



Life-Defining, Long-Lasting  
Spiritual Impact

Awana Alumni Study

Awana is a leading children's and youth ministry. We have been influencing the spiritual lives of young children through teenagers for nearly 60 years.

God's calling on Awana is to use the Bible as the bedrock tool for raising kids who know, love and serve Jesus Christ. Today we equip over 17,000 churches and millions of parents worldwide to build a scripturally sound foundation for their children's faith. As the children mature, we teach teens about biblical character, values and an unshakable faith that endures for a lifetime.

Since our founding, Awana has seen a biblical principle take root in the lives of countless youth in the U.S. and in more than 100 countries overseas. The principle is this: Parents and churches that work together to strategically teach God's Word through the course of childhood move kids progressively toward spiritual maturity. The outcome: life-defining, long-lasting impact.

### Tackling a crisis engulfing our kids

This time-tested approach is desperately needed to solve the spiritual crisis ensnaring many of today's youth. According to Josh McDowell Ministry, denominations are seeing anywhere from 69 to 94 percent of teens leave the church after high school. Studies by McDowell, George Barna and others reveal that just 10 to 15 percent possess a biblical worldview. Christian colleges across the country report that Bible knowledge among young people has diminished dramatically.

The next generation lacks the spiritual development to steadfastly follow Christ in an increasingly post-Christian world. Even children who grow up in Christian homes, go to church and participate in youth group are abandoning their faith by age 19.

### The causes of this crisis

Four glaring voids drive this vacuum:

1. Most Christian parents, unaware that the Bible calls them to lead their children's spiritual development, abdicate this responsibility to the church.
2. The majority of parents don't have a clear picture of how their sons and daughters should turn out spiritually.



3. Few church leaders and parents guide kids along an intentional, integrated path of evangelism and discipleship from the crucial ages of 2 to 18.
4. And at best, children's ministry and youth ministry co-occupy the church in harmony with no collaboration or plan for strategically discipling students.

The consequences are alarming.

Yet, if anything, such downward trends spotlight more brightly the need for parents and churches to work together to train children and teens in God's Word throughout their formative years.

## Comparing Awana alumni's beliefs and behaviors with the rest of America

In 2007, an independent research firm conducted a nationwide survey of adults ages 19 to 32 who participated as kids in an Awana ministry for six to 10 years.

The 721 respondents had all earned awards in Awana for their:

- Active participation in Awana curriculum
- Knowledge of Scripture
- Consistent attendance

Alumni were asked the same questions posed in a 2005 Gallup study for Baylor University that served as a benchmark. The Baylor/Gallup survey measured the religious beliefs, faith-driven behaviors and moral attitudes of Protestants and the general U.S. population. Its purpose was to gauge where men and women stand on such issues as the existence of God, Christ's deity, views on the Bible and spiritual practices across various denominations and outside of Christianity.

Asking identical questions enabled our study to evaluate the beliefs and behaviors of our alums with Protestants and Americans surveyed by Baylor. This information gives us solid feedback on how Awana participants stack up spiritually in comparison to Christians not attending Awana and the rest of America. Of particular interest is the contrast of Awana alumni with the group the Baylor study calls the "most religious segment of America"—those who attend church at least weekly.

Our goal — to find out whether or not our alumni enter adulthood prepared to know, love and follow Christ for life.



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## Biblically grounded faith producing long-term impact

According to the study results, Awana alumni are far more likely than other Americans, much more likely than Protestants on the whole and generally more likely than even Americans who attend church at least once a week to:

### Beliefs

- Have no doubts that God exists
- Believe that Jesus is the Son of God
- Trust the truthfulness and accuracy of the Bible

### Belief-driven behaviors

- Read their Bible regularly
- Attend worship services at least weekly
- Resist the temptation to leave the church
- Pray up to several times a day
- Give more money to their church
- Participate in Bible studies or Sunday school

### Faith-driven service

- Participate in church-related activities
- Share their faith with non-believing friends and strangers
- Engage in missionary and community outreach programs
- Spend more time volunteering in their church and community

## Key survey findings

As expected, the majority of alumni rated their parents as the principal influence on their spiritual foundation. This fact aligns with the scriptural command for parents to act as their children's primary spiritual care-givers. Alumni also noted a healthy balance between parental and church influence in shaping this foundation.

Respondents said about Awana:

- Awana participation contributed as significantly to their faith, values and character as all other church programs combined.
- More than 90 percent of alumni reported that Awana was either important or very important in developing a spiritual and moral foundation for their adult life.
- Outside of their families, Awana provided the most valuable spiritual and moral influence on those who consistently participated in Awana ministries.

### Committed to church

Church attendance offered one of the most encouraging responses.

- Only 1.8 percent of Awana alumni surveyed dropped out of church as adults.
- 92.7 percent said they still attend church weekly or more often.

This result could be similarly seen in our alumni's dedication to church service, Bible study, witnessing and financial giving. By comparison, over 36 percent of Americans surveyed by Gallup/Baylor who attended church at age 12 reported that as adults they are now unchurched.

As you will notice throughout this report, one of the central themes of the Awana alumni study is clear: When parents take leadership of their children's spiritual growth, and churches support them throughout their kids' upbringing, they form a powerful partnership that raises spiritual champions.

## Detailed findings of Awana alumni survey

### SPIRITUAL BELIEFS

Despite the United States' reputation as a relatively "religious" nation, Awana alumni far exceed the American population and other Protestants in almost every area of Christian life — both in beliefs and actions.

The emphasis of our programs for ages 2 to 18 — which target the specific needs of kids at each level of spiritual development — is on biblical teaching. Awana aims to equip parents and churches with the tools to lead kids to salvation in Christ and to root them in a solid, Bible-based worldview that guides them throughout life's circumstances and challenges.

Awana alumni's responses to questions about their beliefs provide great encouragement to Awana-registered churches across the U.S. Our Scripture-focused curriculum, combined with the committed service, talents and shepherding skills of local-church Awana volunteers and parents, produces lasting spiritual results.

#### No doubt that God exists

##### Among Awana alumni, 93.7 percent said they wholeheartedly believe in God

**Among Awana alumni, 93.7 percent said they wholeheartedly believe in God.** Among young adults surveyed by Gallup for the Baylor study on religion in the U.S., 65.8 percent said they have no doubt that God exists. Less than 20 percent of Americans are atheists or believe in a "cosmic force" rather than God. Another 12 percent are conflicted about God's existence.

#### Jesus is the Son of God

##### According to the Awana alumni survey, 98.6 percent of alums believe that Jesus is the Son of God

**Believe that Jesus is the Son of God.** While their parents deserve the most credit, Awana supports their efforts by effectively communicating the Bible's teachings about Christ to our participants starting with our preschool-age programs.

By contrast, over 70 percent of Americans and nearly 85 percent of self-identified Protestants believe that Jesus is God's Son, according to the Baylor study.

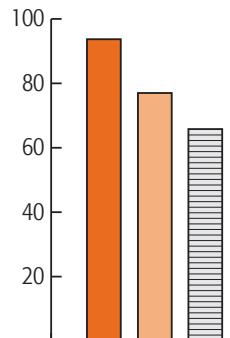
#### Belief about the Bible

##### Over 94 percent of Awana alumni believe that the Bible should be taken literally word for word or is perfectly true but not literal

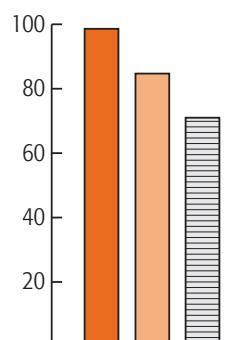
**Belief about the Bible.** Our curriculum instructs kids that Scripture is the literal Word of God and strives to give them a biblical foundation for life. Alumni are 3.6 times more likely than the average American and 2.5 times more likely than the average Protestant to take the Bible literally.

Only 58 percent of all Americans and 73 percent of all Protestants surveyed by Baylor/Gallup say they trust the Bible.

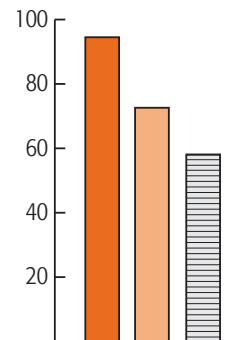
### Survey Results: Spiritual Beliefs



No doubt that God exists



Believe Jesus is the Son of God



Believe the Bible is true

■ = Awana Alumni ■ = Protestants ■ = Nation

## Salvation

**Nearly 93 percent of Awana alumni believe that Christianity is the “one true faith that leads to salvation,” as quoted from the alumni study.** This truth is consistently promoted in our curriculum as part of our emphasis on evangelism. Alumni are far more committed to their faith than any other segment measured in the Baylor study.

Among all Americans, 52.9 percent believe many roads lead to salvation, 16.7 percent do not believe in salvation and 19.6 percent believe their own faith, whether it is Christianity or Judaism or another religion, is the only faith leading to salvation.

## FAITH-DRIVEN BEHAVIORS

Faith drives our actions. Loving and serving Christ are outcomes of knowing Christ intimately and developing a deep trust in Him and His Word through a strong, biblically informed faith. According to the results of the Awana and Baylor studies, Awana alumni are much more devoted to learning and growing spiritually and living out their faith both inside and outside the church than even those categorized in the Baylor Study as most “religiously committed.”

### Church attendance

**Among Awana alumni, 92.7 percent report that they still attend church at least weekly as adults.** Only 1.8 percent have quit attending church since they were kids. Awana is a contributing factor to stemming the drop-out rate among churched youth.

According to the Baylor study, 65.3 percent of respondents said they attended religious services “about weekly” or more often at age 12. As adults, about 36 percent of these same people report that they now attend church no more than once or twice a year. This is a 2.7-fold increase in those not attending church.

### Bible reading

**Awana alumni are 3.6 times more likely to read their “sacred book” — in virtually every case the Bible — several times a week** (60.7 percent of alumni) and are 2.5 times more likely to read it at least weekly (10.9) or almost weekly (11.2). Starting with our preschool program, Awana curriculum encourages participants to spend personal time throughout the week in God’s Word.

Despite most Americans’ professed belief in God and identification with a religion, the Baylor study reported that only 21.6 percent read their sacred book (the Bible, Koran, Torah or other “sacred” book as classified by Baylor) weekly, and 16.8 percent read it several times a week.

## I'm Extremely Grateful For Awana'

Jacquelyn Ashton credits her parents and Awana more than anyone for shaping her life and faith — particularly her love for God’s Word and her hunger for sharing it with others.

“I’m extremely grateful for Awana,” said Jacquelyn, a Norwich, Connecticut native who participated in Awana programs for 13 years. “I want my kids to go through Awana because it’s a great program. I really think it’s important to know God’s Word. We take it for granted. It is a sword. It can help us against every obstacle we come against. It’s a strong foundation in my life.”

Nine years after graduating from high school and completing participation in Awana, Jacquelyn teaches Spanish at a Christian school near the east coast. She has dreamed of moving with her husband, a pastor, overseas to translate the Bible for a people group. She said her parents’ mentoring and missions involvement and the teaching she received in Awana nurtured her heart for God’s Word and for spiritually lost people in developing countries. As Jacquelyn noted, “How will people know the truth unless they hear it in their own language?”

## Alumni Story

## 'Helping Me Grow Spiritually'

Whitney Cooper came to trust Jesus Christ for her salvation when she was 4 years old. Over the next 10-plus years, Awana served as one of her most valuable spiritual influences, instilling her with a biblical worldview and shaping her relationship with God.

"Being in Awana definitely helped me grow spiritually," the Benbrook, Texas native said. "Learning God's Word has been a huge blessing. It has comforted me in times of hurt and disappointment and lifted me up when I was emotionally down. It has brought me joy beyond words. Without it I would be lost. Awana has always been the highlight of my week."

Whitney's experience in Awana benefited her walk with Christ so strongly that she plans to give back by working with high-school students in Awana at a local church after graduating from college. She looks forward to helping other kids prepare to follow Christ for life just as Awana aided her.

"What I value most from my years in Awana," Whitney recalled, "are the incredible memories of spending time with godly teens who appreciate Christ's sacrifice as much as I do, learning Scripture, memorizing God's Word and becoming closer to Christ. It is an awesome thing to have God's Word hidden in your heart! It helped me through different struggles throughout high school, and I know it will be a guiding light for me."

## Alumni Story

### Giving

Ranging in age from 19 to 32, Awana alumni surveyed are younger than the Baylor study's national sample and consequently less financially secure. Despite this difference, **only 15.8 percent of Awana alums donate less than \$500 per year to their place of worship — a decrease of over 62 percent compared to the Baylor survey.** Forty-two percent of Americans give less than \$500 per year to their place of worship, according to Baylor.

**On the other end of the scale, 11.9 percent of Awana alumni reported giving over \$10,000 per year to their place of worship compared with 2.8 percent of Americans — a 4.2-fold increase.**

### Bible study or Sunday school

**At 85.8 percent, Awana alumni are far more likely than Protestants (43 percent) and all Americans (29.9) to participate in a Bible study or Sunday school.** They are even 64 percent more likely than those who attend religious services up to several times per week.

In fact, only 13.3 percent of Awana alumni did not participate in a Bible study or Sunday school in the last month as opposed to 70.1 percent of the nation. It is reasonable to infer that Awana instills a hunger and discipline to study and learn God's Word.

### Small group/discipleship

**At 60.1 percent, Awana alumni are far more likely than all other groups to have participated in a small group or discipleship activity in the last month.** Just 23 percent of Protestants, 15.2 percent of the national sample and 34.1 percent of the most committed religious service attendees took part in such activities.

Awana supports families in instilling within kids a lifelong zeal and devotion to learn and grow as Christians.

### Choir or musical programs

**At 32.9 percent, Awana alumni are 3.5 times more likely to be involved in church choir practice or musical programs** than the national average and 67 percent more likely than even those attending services weekly or more. Awana does not offer musical instruction but does nurture young people's desire to use their talents to worship and serve God.

### Community volunteerism

**A total of 52.9 percent of Awana alumni said they volunteered in their community anywhere from one to 11 hours in the last month.** This makes them twice as likely as other Americans to serve their community. In fact, they are more than three times as likely as other adults to spend five or more hours per month doing volunteer work. Awana ministries are intentional about fostering a heart of service in young people.

## Community/missionary outreach

**With 46.7 percent participating at least once in the last month, Awana alumni are far more likely than other Americans (21.7 percent) to join outreach efforts** into the community or a missionary outreach. Evangelism and outreach are two of the most highly practiced components of most Awana programs.

## FAITH-DRIVEN SERVICE

Reflecting the service aspect of our goal to "help churches and parents raise kids who know, love and serve Christ," **Awana alumni surveyed were nearly five times more likely than Americans polled by Baylor/Gallup to serve 11 hours or more each month with their church.** Nearly 74 percent surveyed said they volunteer at least one to two hours a month.

Even compared to the national sample of those who do serve in their church, Awana alumni volunteer at much higher levels.

## Prayer

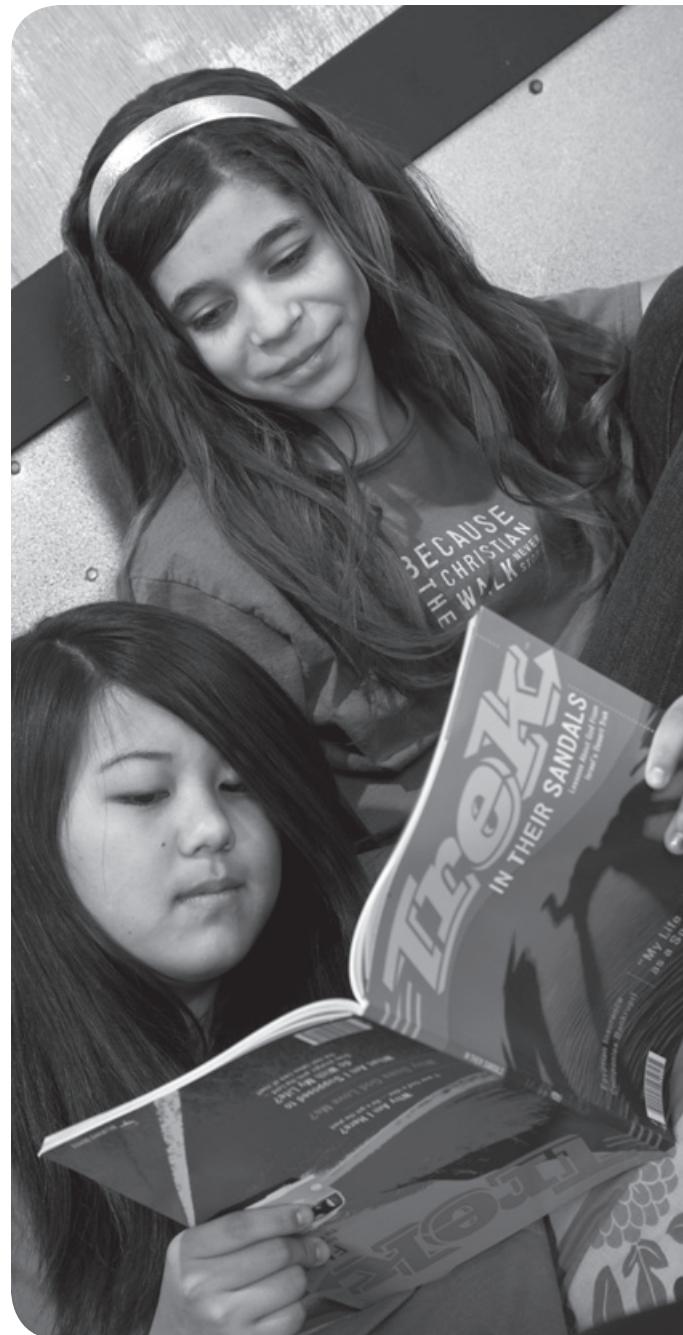
Awana alumni are far more likely than others to be people of prayer. **Ninety-two percent of Awana alumni pray regularly compared to 66 percent of Americans.**

Awana respondents also reported praying much more frequently; 66.3 percent pray several times a day and 81.6 percent say they pray at least once a day. Less than half of Americans pray daily (or meditate in the case of some non-Christian Gallup/Baylor respondents). Prayer is taught, modeled and practiced from a biblical perspective in Awana programs.

## Personal evangelism

Awana alumni are much more likely than others to share their faith with friends. **Nearly 70 percent said they witness to friends at least once a month compared to 35.7 percent of the national average, 48.7 percent of Protestants and 59 percent of the most committed churchgoers.**

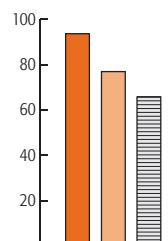
This finding is not surprising. Evangelism is the highest priority of Awana. Our programs present God's plan of salvation throughout our curriculum, teaching and special events. They also train and encourage children and teens to share Christ with friends and family members by inviting their peers to Awana, explaining the gospel message and, for teens, defending their faith.



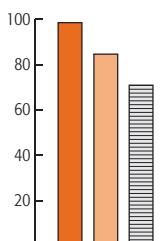
## Awana Alumni Survey Highlights

### SPIRITUAL BELIEFS

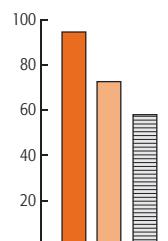
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No doubts that God exists

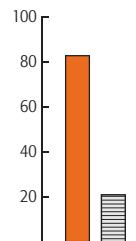


Believe Jesus is God's Son

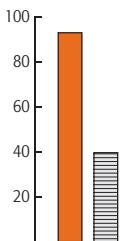


Trust the Bible as God's Word

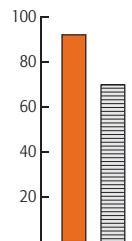
### FAITH-DRIVEN BEHAVIORS



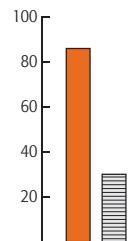
Read Scripture or other religious books weekly or more



Attend worship services weekly or more

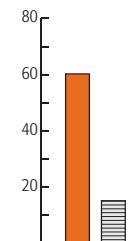


Pray regularly

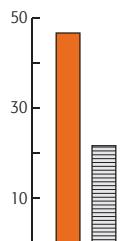


Take part in Bible study or Sunday school

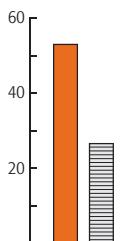
### FAITH-DRIVEN SERVICE



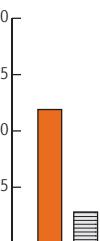
Small group/discipleship



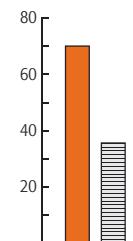
Community/missionary outreach



Community volunteerism



Give \$10,000 or more yearly to place of worship



Personal evangelism

## Conclusion: Equipping kids for life

Amidst a wave of compelling findings, a recurring theme resonated throughout the 2007 Awana alumni study.

Consistent, long-term participation in Awana — accompanied by even stronger spiritual influence from parents — reaps long-lasting results for the kingdom.

Teaching God's Word over the course of the formative years — and incorporating fully integrated programs that build and support one another — produces the ultimate outcome: fully devoted Christians empowered with an unwavering faith.

Two findings shed particular light on this conclusion.

- Nine in 10 alumni said Awana played an important role in developing a spiritual foundation for their adult lives. A total of 92.3 percent said Awana helped shape their moral foundation for today.
- Alumni place such high value on the impact of Awana on their life that 92.9 percent said they would like their own children to participate in an Awana ministry someday.

The alumni study results were so eye opening that the market researcher who conducted the survey described them as the most favorable responses he has encountered in 25 years in his field. "The results are so positive," he reported, "that they should be shared with everyone involved in Awana at the local-church level. Awana is a big commitment on the part of a lot of people, and knowing how important Awana is in building a strong spiritual foundation for the children of the church would be a huge encouragement."

## Join a spiritual revolution

The most vital outcome that churches and families can attain, as God directs, is preparing young people to know and follow Christ. Our hope is that they display the kind of spiritual leadership urgently needed from our next generation in the home, church and community.

In an increasingly pluralistic culture where a shocking number of our youth are abandoning their faith after entering adulthood, Awana stands ready to lead a spiritual revolution.

Results of the alumni study have strengthened our conviction for moving kids along an intentional path of evangelism and discipleship from ages 2 to 18 with the purpose of guiding our youth to know, love and serve Christ for the rest of their lives.

Awana is more committed than ever to developing relevant, Scripture-based curriculum, training and resources that equip parents and churches to build a biblical foundation for children's and teens' faith.





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## How should you respond to these results?

Whether you are a parent, church representative or denominational leader, or donor, consider joining us in the cause of winning and training our youngest generation for Jesus Christ.

**PARENTS:** God intends you to be the primary spiritual nurturers of your children. He designed the home to be the center of discipleship where kids are molded into spiritually mature Christ followers and where parents and children grow together in faith — building stronger families and churches along the way.

**CHURCHES:** God designed the church to play a critical supporting role to parents — encouraging and equipping them to lead their children's spiritual development. He also desires for parents and churches to form an ongoing partnership for raising kids spiritually, each fulfilling their God-ordained role.

**DENOMINATIONAL LEADERS:** Has the epidemic of teens abandoning their faith infected the youth and churches in your denomination? Imagine those churches forming a united front with parents, closely collaborating to spiritually train young people — and with a clear target in mind for how their kids' character, values and faith should turn out. Such partnerships could dramatically transform untold numbers of children, teens and families and even entire communities.

**DONORS:** Learn ten ways you can support Awana missions by visiting <http://missions.awana.org>.

To learn more about Awana,  
visit [www.awana.org](http://www.awana.org) or call  
1.888.292.6249.

## Specific ways Awana can help you impact kids for life

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### **Denominational and Church Leaders**

If you are a denominational leader or a pastor whose church does not offer Awana, consider starting the Awana ministry. Visit [www.awana.org/about](http://www.awana.org/about) for more information.

### **Youth Pastors**

If you are a pastor whose church only uses our children's ministries, consider our youth ministry programs by visiting [www.24-7ministries.net](http://www.24-7ministries.net) and our family ministry program, HomeBase™, by visiting [www.awana.org/homebase](http://www.awana.org/homebase).

### **Parents**

If you are a parent, Awana would love to come alongside you. Find an Awana program in your area and learn more about Awana by visiting [www.awana.org/parents](http://www.awana.org/parents).

### **Advocates**

If you are interested in supporting our ministry to children, youth and families prayerfully and financially, learn all about how Awana is impacting lives around the world by visiting <http://missions.awana.org>.