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George Barna's Definition Of "Revolutionaries"

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George Barna recently released a clarification of his definition of "revolutionaries" in reference to his controversial [new book](#). Apparently, enough people misunderstood it (you can always count on that in the church) that he felt he needed to make it a bit more clear. It's compelling stuff, and I highly recommend you give the book a good read.

Faith Revolutionaries Stand Out From the Crowd

(Ventura, CA) – The controversy fueled by George Barna's current best-seller, *Revolution*, has raised many questions about the nature of the people the California-based researcher labels "revolutionaries." Defined as born again people who have made their faith in God the highest priority in their life, who believe that their faith has greatly transformed their life, and who often express and experience their faith through alternative forms the Church, Barna this week released additional data about the beliefs, practices and lifestyle of revolutionaries in comparison to those who fit a more tame spiritual profile.

Revolutionaries possess some attributes that fail to distinguish them from other born again Christians. For instance, they are just as likely to embrace new technology, view movies just as often, a similar proportion of them are overweight, and equivalent percentages of the two groups consider themselves to live a simple life, to feel at peace, and to be in control of their life. Even in the spiritual realm, they have identical profiles when it comes to the frequency of fasting and how often they talk to non-believers about faith matters.

However, Barna also outlined four areas in which revolutionaries are substantially different than other born again adults, and vastly different from adults who are not born again.

Integration of Faith in Life

Perhaps the aspect of life in which revolutionaries are most distinct from the mass of non-revolutionary born again adults relates to the integration of faith into lifestyle. Barna revealed the following differences between the two segments.

- More than seven out of every 10 revolutionaries are actively serving in their community, compared to 53% among non-revolutionary born again adults.
- The average amount of money donated by revolutionaries in 2005 was \$2990. That surpasses the mean giving total among non-revolutionary born



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again adults (\$1641) by 82%, despite household income levels that are similar.

- Almost two out of every three revolutionaries (64%) study the Bible every day. That's close to three times the percentage of non-revolutionary born again adults who do so (23%).
- A majority of revolutionaries (54%) has a quiet time with God each day. Less than one-third of non-revolutionary born again adults (31%) follows that pattern.
- While close to half of all revolutionary families spend time each day studying the Bible together (42%), the same is true among just one out of every eight non-revolutionary born again families (12%). In fact, a majority of the non-revolutionary born again families admit to "never" or "rarely" studying God's Word together.
- About six out of every ten revolutionaries (57%) experience "intimate, personally stirring worship of God" on a daily basis. The same held true for only four out of every ten non-revolutionary born again adults (39%).
- Non-revolutionary born again adults were just half as likely (15%, compared to 27% among revolutionaries) to engage in daily conversations with a mentor, friend or spiritual overseer in which they were held accountable for following the beliefs they possess.
- Most revolutionaries (56%) frequently commit their time and energy to helping disadvantaged people in their community. That substantially surpasses the level of involvement among non-revolutionary born again adults (40%).
- More than four out of five revolutionaries (82%) had shared their faith in Jesus Christ with a non-believer in the preceding 12 months. That was considerably more than the 54% among non-revolutionary born again adults.

Beliefs Differ

Barna also pointed out that the startling difference in behavior between the two segments of the born again population is largely affected by their divergent beliefs. "Revolutionaries have a very different, faith-driven lifestyle," according to Barna, "because they are more likely to take the Bible at face value, to feel a deep and genuine gratitude for what Jesus did for them on the cross, and because their beliefs lead them to attempt to be the manifestation of God's kingdom on earth. Your behavior is a result of what you believe, and the manner in which revolutionaries live corresponds to a Bible-centered perspective on life."

Once again, the differences between the two groups are unmistakable.

- Almost all revolutionaries (97%) strongly affirm "the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches." Far fewer non-revolutionary born again adults (65%) join them in that perspective.
- Whereas eight out of ten revolutionaries believe that there is absolute moral truth, barely half as many of the non-revolutionary born again adults (43%) concur.
- The passion of revolutionaries is partially fueled by their belief that Satan is

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real. Two out of every three (65%) firmly argue that Satan is real and affects people's lives; just one out of every three non-revolutionary born again adults (35%) buys that point of view.

- The importance of obedience to God's commands and principles is driven home by the finding that two-thirds of revolutionaries (67%) strongly believe that "success in life is determined only by your obedience to God." In contrast, a minority of the non-revolutionary born again adults (42%) embrace that thinking.
- Despite being unfairly criticized as "isolated" and "independent," this research found that revolutionaries are more tuned in to the importance of community in spiritual life. Not only do they have a wider net of faith-based personal relationships that affects their spiritual development, but they believe that someone cannot become a "complete and mature" follower of Christ without being personally involved in a spiritual community. While four out of ten revolutionaries strongly endorse this notion, only half as many (21%) of the non-revolutionary born again adults do so.
- While a startling percentage of the non-revolutionary born again adults agrees that a good person can earn their salvation (even though they contend that their own salvation was based on grace, not good works), a large majority of revolutionaries (75%) strongly rejects the works-based or multiple-means-to-salvation arguments. (Only 44% of the non-revolutionary born again adults strongly asserts that salvation can never be earned.)

Regarding Faith Focus

Whereas revolutionaries are partially identified by placing their faith in God as the single, highest priority in their life, such a commitment is common to less than one out of every ten born again adults who is not a revolutionary (8%).

Perceiving oneself to be fully committed to God helps explain why 91% of revolutionaries view themselves as a "full-time servant of God" compared to only 72% among non-revolutionary born again adults.

The research also discovered that revolutionaries more frequently make use of Christian media on a daily basis as they strive to stay focused on God and their faith. Overall, a majority (54%) listens to Christian radio everyday; 42% of revolutionaries listen to teaching tapes or CDs on a daily basis; and one-fifth (20%) watch Christian television programming each day. In comparison, less than half as many non-revolutionary born again people tune in to Christian radio daily (25%), far fewer listen to teaching tapes or CDs each day (25%), and just 9% are exposed to Christian TV every day.

Revolutionaries were also more than twice as likely as non-revolutionary born again individuals to visit faith-related websites in a given day, and more than twice as likely to read a Christian magazine on a daily basis.

Transformation Is Evident

Apart from the overt evidence of the changes that their faith in God has introduced into their lives, the national research revealed that while all revolutionaries, by definition, contend that their life has been greatly transformed by their faith, the same perspective is found among far fewer of the

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non-revolutionary born again adults (67%).

Are Critics of the Revolution III-Informed?

After reviewing these and other data from recent studies, the author of the book on the growing revolution of faith in America (entitled *Revolution*) suggested that the critics of this new movement of believers are criticizing without understanding. "Many of the critics of the Revolution probably have good intentions," Barna reasoned, "as they seek to protect God from what they believe is heresy or compromise. The problem is that many of those critics are producing emotion-charged, ill-informed criticisms of people who are practicing many of the very things that Jesus Himself taught and practiced. It's hard to fathom why so many church leaders are so viciously opposed to the passion and godly exercises of the revolutionaries."

Pressed on the issue of the departure of many revolutionaries from congregational churches, Barna acknowledged that this is one of the hot buttons of the critics. "It's important to remember that the Bible does not command us to 'go to church.' It commands us to live in a certain manner, to be connected to other believers in a life-shaping community and to engage in worship together. But keep in mind," he continued, "that the dominant form of the Church in the New Testament era was the house church and that the family was clearly a center of one's faith experiences during the early church times. It is mind-boggling that so many of today's church and seminary leaders have launched incredibly uncharitable attacks on devout followers of Christ simply because they are meeting in different places and pursuing God through divergent yet biblical approaches. That same spirit of divisiveness and contentiousness has led millions of revolutionaries to flee organized churches for alternative faith communities where their energy can be poured into honoring God and loving people, rather than fighting about man-made preferences, routines and systems."

Research Background

The data in this report are based on interviews with 3,033 adults from across the nation. These telephone surveys were conducted by The Barna Group, based upon a random sample of people 18 years of age and older living within the 48 continental states. The maximum margin of sampling error associated with the aggregate sample of adults is ± 2.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The maximum margin of sampling error associated with the aggregate sample of Revolutionaries is ± 6.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The maximum margin of sampling error associated with the aggregate sample of born again adults is ± 3.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. In the research, the distribution of survey respondents corresponded to the geographic dispersion of the U.S. population. Multiple callbacks were used to increase the probability of including a reliable distribution of qualified individuals.

"Born again Christians" are defined as people who said they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today and who also indicated they believe that when they die they will go to Heaven because they had confessed their sins and had accepted Jesus Christ as their savior. Respondents were not asked to describe themselves as "born again."

"Revolutionaries" were classified on the basis of meeting 11 specific criteria.

Excerpt From Revolution

Chapter 14

This Revolution's for You!



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I hope you have gleaned a few new insights into our culture and the Church from this book. Studying the Revolution has been a life-changing experience for me in many respects. It has stimulated my curiosity and restored my hope for the Christian body in America, redefined my beliefs about church and the kingdom, and radically reshaped my spiritual habits. This book may not motivate you to become a Revolutionary, but I pray that it at least gives you a clearer understanding of what the Revolution is all about and how you can partner with the nation's Revolutionaries to advance God's kingdom on earth. If this information strikes a deeper chord within you, then I pray that the book has provided you with the sense of value that Revolutionaries possess within the work of God's kingdom. I hope that you claim the freedom to be whoever God made you to be in fulfilling your role in His service.

This is a great time to be alive—especially for those who love Jesus Christ. The opportunities to minister are unparalleled: the millions of searching hearts and agonized souls, combined with the abundance of resources Christians have at their disposal, makes this a very special era for the Church. Throw in the rapid and profound cultural changes occurring as well as the struggles local churches are undergoing, and we have an environment in which the birth of a spiritual revolution is inevitable. The confluence of those elements demanded a dramatic response, and the emerging Revolution represents such a historic thrust.

There can be no turning back at this point, no return to the old ways and the comfortable forms. Although we cannot accurately predict what the Church will look like twenty years hence, we can be confident that it will be more different than similar to the Church at the start of the twenty-first century. The Revolution is an extensive grassroots response to the undeniable and insatiable human longing for a genuine relationship with God our Father. The transformations it introduces are sometimes difficult to accept and oftentimes inefficient in their development, but the outgrowth is a stronger and more irresistible Church.

The Church You've Always Wanted

As you seek to comprehend the emerging Revolution and describe it to others, keep in mind its central facets. It is comprised of a demographically diverse group of people who are determined to let nothing stand in the way of authentic and genuine experience with God. They are involved in a variety of activities and connections designed to satisfy a spiritual focus. They are God-lovers and joyfully obedient servants. They are willing to do whatever it takes to draw closer to God, to bond with , and to bring Him glory and pleasure. If that can be accomplished through existing structures and process, they accept that; if not, they will blaze new trails to facilitate such a Spirit-driven life.

En route to this intimacy with God, they are integrating the seven spiritual passions of a true Revolutionary Christian into their life. Their daily expressions of worship refine their sense of the beauty, the creativity, and the majesty of God. Their joy at knowing Him naturally provides the impetus to communicate to others the good news about Jesus' sacrifice and offer of salvation. Their infatuation with the kingdom fuels their consistent effort to know more about God's ways. They respond to His love by seeking ways to invest the resources they control or influence for kingdom outcomes. Their friendships hinge on spiritual growth. They

pursue opportunities to use their abilities to affect the quality of life in the world. And they recognize that their most important set of relationships is within their family, and that Christ must be the centerpiece of their experience together. These passions enable Revolutionaries to remain centered on God in a world of distractions and seductions. Their attention to these passions allows them to be the Church.

At what stage, or under what conditions, is the Revolution successful? Revolutionaries recognize that spiritual success is more about surrender than results. They know that God examines the fruit of someone's life, but the real fruit of the kingdom is flat-out, no-excuses obedience to God. Such submission produces a perpetual string of behaviors and outcomes that may be imperceptible to a frenetic and hard-hearted world, but represent major victories within the kingdom. Why? Because life is war, and every time a soldier willingly engages in sacrificial battle for the King, His honor is advanced. Revolutionaries' complete and total surrender to Him and His cause is the essence of eternal victory.

It is this holistic devotion to being Christ-like that triggers the transformational legacy of the Revolution. First, Revolutionaries are changed so profoundly that they see life through a completely different lens. Then, armed with that new perspective and the courage to respond, these individuals set about transforming the world by being replicas of Jesus in every space they inhabit.

The purity and authenticity of their cultivated spirit influences everything in their path. Their beliefs, identity, behavior, and relationships blend to project a persona that pricks the spirit in everyone around them. Analysts might say that the job of a Revolutionary is to reform the culture, but that confuses purpose and product. These extreme God-lovers reform the culture simply by being true representations of who God

made them to be. They do not create and enforce a carefully plotted and meticulously deployed agenda of reform. They simply live a holy and obedient life that a society suffering from the stranglehold of sin cannot ignore. The transformation that follows in their wake is not so much their doing as it is an inevitable result of God's creatures waking up to the difference between living in the freedom of Christ or in the shackles of Satan.

In past spiritual awakenings, dynamic preachers went into society to bring people into a local church for further development. This era of spiritual growth is different. It features millions of individuals quietly using the weapons of faith that God has given them to be scions of transformation within the framework of their typical space and connections. The starting point is internal, not external: their message is their own transformation by Christ, made real in their words and deeds. Rather than draw people out of the world and into a relationship with an institution, Revolutionaries demonstrate what it means to be the presence of God wherever you are. This is a broad-based grassroots revival that has no single leader and no headquarters. The declaration of purpose is more than two thousand years old: the Bible.

In the great awakenings of America's history, the pattern was always the same: draw people into the local church for teaching and other experiences. In this new movement of God, the approach is the opposite: it entails drawing people away from reliance upon a local church into a deeper connection with and reliance upon God. In other words, past revivals were outside-inside phenomena, in which the dynamic and evangelistically gifted Spurgeons, Finneys, Wesleys and Whitefields of the Church brought non-Christian people inside the local church to be ministered to. This edition is predominantly an outside-outside experience, where believers see the world as their church grounds and every human being they encounter as a soul to love into the permanent presence and experience of

God. Many of these Revolutionaries are active members of a local church, but their primary ministry effect is not within the congregational framework but in the raw world.

The Affirmations of a Revolutionary

What we believe drives what we do. What we believe matters to God—which is why so much of the Bible painstakingly explains God and His kingdom (i.e., theology). The Revolution fosters a stunningly diverse array of activities that work together to produce spiritual and behavioral transformation. But Revolutionaries connect at the level of theology. What are the affirmations common to Revolutionaries?

I am a Revolutionary in the service of God Almighty. My life is not my own; I exist as a free person but have voluntarily become a slave to God. My role on earth is to live as a Revolutionary, committed to love, holiness, and advancing God's kingdom. My life is not about me and my natural desires; it is all about knowing, loving, and serving God with all my heart, mind, strength, and soul. Therefore, I acknowledge the following: •

- *I am a sinner, broken by my disobedience but restored by Jesus Christ in order to participate in good works that please God. I am not perfect; but Jesus Christ makes me righteous in God's eyes, and the Holy Spirit leads me toward greater holiness. •*
- *God created me for His purposes. My desire as a Revolutionary is to fulfill those ends, and those ends alone. When I get out of bed each day, I do so for one purpose: to love, obey, and serve God and His people. •*
- *Every breath I take is a declaration of war against Satan and a commitment to opposing him. •*
- *God does not need me to fight His fight, but He invites me to allow Him to fight through me. It is my privilege to serve Him in that manner. I anticipate and will gladly endure various hardships as I serve God; for this is the price of participation in winning the spiritual war. •*

- *I do not need to save the world; Jesus Christ has already done that. I cannot transform the world, but I can allow God to use me to transform some part of it.* •
- *My commitment to the Revolution of faith is sealed by my complete surrender to God's ways and His will. I will gratefully do what He asks of me simply because He loves me enough to ask. I gain my security, success, and significance through my surrender to Him.* •
- *I am not called to attend or join a church. I am called to be the Church.* •
- *Worship is not an event I attend or a process I observe; it is the lifestyle I lead.* •
- *I do not give away 10 percent of my resources. I surrender 100 percent.* •
- *God has given me natural abilities and supernatural abilities, all intended to advance His kingdom. I will deploy those abilities for that purpose.* •
- *The proof of my status as a Revolutionary is the love I show to God and people.* •
- *There is strength in relationships; I am bound at a heart and soul level to other Revolutionaries, and I will bless believers whenever I have the chance.* •
- *To achieve victory in the spiritual war in which we are immersed, there is nothing I must accomplish; I must simply follow Christ with everything I have.* •
- *There is no greater calling than to know and serve God.* •
- *The world is desperately seeking meaning and purpose. I will respond to that need with the Good News and meaningful service.* •
- *Absolute moral and spiritual truth exists, is knowable, and is intended for my life; it is accessible through the Bible.* •
- *I want nothing more than to hear God say to me, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."*

Thank you, Lord God, for loving me, for saving me, for refining me, for blessing me, and for including me in the work of your kingdom. My life is yours to use as you please. I love you.

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