian faith are shaped, followed by the input they receive from other religions (48 percent) and what their parents have told them about Christianity (40 percent). (Pg 31)
- The media certainly do affect how outsiders view Christianity, but less than one might anticipate. Books were mentioned by slightly less than half (44 percent), followed by visual media (movies and television–31 percent) and music (16 percent). Only 9 percent of young outsiders and only one-fifth of young churchgoers (22 percent) said that Christianity has received a bad reputation from television and movies. (Pg 31)
- One-fifth of all outsiders, regardless of age, admitted they “have had a bad experience in a church or with a Christian that gave them a negative image of Jesus Christ.” This represents nearly fifty million adult residents of this country—including about nine million young outsiders—who admit they have significant emotional or spiritual baggage from past experiences with so-called Christ followers. Among pastors of Protestant churches, three-quarters said they often encounter people whose negative experiences create major barriers to their openness to Jesus. (Pg 31)
- Three out of every ten young outsiders said they have undergone negative experiences in churches and with Christians. Such hurtful experiences are part of the stories of nearly one out of every two young people who are atheist, agnostics, or of some other faith. Outsiders who are Mosais and Busters are two and a half times more likely than older outsiders to say bad experiences have degraded their picture of Jesus. (Pg 32)
- Many young Christians harbor significant concerns about the Christian faith as well. For instance, four out of five young churchgoers say that Christianity is antihomosexual; half describe it as judgmental, too involved in politics, hypocritical, and confusing; one-third believe their faith is old fashioned and out of touch with reality; and one-quarter of young Christians believe it is boring and insensitive to others. (Pg 33)
- A majority said that when deciding how to spend their time, they try to choose activities that will help bring people closer to Christ. Most young Christians indicate that they intentionally build friendships with other people so they might get a chance to explain their faith in Jesus. (Pg 38)
- Two-thirds of young born-again Christians say they believe that most outsiders have a negative image of Christianity. Another one-third admit that the way Christians act and the things they say make them embarrassed to be a Christian. (Pg 39)

- Eighty-five percent of young outsiders conclude that present-day Christianity is hypocritical. Half of young churchgoers agreed that Christianity is hypocritical (47 percent). (Pg 42)
- Facing a moral or ethical dilemma, young adults are significantly more likely than older adults to say they do whatever feels comfortable or whatever causes the least amount of conflict. Young adults are more likely than their predecessors to believe that sometimes the rules have to be bent to get by in life. (Pg 44)
- More than four out of five young adults said they are totally committed to getting ahead in life, compared with three out of five Boomers. (Pg 44)
- Overall, 30 percent of born-again Christians admitted to at least one type of sexually inappropriate behavior in the past thirty days, including online pornography, viewing sexually explicit magazines or movies, or having sex outside of marriage, compared with 35 percent of other Americans. (Pg 47)
- Among young outsiders, 84 percent say they personally know at least one committed Christian. Yet just 15 percent thought the lifestyles of those Christ followers were significantly different from the norm. (Pg 48)
- We asked born again Christian adults to identify the priorities Christians pursue in terms of their personal faith. The most common response was lifestyle – being good, doing the right thing, not sinning, a response mentioned by 37% of believers. (Pg 49)
- The “lifestyle” priority was more frequently mentioned than discipleship learning about the Bible and about Christ. It was more often included in the definition of being a Christian than were evangelism, worship, or relationships. Serving others and the poor was identified as a main concern by just one-fifth of believers. Thoughts of stewardship or nurturing family faith were almost nonexistent as faith priorities. (Pg 49)
- The research also pointed out that “lifestyle” indicators are more significant to born-again Christians over age forty (41 percent) than they are to Mosaic and Buster believers (23 percent). (Pg 49)
- Christians believe the primary reason outsiders have rejected Christ is that they cannot handle the rigorous standards of following Christ. There is a nuance here that allows Christians to feel like they’re better than other people, more capable of being holy and sinless. (Pg 51)
- Only one-quarter of young outsiders are convinced Christianity would limit their lifestyle and options in life. Instead, outsiders said they have never become a Christ follower for because they have never thought about it, because they are not particularly interested in spirituality, because they are already committed to another faith, or because they are repelled Christians. (Pg 51)
- Young Christians currently embrace the acceptability of many behaviors older believers staunchly reject. A majority of born-again adults in their twenties and thirties currently believe that gambling, cohabitation, and sexual fantasies

are morally acceptable. There are also huge gaps between young believers and older Christians when it comes to the acceptability of sex outside of marriage, profanity, drunkenness, pornography, homosexual sex, and illegal drug use. The only two areas of statistical similarity between older and younger born-again Christians are views on abortion and using the f-word on television. (Pg 53)

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **GET SAVED!**

- Young Christians are less likely than older adults to feel compelled to share their faith in Christ with others. Young people are also more likely to believe one can live a meaningful life without accepting Jesus Christ. Mosaics and Busters are less likely to embrace the “once-saved-always-saved” perspective, that is, that” a commitment to Christ permanently alters one’s eternal destiny. (Pg. 68)
- Young outsiders generally do not get the impression that Christians have good intentions when it comes to trying to “convert” them. Most reject the idea that Christians show genuine interest in them as individuals. This was one of the largest gaps in our research: most Christians are convinced their efforts come across as genuine, but outsiders dispute that. Only one-third of young outsiders believe that Christians genuinely care about them (34 percent). And most Christians are oblivious to these perceptions—64 percent of Christians said they believe that outsiders would perceive their efforts as genuine. (Pg 68)
- Only one-quarter of young outsiders firmly perceive that Christianity offers them “hope for the future” (23 percent), and only one out of every seven strongly believes Christianity is “genuine and real” (15 percent). Despite the fact that most young outsiders say that Christianity has good values and principles (79 percent), a majority say that the Christian faith teaches pretty much the same basic ideas as other religions (81 percent). (Pg 69)
- The most effective efforts to share faith are interpersonal and relationship based. When we asked born-again Busters to identify the activity, ministry event, or person most directly responsible for their decision to accept Jesus Christ, 71 percent listed an individual—typically their parent, a friend, another relative, or a teacher. A majority of those decisions were described as conversations and prayer, while about one-third were instances in which their friend or family member took them to a church service or an evangelistic event. Radio, television, and tracts accounted for a combined total of less than one-half of 1 percent of the Busters who are born again. (Pg 70)
- In our research with various “mass evangelism” efforts, we found that often these efforts create three to ten times as much negative response as positive. Mass evangelism efforts are most effective with marginally churching adults; outsiders are usually the ones who respond most negatively. (Pg 71)
- When we asked outsiders what the most important factor is in their faith, they said it is something that “feels right to them personally” (69 percent of outsiders said this was an important facet of their spirituality). Before you start lamenting this reliance on feelings, you should realize that 67 percent of Christians between the ages of sixteen and twenty-nine said this was important as well. Among young people, whether we like it or not, their sense of individualism, their loyalty to peers, and their emotional and experiential

outlook on life guide their spiritual pursuits. (Pg 72)

- The faith trajectory of the vast majority of Americans is mapped out before they become adults, often before they even reach adolescence. In fact, for every one hundred people who are not born again by the time they reach age eighteen, only six of those individuals will commit their lives to Christ for the first time as an adult. (Pg 72)
- While it's true that God's presence is life changing, most outsiders admit they are reluctant to have anything to do with this type of experience. Nearly half of young outsiders (42 percent) said they are skeptical and distrustful of faith and religion. They don't want to be whipped up into a state of emotionalism and reliance on faith. Only one-quarter of outsiders said they are looking for a faith that helps them connect with God. By comparison, this was the top motivation of young Christians, which confirms that this is a huge area of dissonance between those of us on the inside and those outside the church. (Pg 73)
- Among nonChristians ages sixteen to twenty-nine—that is, atheists, agnostics, those undecided about their faith, and individuals affiliated with other faiths—more than four out of every five have gone to a Christian church at some time in their life (82 percent). Most of these attended for at least three months. And two-thirds of nonChristians (65 percent) said they have had conversations in the last year with a Christian friend about their faith views. More than half (53 percent) said they have been specifically approached in the past few years about becoming a Christian. (Pg 74)
- The majority of outsiders in this country, particularly among young generations, are actually de-churched individuals. (Pg 74)
- Only one out of seven outsiders describes Christianity as something that seems genuine and real. Just one-third believe that Christians show genuine interest in them. (Pg. 77)
- Even among those who have never made a commitment to Christ, nearly half (45 percent) said they have considered becoming a Christian before, with the other half saying they have never given the notion much thought. (Pg. 77)
- Most of those who made a decision for Christ were no longer connected to a Christian church within a short period, usually eight to twelve weeks, after their initial decision. (Pg 79)

## CHAPTER 5 ANTIHOMOSEXUAL

- Out of twenty attributes that we assessed, both positive and negative, as they related to Christianity, the perception of being antihomosexual was at the top of the list. More than nine out of ten Mosaic and Buster outsiders (91 percent) said “antihomosexual” accurately describes present day Christianity. And two-thirds of outsiders have very strong opinions about Christians in this regard, easily generating the largest group of vocal critics. (Pg 92)
- Born-again Christians are more likely to disapprove of homosexuality than divorce. However, a minority of born-again believers (39 percent) embrace Jesus's teaching that divorce is a sin except in cases of adultery (see Matt. 5-32) (Pg 94)

- A majority of born-again Christians, including more than four out of five evangelicals, say that homosexual relations between two consenting adults should be illegal. (Pg 94)
- Our research shows that one-third of gays and lesbians attend church regularly, across a wide spectrum of denominations and backgrounds, including Catholic, mainline, nonmainline, and nondenominational churches. Most gays and lesbians in America align themselves with Christianity and one-sixth has beliefs that qualify them as born-again Christians. (Pg 97)
- In our research, one out of every thirty-three people in America admits to being gay, lesbian, or bisexual (3 percent.) Our research among young adults, demonstrates that in the high school or college years, most people will have personal friends who are gay, lesbian; bisexual, or transgender. (Pg 99)
- An important indicator of public opinion is not merely how many residents endorse an idea, but how firmly people resist it. We have found, however, that opponents of homosexual rights have little influence on young adults—outside or inside the church. (Pg 100)
- Just one out of seven Mosaics (14 percent) and one-fourth of Busters (28 percent) said they strongly oppose changing the laws to grant homosexuals more freedoms, rights, and protections. Among older generations, more than two-fifths (42 percent) firmly oppose such legal protection for gays and lesbians. (Pg 100)
- Although most Christians say they are concerned about homosexual lifestyles, just 4 percent of Americans (10 percent of born-again Christians) say they have engaged in any other nonpolitical means of addressing what they perceive to be a problem. Only 1 percent of Americans say they pray for homosexuals; a similarly miniscule proportion say they address the issue by donating money to organizations that help people dealing with the lifestyle or that they try to have meaningful discussions with people about it. (Pg 101)
- Even among Mosaic and Buster churchgoers, fewer than one-third believe that homosexual lifestyles are a major problem, compared with half of Boomers and nearly three out of every five Elders. (Pg 101)

## CHAPTER 6 SHELTERED

- Only one-fifth of young outsiders believe that an active faith helps people live a better, more fulfilling life. Three-quarters of Mosaics and Busters outside the church said that present-day Christianity could accurately be described as old-fashioned, and seven out of ten believe the faith is out of touch with reality. Most outsiders and nearly half of young insiders say that Christianity is confusing. (Pg 122)
- Two-thirds of young outsiders said the faith is boring, a description embraced by one-quarter of young churchgoers as well. (Pg 123)
- Nearly one-quarter describe Christians as using special words and phrases no one else can understand. And half of all young outsiders said that Christianity seems like a club only certain people can join. (Pg 123)

- A majority of Busters, including most born-again Christian young people, believe that the spiritual world is too complex and mysterious for humans to understand. These ideas are twice as common among Mosaics and Busters as they were in their parents' generation. (Pg 125)
- Four out of five describe themselves as "adapting easily to change," a much more common self-perception than is true of Boomers. (Pg 126)
- Young people are significantly less likely than older adults to limit their media content out of discomfort with the values or perspectives represented. Consider this fact: a majority of those ages forty-two-plus say that the content of movies and television is a major problem facing America; but that drops to just one-third of those eighteen to forty-one. (Pg 126)
- Compared with Boomers, today's young adults are more likely to view sexually explicit magazines, movies, or websites. At least two out of every five Busters and Mosaics admit to viewing some type of pornography in a typical month. A majority of young adults say they have been exposed to Internet pornography sometime in their life. (Pg 127)
- One-fifth of Busters and two-fifths of adult Mosaics say in the last thirty days they have had a sexual encounter with someone who is not their spouse. (Pg 127)
- Two-thirds of Mosaics and half of Busters say they have used expletives in public in the last month, compared with just three out of ten Boomers. (Pg 128)
- One out of seven admits to dealing with an addiction. One-third describe themselves as overweight. One-sixth recognize they are already in serious debt. Almost one out of every four Busters who have been married has already experienced a divorce. (Pg 128)
- Nearly half of young adults say they are trying to find a few good friends. One-eighth are lonely. One-quarter feel unfulfilled in life. Nearly half say they are stressed out, which is double the proportion of Boomers. (Pg 128)
- Mosaics and Busters are more likely than older adults to pay back someone who has offended them and to say mean things about people behind their backs. (Pg 128)

## CHAPTER 7 TOO POLITICAL

- In our survey, we asked young people to identify the best-known Christians, encouraging respondents to mention anyone who came to mind. Among sixteen-to twenty-nine-year olds outside of Christianity, the top five leader associations included the Pope (mentioned by 16 percent of young outsiders), George W. Bush (13 percent), Jesus (9 percent), Billy Graham (17 percent), and Martin Luther King Jr. (6 percent). (Pg 154)
- Among young churchgoers, the top three included Mr. Graham (29 percent), followed by the Pope (17 percent) and the president (17 percent). Young Christians also mentioned Martin Luther King Jr. (8 percent), Jesus (7 percent), Mother Teresa (7 percent), Mel Gibson (7 percent), and James Dobson (5

percent). There were smaller levels of awareness for other Christian leaders. (Pg 154)

- Three-quarters of young outsiders and half of young churchgoers describe present-day Christianity as “too involved in politics.” Nearly two-thirds of Mosaic and Buster outsiders and nearly half of young born-again Christians said they perceive “the political efforts of conservative Christians” to be a problem facing America. (Pg 155)
- One-fifth of all American adults (21 percent) believe “the political efforts of conservative Christians are a major problem facing the country today. Half of the adult population (48 percent) describe the political involvement of Christians as a concern. More than 110 million adult Americans admit they maintain misgivings about the role of “conservative Christians” in politics. (Pg 156)
- Many Christians themselves admitted that they perceive the politics of conservative Christians as a challenge facing the country. The study showed that one-sixth of born-again Christians (17 percent) firmly embrace this viewpoint, while nearly half have some degree of concern. (Pg 156)
- Among the evangelical segment, only a slight majority are registered Republicans (59 percent). That’s a high proportion, but far removed from the monolithic levels one might expect based on media pronouncements or the expectations of Christian leaders. (Pg 160)
- We are projecting, that in the 2008 election, as many born-again Christians (including both evangelicals and nonevangelicals) will cast a ballot as registered Democrats and will vote as Republicans. Party affiliation does not always translate directly to candidate choice, but it is a reminder that the Christian community is more diverse, less cohesive, and less unified than is typically assumed. (Pg 160)
- Mosaics and Busters are less likely than their predecessors to support keeping the motto “In God We Trust” on our currency, the phrase “one nation under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance, or the Ten Commandments posted in government buildings. They are also less likely than Boomers and Elders to support teaching creationism in public schools or to favor a federal marriage amendment defining marriage as possible only between one man and one woman. (Pg 164)
- Just one-third of twentysomethings believe that humans are superior to other living things created by God, which compares to half of those in their thirties and nearly three-fifths of those over the age of forty. (Pg 165)

## CHAPTER 8

### JUDGMENTAL

- Nearly nine out of ten young outsiders (87 percent) said that the term judgmental accurately describes present-day Christianity. (Pg 182)
- Most Christian young people told our interviewers that our faith seems too focused on other people’s faults. More than half the young Christians between the ages of sixteen and twenty-nine (53 percent) said they believe that the label judgmental accurately fits present-day Christianity. (Pg 182)

## DATA SUMMARY

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- The perception is that Christians are known more for talking about these issues than doing anything about them. Based on our survey, a majority of outsiders (57 percent) say Christians are quick to find fault with others. (Pg 184)
- Only one out of five outsiders said they perceive Christian churches as loving environments, places where people are unconditionally loved and accepted regardless of how they look or what they do. Surprisingly, fewer than half of churchgoers, including born-again Christians, felt strongly that their church demonstrates unconditional love. (Pg 185)
- Only 16 percent of young outsiders say the phrase “consistently shows love for other people” describes us “a lot.” (Pg 185)
- We found that a majority of born-again Christians said they are “very convinced they are right about things in life.” Also, believers are more likely than others to say they often try to persuade people to change their views. And, compared to outsiders, born-agains admit to being less open to other people’s perspectives about life. (Pg 192)