

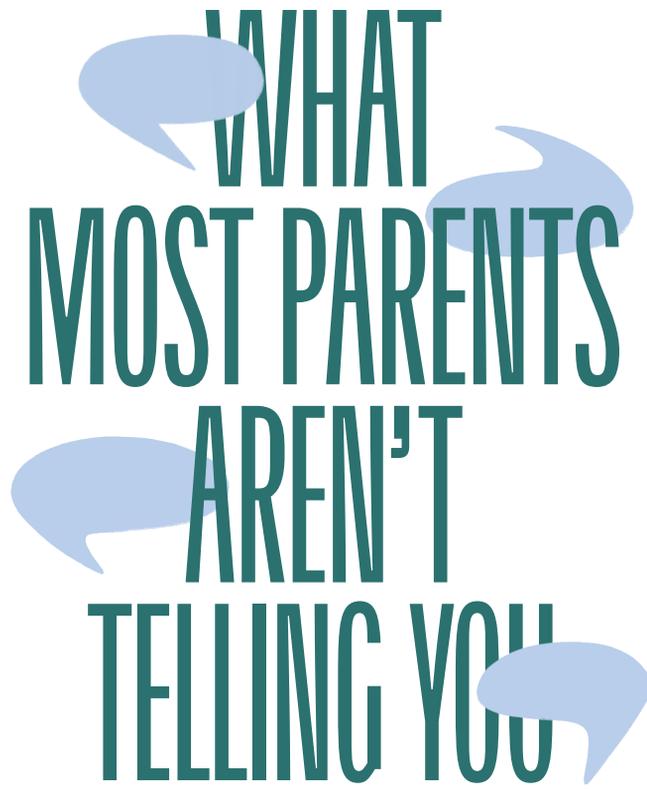
# WHAT MOST PARENTS AREN'T TELLING YOU

Four insights about  
parents that should  
radically impact  
your ministry

***FREE SAMPLE***

AN ORANGE REPORT PRODUCED WITH PARENT CUE

WHAT  
MOST PARENTS  
AREN'T  
TELLING YOU

The text is centered and arranged in four lines. Each line is accompanied by a light blue speech bubble graphic. The first bubble is to the left of 'WHAT'. The second bubble is to the right of 'MOST PARENTS'. The third bubble is to the left of 'AREN'T'. The fourth bubble is to the right of 'TELLING YOU'. The text is in a bold, teal, sans-serif font.

**What Most Parents Aren't Telling You:**  
Four Insights About Parents that Should Radically Impact Your Ministry

Published by Orange in partnership with Parent Cue  
[thinkorange.com](http://thinkorange.com) and [parentcue.org](http://parentcue.org)

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# What Most Parents Aren't Telling You

AN ORANGE REPORT  
PRODUCED WITH PARENT CUE

Four Insights About  
Parents That Should  
Radically Impact  
Your Ministry

“But however the forms of family life have changed and the number expanded, the role of the family has remained constant and it continues to be the major institution through which children pass en route to adulthood.”

— Bernice Weissbourd

## Before

Why Now is the Time to Listen	06
<i>Introduction by Carey Nieuwhof</i>	
The Influence of a Family	08
<i>A Preface by Reggie Joiner</i>	
A Note from Kristen Ivy	10
Terms	12
<i>What We Mean</i>	

## Sections

#01 What Parents Want	15
#02 What Parents Fear	31
#03 What Parents Feel	49
#04 Where Parents Go For Help	69
#05 Distinctions by Race and Ethnicity	92
#06 Distinctions by Family Structure	108

## After

Different Ways to Read This Book	116
Methodology	118
<i>How We Conducted Our Research</i>	
Notes	121
Acknowledgments	126
<i>The People Who Made This</i>	
Project Partners	127
<i>The People Who Made it Possible</i>	

# Introduction: Why Now is the Time to Listen *by Carey Nieuwhof*

→ “When we stay curious, with humility about the possibility that we haven’t figured it out, then there is more that can be discovered.” —*Francesca Gino*

The thought of leading the Church forward might feel impossible right now, but it isn't. And fortunately, there's help.

Rather than getting exhausted by what's changing (which is so easy to do), what if you and I got curious about what's changing instead?

That's why I'm so excited about the project Orange and Parent Cue have created with What Most Parents Aren't Telling You. This research is an honest dive into what parents are feeling, thinking, and in need of at this moment in time.

Here's the bottom line: Family needs are changing, and the Church needs to figure out how to respond to those changes.

Through numerous studies over the past decade, parents have said they want a congregation that's supportive of their family life—one that offers practical help for their role as a parent.

The new research reveals that:

41%

of respondents desire resources to better understand their child's phase of life

38%

of respondents were looking for resources to enable better conversations with their kid

63%

of respondents wish someone would provide family experiences they can attend with their kid

As a leader, you likely hear from a select group of parents a lot. But my guess is sometimes what you're hearing gets in the way of what you may need to hear even more—like the thoughts of many parents, and the parents and children you're hoping to reach.

One of my hopes is that as you read this research, you'll gain some fresh insights. You'll have an opportunity to hear from voices that may not always be the loudest, and yet they may also be some of the most essential if we want to build churches that reach those who aren't coming yet. You and I have an opportunity in front of us to nurture the faith and the future potential of a generation. Parents matter, and connecting to the church matters now more than ever.

You ready? Here's to listening and learning...



## Carey Nieuwhof

Parent of 3, pastor, speaker, podcaster, and best-selling author of *Didn't See It Coming* and *Lasting Impact*

# Preface: The Influence of a Family *by Reggie Joiner*

→ What happens at home is more important than what happens at church. I know... bold statement. But after 40+ years of ministry, I still believe this to be true.

**What happens at home is more important because kids spend more time at home.**

Now, this doesn't mean as leaders we won't have influence, it just means there are others who have more. Even with the kids who attended church consistently, at best I would only have about 40 hours with them every year. That's only 40 hours to help a kid or student understand everything they need to know about God, the Bible, and life.

The amount of time the average parent gets to spend with their child in a single year is 3,000 hours. It's staggering, honestly, when you simply consider the potential of 40 hours versus 3,000 hours you can see why what happens at home is more important.

**What happens at home is more important because parents will have lifelong influence.**

I remember those early years of ministry, being invited to every sort of milestone event—ball games, graduations, and even officiating weddings—only to realize that after spending countless hours investing in these students' lives, I still only played a small part in their worlds.

It can be tempting to start believing you have more—maybe even better—influence than a kid or teenager's parent. But remember, a mom, dad, grandparent, foster parent, or step-parent has been with a kid for a long time—maybe since the beginning. They've seen more, loved more, cried more, hoped more, and been hurt more by this child than you ever will.

Regardless of their issues, baggage, and brokenness, every parent wants to be a better parent. No matter what you think about parents—conservative, liberal, strict, and laid-back alike—the reality is they have more influence than you do. Think about it this way: At best, you will have temporary influence. By default, a parent has lifelong influence.

**If you want to help parents win, you have to care about parents.**

It's not enough to just show up for parents because we have to. We don't just show up because we want influence with them, or because it's in our job description; we show up because we care about what parents care about.

Many kids and teenagers in this generation will decide how they see the Church when they see how the church treats their parent. So, what if we allow the findings of this research to inform the way we greet every parent, communicate to every parent, encourage every parent, and resource every parent? We just might find that the best thing we can do for a kid's faith is to learn how to love their parent well. Because truly, what happens at home is more important than what happens at church, and no one has more potential to influence a kid than a parent.

**Reggie Joiner**

Parent of 4, Grandparent of 6, CEO & Founder of Orange  
Author of *Think Orange*, *Don't Miss It*, and *It's Personal*

# A Note *from Kristen Ivy*

→ Two weeks to flatten the curve.  
*Can someone send us video links we can send out to parents next Sunday? How is your team planning to do Easter this year?*

These were a few of the questions I remember pouring into our offices in the Spring of 2020. The world was preparing to plunge head-first into something no living human had experienced.

This might not seem like the ideal time to begin an in-depth research initiative on parents, but in some ways, it could not have been better timed. The past two years have been an opportunity to break free from established patterns, listen, and recalibrate. So, as the U.S. census team set out to collect 2020 census data, Orange and Parent Cue commissioned what would become a sixteen-month series of studies with Arbor Research Group to better understand the reality of parents and their relationship with faith communities in the U.S.

From the outset, our goal was to discover as much as possible about U.S. parents, from a representative sample of states and regions, income levels, races and ethnicities, family structures, and genders. We hoped to provide ministry leaders with insights about what parents want, what parents fear, how parents feel, and where parents go for help. By gathering this information, we wanted to fuel conversations about how ministries and families can work together to give kids and teenagers a stronger and more vibrant faith, and a better future.

Some of the aims of the study evolved over the course of four surveys and two listening sessions. We added, for example, a group of parents who self-reported as committed Christians from a range of denominations and affiliations. This group highlights some places where Christian parents may differ from the general population of parents overall. More of the specific methodology is listed at the end of this book.

What we have learned from the findings so far both confirms and challenges a number of beliefs. In many ways, it also raises questions. In order to release the findings in a timely manner, this report does not provide many directives or applications. Instead, our team has highlighted places within the research that feel like moments to pause, reflect, and consider what parents seem to be saying by their responses.

You picked up this book because you care about the faith and future of the next generation. So do we. And we have a shared belief that the Church is positioned to answer the call to support parents and caregivers as we build ministries for kids and teenagers. This study is an exercise in listening deeply to what parents have to say about their own experience. As you read the findings within, I have one request: Will you read with a filter of radical empathy?

Will you listen to the voice of thousands of parents who took time to share their hopes, fears, and experiences as a part of this study, and will you believe them?

Will you set aside a culturally normative framework—a bias that makes it so easy to blame parents, judge parents, and dismiss parents? And will you instead read with a counter-cultural lens—one that trusts parents.

This study did not set out to help leaders learn how to fix the family. Instead, we set out to listen to every caregiver, in order to learn how to better serve every family. As we look to the days ahead, many leaders have made the observation, “Now is not the season for the Church to return to what was. Now is the season to reimagine what the Church will be.” We hope this project can fuel our collective imagination.



## Kristen Ivy

Parent of 3, President of Orange and Parent Cue  
Author of *It's Just a Phase. So Don't Miss It* and the  
18-series *Phase Guides* for parents

# Terms

## *What We Mean*

### **Parent**

The findings in this study use the term “parent” to refer to any adult who is consistently tasked with the responsibility of raising a young person under the age of 26. It may refer to a guardian, grandparent, stepparent, foster parent, or any number of adult-to-child relationships in which the adult has consistent caregiver responsibilities.

### **Kid**

The findings in this study use the term “kid” to refer to any young person under the age of 26 who is the object of parental caretaking. This may refer to a person who is the biological, foster, or adopted responsibility of a parent. This study found that the term “kid” was most commonly used by parents when referring to a young person under their care, regardless of that young person’s age—although words like “children” and “adult children” were also common.

### **All Parents**

The terms “all parents” and “general population of parents” refer to a randomly selected, nationally representative sample of 1,464 U.S. nonreligious and “religious but not practicing” parents. This group participated in a survey in June 2021. For more detailed information, see the section titled “Methodology.”

### **Christian Parents**

The term “Christian parents” most often refers to a randomly selected, nationally representative sample of 1,269 U.S. parents who all consider themselves to be “a committed Christian.” This group participated in a survey in February 2022. When the term “follow up” is used in Christian parents, it refers to a second, randomly selected, similar sample of 800 U.S. parents who responded to a follow-up survey in March 2022. Any follow-up data is separately identified in footnotes. For more detailed information, see the section titled “Methodology.”

“Caring about the  
welfare of children  
and shaming parents  
are mutually exclusive  
endeavors.”

— Brené Brown

No one is full of  
more false hope  
than a parent who  
brings a chair to  
the beach.

# Section #01

WHAT  
PARENTS  
WANT

→ You don't have to look far to recognize a growing number of adults view their parenting role as a key element of their identity. Many parents, whether athletes, musicians, pastors, or social influencers talk about their parenting as an important aspect of their life and purpose.

One Pew Research Center report found that 52% of millennials say being a good parent is “one of the most important things” in life.<sup>1</sup> Millennial parents, especially dads, also report spending more time with their children than previous generations of parents. More than half (57%) of fathers now say parenting is *extremely important* to their identity, only one percentage point less than mothers. And fathers now spend three times as much time with their children as they did two generations ago.<sup>2</sup>

As parents place an increasingly high value on their parenting, they also feel escalating pressure to parent well. Social media undoubtedly contributes to some of this pressure. One study from the popular parenting site *BabyCenter* found that 80% of millennial moms said it's important to be “the perfect mom,” largely due to the desires to live up to what they see online.<sup>3</sup> But parents report other sources of pressure as well. Nearly three-fourths (72%) of parents report wanting their own parents to think they are doing a good job of parenting, and 93% of married or cohabiting parents say it matters a lot that their spouse or partner sees them as a good parent.<sup>4</sup> In addition to pressure from social media, comparison, and the perception of others, many parents feel an intrinsic burden to do right by their kids. One study out of Boston College demonstrates this deep-seated intrinsic burden, revealing that three-fourths of fathers say they wish they could spend more time with their kids.<sup>5</sup>

In a generation of parents who want to raise kids well, and feel significant pressure to do so, parents need new levels of support in order to provide for the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being of the children and teenagers in their homes. The pending question is this: Where will parents find the support network they need as they navigate their parenting journey? In order to build effective support systems, ministry leaders will need to first understand more about what parents value.

# What Parents Want for Their Kids



## Access to Resources



## Healthy Mentors



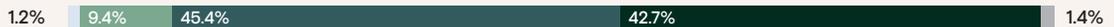
## Educational Achievement



## College Preparation



## Technological Responsibility



## Career Readiness



## My Friendship with My Kids



## Mental Health



## Access to Opportunities



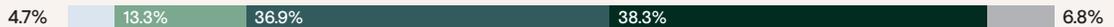
## Character Development



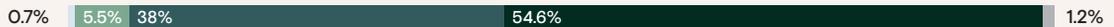
## Strong Friendships



## Sexual Integrity



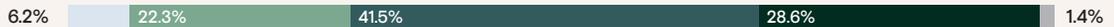
## Balanced Nutrition



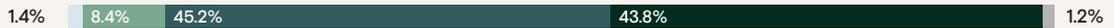
## Faith Development



## Extended Family Connections



## Physical Exercise



## Community Involvement



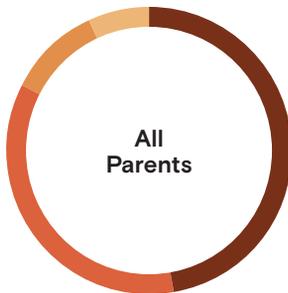
→ Parents need new levels of support in order to provide for the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being of the children and teenagers in their homes.

### Raising Humans with the Future in Mind

Every caregiver places a high value on things that seem significant for their child or teenager’s future. As part of this study, parents rated seventeen separate parenting categories on a scale of not important to extremely important. More than 65% of the general population of parents valued *every aspect* as *important* or *extremely important*—except one: faith development (coming in at 39.6%.) The high level of importance parents place on all aspects of parenting stands out as particularly notable. It reinforces the idea that parents feel substantial value and pressure related to their caregiving duties. Consider this. The average parent feels responsible for delivering adequate to excellent support for the young person in their home in 17 different areas ranging from physical exercise to healthy mentors to career readiness. It’s a lot to keep up with!

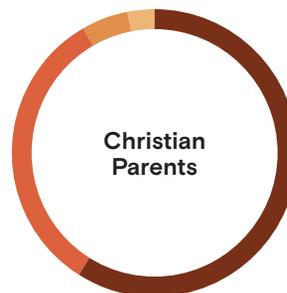
## Levels of Enthusiasm

How parents rate all 17 parenting values on average.



- 49%** Extremely Important
- 34.6%** Important
- 10.2%** Mildly Important
- 4.2%** Not Important or Not Applicable

- Extremely Important **58.9%**
- Important **32.8%**
- Mildly Important **5.5%**
- Not Important or Not Applicable **2.8%**



When it comes to priorities, parents place the greatest value on mental health (96.4%), access to opportunities (95.8%), and character development (95.5%) by rating them *important* to *extremely important*. Parents also consistently place both physical exercise (88.9%) and nutrition (92.7%) high on their list, indicating a significant value for their kids' physical well-being.

### Levels of Enthusiasm

It might not be a surprise, but parents who identify themselves as “committed Christians” place a much higher value on faith development than the general population. Most Christian parents (94%) say their kids' faith is *important* to *extremely important* compared to only 40% of the general population. What might be surprising, however, is the elevated value Christian parents place on *every aspect* of their parenting. For each of the parenting values included in our study, Christian parents selected *extremely important* 10% more often than the general parenting population. In contrast, the general parenting population selected *not important* more than twice as often as Christian parents. Given the margin between all parents (general population) and committed Christian parents, it begs the question: What is it about valuing faith that elevates the value of everything else? One might wonder if Christian parents are aware of a connection between faith and everything else. It may also underscore an opportunity for ministry leaders to gain parents' attention when they connect faith with other highly valued aspects of parenting.

→ In the top three responses, Christian parents don't differ from the general population in what they say matters most.

### What Parents Want Most

While committed Christian parents differ from the general population in the level of importance they place on their parenting, both groups consistently prioritize the same parenting values in almost every area. In the top three responses, Christian parents don't differ from the general population in what they say matters most.

→ The three lowest values for Christian parents were among the lowest five for the general population.

#### All Parents' Top Three

- #1 Mental Health
- #2 Access to Opportunities
- #3 Character Development

#### Christian Parents' Top Three

- #1 Mental Health
- #2 Access to Opportunities
- #3 Character Development

Likewise, the three lowest values for Christian parents were among the lowest five for the general population. Both groups ranked community involvement, college preparation, and sexual integrity in their bottom five. The general population also ranked faith and extended family relationships comparatively low. It's important to note, however, the majority of parents in both groups still rate even their lowest values *important* to *extremely important*. In other words, there is no such thing as an insignificant parenting value.

→ There is no such thing as an insignificant parenting value.

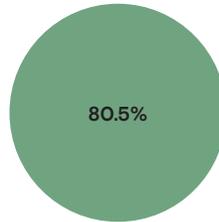
## Parents Differ in their Value for Faith and Relationships

The percent of parents who say faith and relationships are *important or very important*.

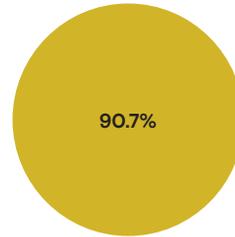
### Relationships

(mentors, my friendship with my kid, peer friendships, extended family, community)

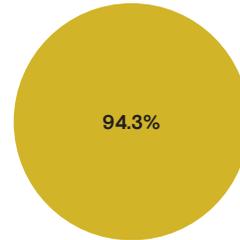
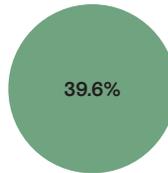
#### All Parents



#### Christian Parents



### Faith



n = 1,464 U.S. parents with kids 0–25, June 2021

n = 1,269 U.S. Christian parents with kids 0–25, February 2022

### Where the Gaps Widen

The most striking contrast between Christian parents and the general population of parents is, of course, how they prioritize faith. Christian parents rate faith development as the fourth most important parenting value, just below character development.

Perhaps the second most noteworthy distinction between Christian parents and the general population is that Christian parents generally prioritize relationships at a higher level. Christian parents say mentors, parental friendship, peer friendship, extended family, and community are *important to extremely important* (+10% more often than the general population.) And 90.7% of Christian parents specifically prioritize extended family relationships, as compared to 80% of the general parent population. Conversely, there were no notable differences between the two groups related to career, health, or character.

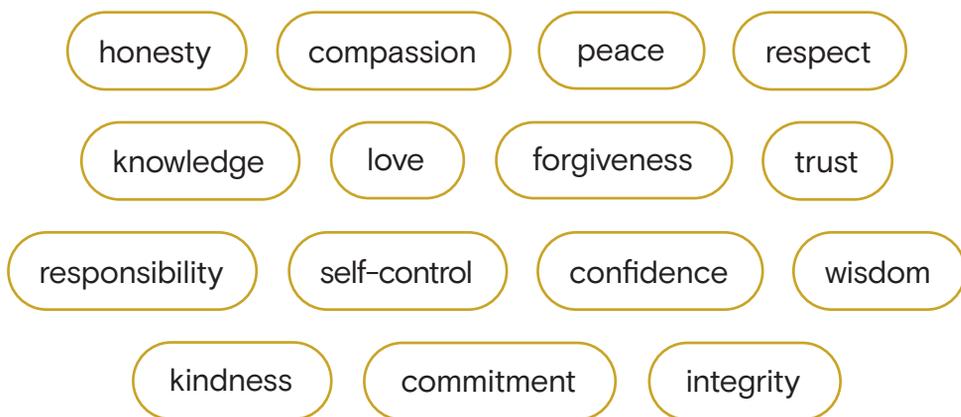
## The Importance of Character

Standing out as a high value for every parent, over 95% of both the general population of parents and Christian parents say character development is *important* to *extremely important* for their kids. In their responses, parents prioritize character development third-highest in the list of fifteen parenting values. Over 80% of the general population of parents report feeling unsupported in this area—while nearly 90% of Christian parents feel unsupported in this area. We will return to the support gap for parents wishing to nurture positive character in their kids in Section 3. But first, let's explore what parents mean by "character."<sup>6</sup>

When asked to respond to a series of questions designed to evaluate parents' perception of 39 potential character traits, the majority of parents indicated that *all 39* character qualities were *important*. In fact, the lowest-scoring value was still selected as *important* by 61.3% of parents. From this set, 15 character qualities stood out above the rest, having no negative correlations. Parents demonstrated consistent confidence in importance, relevance, and meaning for all 15 of the top character traits.

---

## 15 Character Traits Every Parent Values:



When compared to the general population of parents, Christian parents selected the same top three character qualities from 39 options—with one notable distinction.

**All Parents' Top Three**

- #1 Honesty
- #2 Trust
- #3 Love

**Christian Parents' Top Three**

- #1 Honesty
- #2 Faith
- #3 Love

→ Christian parents selected the same top three character values from 39 options—with one notable distinction.

In their response to character traits, Christian parents were more alike than unlike the general population of parents. But Christian parents favored faith and obedience more than the general population by a significant margin. Both faith and obedience were notably absent from the top fifteen character traits for the general population.

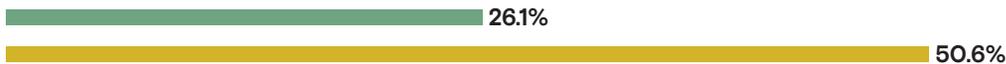
Female parents named many of the character traits *important* more often than male parents. And parents who were older tended to rank conviction, humility, and respect higher than parents who were younger. Parents who were younger tended to favor uniqueness more than parents who were older.

## Parents Differ in their Value for Faith and Obedience

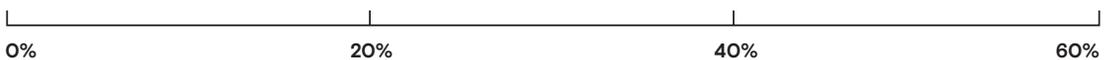
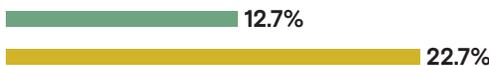
The percent of parents who say faith and obedience are *important* or *very important*.

- All Parents
- Christian Parents

### Faith



### Obedience



# Acknowledgments

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## Arbor Research Group

Arbor Research Group is an exclusive team of research and HR experts who help organizations solve multifaceted problems using customized and collaborative projects of all types and sizes. Arbor empowers mission-drive organizations to take their next steps with confidence by helping organizations gain the quality data and rich insights they need using custom but cost-conscious methodologies.

→ [arborresearchgroup.org](http://arborresearchgroup.org)

# Project Partners



Orange creates resources, curriculum, and experiences that promote the alignment of the church and the home. The name Orange is based on the idea that two combined influences make a greater impact than just two influences. When the light of the church (yellow) combines with the heart of the home (red), you get a stronger, more vibrant impact in the life of a kid (orange). Orange also believes that when the church engages every parent and caregiver at home, they help support the primary faith influence in a kid's life. Orange empowers churches to do this better through utilizing Parent Cue as a resource that can support their parents at church and at home.

Learn more about Orange → [ThinkOrange.com](https://ThinkOrange.com)

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Parent Cue strives to share a message of hope for every parent, grandparent, guardian, and caregiver who wants to raise their kids to have a positive future. With resources for every parent, grandparent, or caregiver, Parent Cue provides parents at every phase with professional articles, books, courses, and media. Parent Cue's goal is simply to cue you with what you need when you need it, so you can be the parent you want to be. Parent Cue also believes the church has the greatest potential to be a light in communities everywhere. Often one of the greatest gifts any family can receive is personal support for a child that comes from someone outside of the family unit. Many churches offer Parent Cue resources to the parents and guardians in their community as a service and support for their families.

Discover more resources for Parents → [ParentCue.org](https://ParentCue.org)

Or download the free Parent Cue app, available for Android and iOS

# Is the gap between church

# and home wider than ever?

The best churches activate an intergenerational community to support the faith and future of young people. In those communities caregivers feel both confident and supported.

As the church navigates new realities where fewer families participate consistently, many leaders are asking questions: *How do we implement a church + home strategy if families aren't coming? What are parents not telling us that we need to know?*

In response to these pressing questions, Orange and Parent Cue teamed up with Arbor Research to learn more about a generation of caregivers by exploring four areas of inquiry:

- What parents want
- How parents feel
- What parents fear
- Where parents go for help

Inside this study you will discover insights about parents both inside and outside the church, as well as remarkable distinctions that make families unique, complex, fascinating, and meaningful.

The greatest opportunity for the future Church may be found in reimagining how we engage the family.



Research conducted  
by Arbor Research Group

