

Parents look inward, not upward, for guidance

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Most American parents believe their parenting skills and family lives are pretty good, but they are reluctant to describe their homes as peaceful, relaxed or joyful. They say their daily family time consists mostly of eating dinner and watching television, according to a new study from [LifeWay Research](#).

While most parents are trying to improve their skills, far fewer look to the church or the Bible for help, the researchers reported.

The national survey of 1,200 parents with children under 18 at home was conducted by LifeWay Research, an arm of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. The study found 96 percent of parents agree they consistently try to be better parents. Fifty-eight percent agreed strongly and 38 percent agreed somewhat with this statement.

“Parents claim they are trying hard to be better parents, but they are not welcoming outside guidance or advice,” Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research, said. With Rodney and Selma Wilson, McConnell is co-author of *The Parent Adventure*.

Sixty percent of parents look a lot to their own experiences growing up as their source of guidance on parenting and another 31 percent do so to some extent. By comparison, 21 percent indicated they receive a lot of guidance from a sacred text, and 15 percent said they depend a lot on a church. A full 61 percent completely ignore parenting seminars, and 53 percent have no use for books by religious parenting experts.

Only 14 percent indicated they are very familiar with what the Bible has to

say about parenting, LifeWay Research reported.

Twenty-seven percent of Protestant parents said they are very familiar with what the Bible has to say about parenting, compared to only 7 percent of Catholic parents. Among parents with evangelical beliefs, 52 percent said they are very familiar with the Bible's parenting advice.

A large majority—74 percent—of the parents described their home environment as supportive; 71 percent as positive; 69 percent as encouraging; and 69 percent as active. Only 53 percent reported that they pray together at least monthly, and just 31 percent reported having religious devotionals or studies together at least monthly.

More than 80 percent of parents rate family life—the quality of family communication, time spent with each other, treating each other with respect—as good to excellent. Thirty percent, however, indicate their family's spiritual life is only fair or poor.

A full 92 percent of parents agreed they need encouragement, the study found. Almost 10 percent said they need help with parenting, and 11 percent indicated they have nowhere to turn for encouragement.

Among parents who attend religious worship services weekly, 38 percent indicated they get no encouragement from a sacred text such as the Bible, Torah or Quran. And 24 percent reported getting no encouragement from their church or place of worship.

Forty-three percent of Protestant parents and 85 percent of Catholic parents said they do not receive encouragement from a sacred text.

As for their church, 39 percent of Protestant parents and 71 percent of Catholic parents said it is not a source of encouragement as a parent.