

# Defending the Faith

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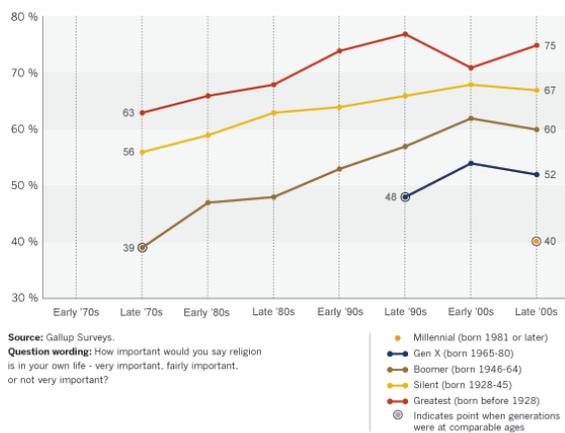
November 2017

## There Is No Greater Truth

The word “religion” has come to develop negative connotations in today’s culture. It has become associated with hypocrisy, terrorists, or the narrow-minded irrational adherence to dogma. It has become associated with organizations, rather than communities of people. In the case of Christianity, many denominations have become associated with religious leaders than with Christ. The graphs below show the trends, by age group, of those who consider religion important and those affiliated to a specific religion. Fewer and fewer young people, especially those under 36 years old (28%), identify themselves with a religious denomination. Even more revealing, only 40% of millennials compared to 75% of those over 89 years old consider religion important. Each generation has shown a marked decline. Where will this trend lead? What conclusions can we draw?

Importance of Religion, by Generation

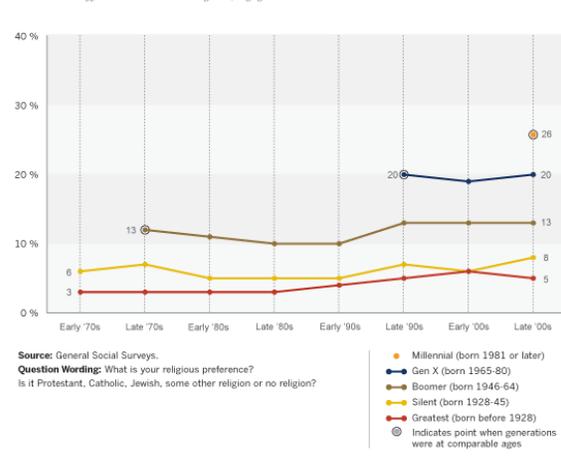
Percent saying religion is very important in their lives



Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life • Religion in the Millennial Generation, February 2010

Young People Less Religiously Affiliated

Percent unaffiliated with a religion, by generation



Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life • Religion in the Millennial Generation, February 2010

Isn't it interesting that religion becomes more important as we become older and closer to death (chart on the left)? The greatest increase in the importance of religion is indicated by the Baby Boomers. During their youth, 39% considered religion important, but more recently and thirty years

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## There Is No Greater Truth (cont'd)

older, 60% of the Baby Boomers consider religion important. There is little change for each generation in their affiliation to a specific religion by age (chart on the right). Of those surveyed, 13% of the Baby Boomers had no religious preference in their youth and thirty years later, 13% still indicate no religious preference. That does not bode well for our youngest generation, where twice as many (26%) have no religious preference. In addition, each subsequent generation considers religion less and less important and thus, does not associate themselves with a specific religious affiliation.

When analyzing both graphs together, we can conclude that although God is important to the lives of many, fewer are associating themselves with a specific religious affiliation. Why is that? Are many disillusioned by religious organizations? Are we not meeting the needs of the people? Our churches are seeking ways to increase the engagement and involvement of young people, but what do young people need from their churches? What do all people need?

According to James 1:27, *"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."* According to James, we need to set a good example by the life we lead, being charitable and *"unspotted from the world."* Yet, there is an important social component necessary. I remember when I was a teenager and young adult, even though it was long ago! The most important thing to me was my social life, my friends. I went to church because I belonged to a youth group at my church, and that was where my friends were. Well, God was important, too, but I regularly attended church to see my friends. As I grew older, my church attendance was determined by my closeness to God, my relationship with God. Each time my relationship grew stronger, I sought to learn more about God. I hungered for knowledge and wisdom. I hungered to experience God.

I believe that the most crucial factors in increasing our participation and church attendance are the same two factors, genuine love through relationship with God and with others. These are the same two commandments Christ gave us; we are to love God with our entire being, and we are to love one another. If these precepts are not alive in our churches, in the hearts of our parishioners, Christ's message is in vain. I believe that people hunger for the word of God, but are unwittingly starving themselves.

Whose responsibility is it to meet the needs of our people in our Christian communities? It is not just the responsibility of the priests or pastors. It is up to each one of us. Each community member is responsible for supporting and encouraging one another, responsible for loving one another.

Another interesting statistic, according to Petts (2014)<sup>1</sup>, is that parental influence on children's religious life is overwhelmingly the greatest factor in church affiliation as the children become adults. In other words, Christian children who are taught about Christ by their parents, will follow Him, even as they become adults. Parents, not priests, pastors, or teachers, have the greatest influence on their children. Parents who teach by example have an even greater impact. When children see their parents pray, when they go to church with their family, when they participate in church activities, these children will develop their faith. When children see their parents loving one

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another and showing love to others in the community, they will be inspired to follow that example. They will know the love of Christ.

Children need a moral compass as they become adolescents and teenagers. *“Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray”* (Proverbs 22:6). Teach your children to love and respect everyone and teach them good manners. The children of today need an example of God’s love to flourish into confident adults. They need the support and encouragement of the church, their Christian peers and their families to experience genuine Christian living and to experience Christ Himself. They may act as if they are not listening, but they are outstanding observers of those around them.

How can parents teach by example? Parents must always be loving, honest and genuine. *“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4). We will make mistakes, but we can acknowledge those mistakes and teach our children what is right according to Christ’s teachings. We must always be loving to all in all situations, *“take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all”* (Romans 12:17-18). In other words, as much as we are able, we are to live with integrity, humble and compassionate, merciful and kind, enduring suffering with patience and courage. Finally, *“Have nothing to do with stupid and senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness”* (2 Timothy 2:23-25). When we correct our children, we should do so with love and gentleness, teaching and encouraging them in the ways of the Lord. We can offer consequences, so they understand that poor choices in life have consequences, but they must be appropriate to the behavior. *“Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger”* (Ephesians 4:26).

According to Merriam-Webster, “religion” is the service and worship of God, or a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith. Religion is the dedication to our beliefs about God. The negative connotations of religion originate from beliefs that are contrary to the teachings of Christ. Christ taught us to love, to be compassionate, not to judge others, not to force our beliefs on others. We teach others about Christ through love, by the way we live our lives in the love of Christ. We are Christians because we follow the ways of Christ, who embodies the purity of love. This is why it is so important that our children are taught our faith. There is no greater truth than Christ’s love.

<sup>1</sup>Petts, Richard J., “Parental Religiosity and Youth Religiosity: Variations by Family Structure,” *Sociology of Religion Advance Access* (November 10, 2014). Retrieved on Oct. 29, 2017 from [http://youthandreligion.nd.edu/assets/156823/sociology\\_of\\_religion\\_2014\\_petts\\_socrel\\_sru064.pdf](http://youthandreligion.nd.edu/assets/156823/sociology_of_religion_2014_petts_socrel_sru064.pdf)

Helen Kamenos  
Readers’ Favorite Author

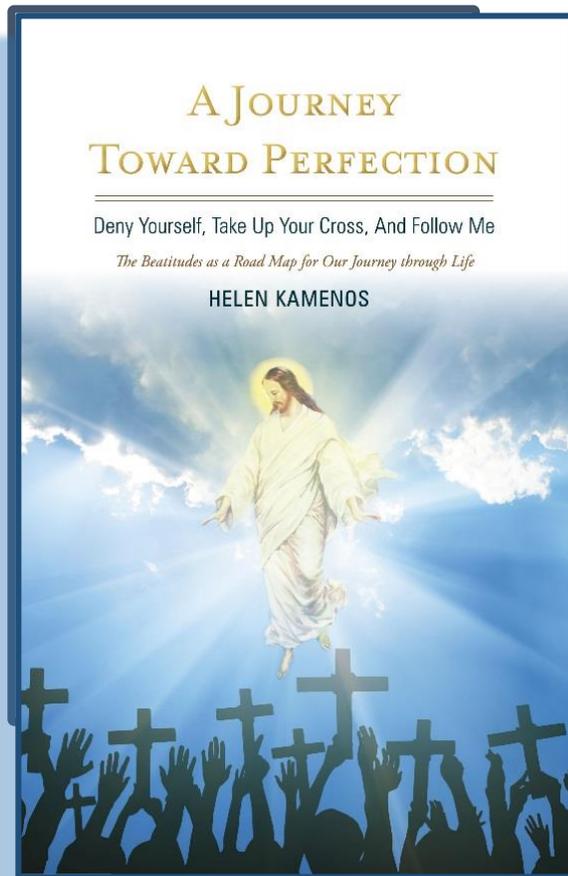
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## Save on Christmas Shopping

Buy the print version of **A Journey Toward Perfection** for yourself or your friends and **save \$2.00** through 11/30/2017. Go to <https://store.bookbaby.com//bookshop/book/index.aspx?bookURL=A-Journey-Toward-Perfection> and use the following coupon code: **Q8ZBU9**.



Here is the latest review, posted by Jaime Contreras on Amazon and Goodreads, "One of the Best Teaching Christian Books I Have Ever Read:"

"I am grateful for this book of hope, strengthening, and developing a mature relationship with the Lord.

In truth, it is very basic in content and quite appropriate for a new Christian or someone who has lost touch with the Christian way of faith. The spirit of love comes forth and the reader benefits from this. The book is based on the lessons of love and guidance found in Matthew 5-7. Being that the Beatitudes form the base of this book, Ms. Kamenos spends a large part of the book focusing on the need to be humble, mournful, meek, righteous, merciful, pure in heart, and peaceful. The author lays out the need to master these basic lessons for it is the only way one can be one with the Lord. The author shines a new light on the words and concepts of peace, purity, meekness, humility, righteousness, charity, love, et al. by citing the scriptures and the biblical meaning of such. By focusing on such basic concepts, the author delivers a vital insight into the tenets of the Christian faith.

This world is full of evil and the believer must be able to stand up against evil and be a minister of love, hope, peace, and charity. This book serves as a handbook for believers because it encompasses the essential lessons for living a Christian life and battling evil. The reader of this enlightened book has a valuable tool. Like any stellar teaching, one must take the concepts taught in this book and wield them in righteousness. A firm foundation in the lessons taught on the mount and throughout Jesus' ministry will gird one for life and bring one into an intimate relationship with Jesus, the Savior.

Finally, this book was written with love and faith. I praise the work of the Holy Spirit leading Ms. Helen Kamenos in this work. I rate this one of the best Christian teaching books I have ever read."

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In the United States, we observe Thanksgiving in November, which traces back to the Pilgrim celebration in 1621. According to tradition, the first 3-day Thanksgiving feast was attended by 53 Pilgrims and 90 Native Americans. After several years of drought and hardships, the Pilgrims wished to give thanks to God for the abundant harvest.

Although we set aside this special day to give God thanks, He loves it when we are continually thankful, *"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things"* (Psalm 107:1,8-9, NIV). And again, *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you"* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

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