

THE ONE THING

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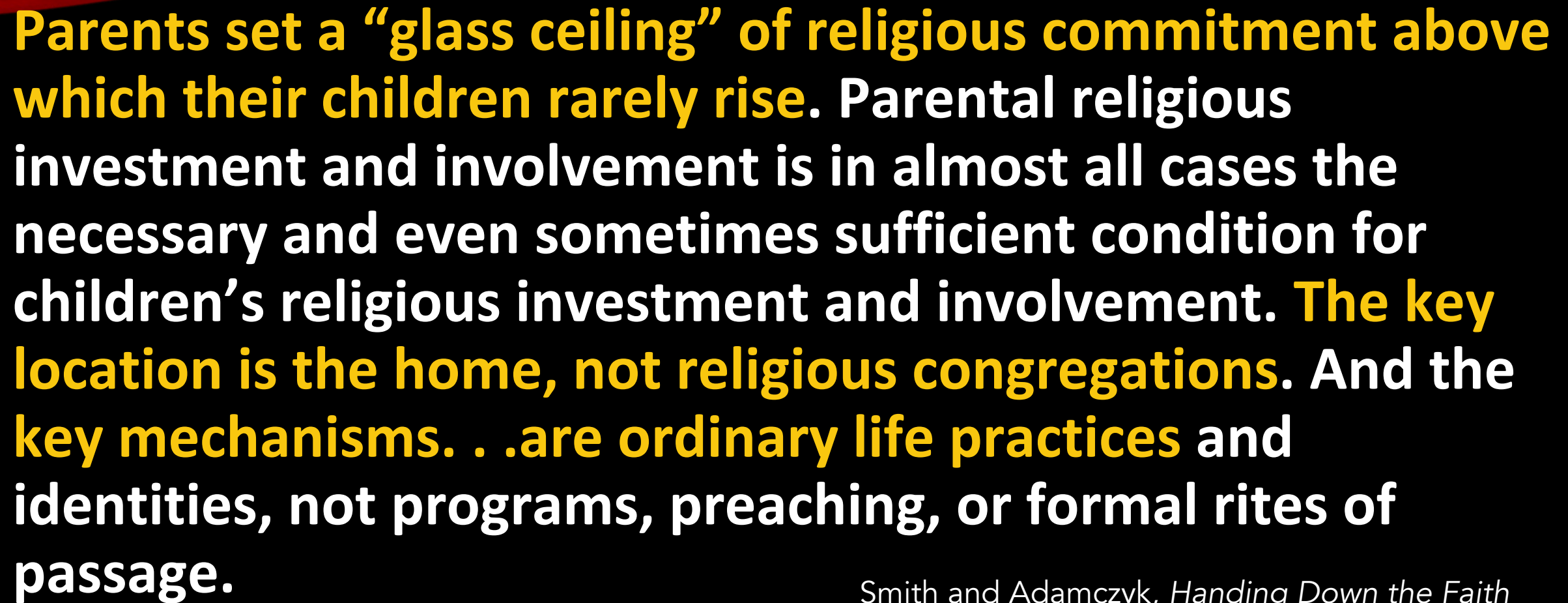
**When it comes to kids,
to what extent is your
church training fleas?**



CHRISTIAN SMITH AND AMY ADAMCZYK

*Handing Down the Faith:
How Parents Pass Their Religion on to the Next Generation (2019)*

Parents are by far the most important factor influencing their children's religion, not only as youth but also after they leave home. Not clergy, religious schools, youth ministers, neighborhoods, Sunday school, mission trips, service projects, summer camp, peers, or the media—parents. **Parents define for their children the role that religious faith and practice ought to play in life**, whether important or not, which most children roughly adopt.



Parents set a “glass ceiling” of religious commitment above which their children rarely rise. Parental religious investment and involvement is in almost all cases the necessary and even sometimes sufficient condition for children’s religious investment and involvement. **The key location is the home, not religious congregations.** And the **key mechanisms. . .are ordinary life practices** and identities, not programs, preaching, or formal rites of passage.

Smith and Adamczyk, *Handing Down the Faith*



THE ONE THING

...is not what you think.



VARIABLES THAT MATTER

NATIONAL STUDY OF YOUTH AND RELIGION
(LONGITUDINAL DATA)



VARIABLES THAT MATTER

NATIONAL STUDY OF YOUTH AND RELIGION (LONGITUDINAL DATA)

- Parents were highly religiously involved while their teen was in high school

VARIABLES THAT MATTER

NATIONAL STUDY OF YOUTH AND RELIGION (LONGITUDINAL DATA)

- Teen was highly committed to faith.

VARIABLES THAT MATTER

NATIONAL STUDY OF YOUTH AND RELIGION (LONGITUDINAL DATA)

- Teen had multiple adults of faith to turn to.

VARIABLES THAT MATTER

NATIONAL STUDY OF YOUTH AND RELIGION (LONGITUDINAL DATA)

- Teen prayed and read the Bible frequently.

VARIABLES THAT MATTER

NATIONAL STUDY OF YOUTH AND RELIGION (LONGITUDINAL DATA)

- Teen had few serious doubts about religious beliefs.

VARIABLES THAT MATTER

NATIONAL STUDY OF YOUTH AND RELIGION (LONGITUDINAL DATA)

- Teen had a religious experience before entering young adulthood

NSYR: “SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE”

- An experience of powerful worship
- A commitment of one's life to God
- An answered prayer or sense of divine guidance
- The experience of witnessing a miracle

Where do teens say they experience God?

Stephen Cady, Ph.D.

- **Liminal experiences**
- **Times of trial**
- **Intense and affirming community**
- *[Experiences of vocational competence]*

- **Parental religious involvement**
- **High commitment to faith in high school**
- **Multiple adults for support**
- **Prayed frequently and read the Bible**
- **Few serious doubts about faith as teenager**
- **Religious experience before young adulthood**

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IF THE MOST IMPORTANT
CONTRIBUTOR TO FAITH IS GOD,
NOT US...

Does that mean we do *nothing*?





SEVEN AVOIDANCES

LISA MILLER, *THE SPIRITUAL CHILD* (2015)

- Ignore
- Disavow
- Discourage
- Quash questions
- Base affection or discipline on performance
- Overlook need for a spiritually supportive community
- Ignore signs of concern



THE **2ND** MOST IMPORTANT THING
(AND THE PART OF SMITH'S RESEARCH
TO PAY ATTENTION TO):

TALK about faith.

1. SHARE WHAT YOU LOVE



2. SHARE YOUR OWN FAITH STORY



“The most effective way to hand on faith to [young people] is through personal testimony of religious experience.”

--Maria Dixon Hall, Ph.D.
Southern Methodist University

3. SPEAK CHRISTIAN AT HOME



- Share
 - Read
 - Talk
 - Pray
 - Bless
- (Rich Melheim)

- Where did you see God on the move today?
 - Where did you feel blocked from God?
- (Ignatian Prayer of Examen)

- Holy eavesdropping

4.

**TALK ABOUT
GOOD
NEWS NOT
GOOD
BEHAVIOR**



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THE ONE THING

Invest in your *own* faith

