



*the*  
POWER  
*of*  
BACKSTORY

David Kinnaman



**Dr. Henrietta C. Mears**  
**1890-1963**

**We can unlock the redemptive  
power of backstory.**



The Eldarin languages  
were spoken by the Eldar

Quē cum  
I ʒ ʒācēro hēroōyī  
n w p w  
c cē  
q a ca

τ ς ϑ β γ ε ζ  
I, λ α δ ο ε  
... ʒ ʒācēro hēroōyī

I H T  
jāhōsā  
jōt  
jōu jāhōsā  
I H N A V A H  
M

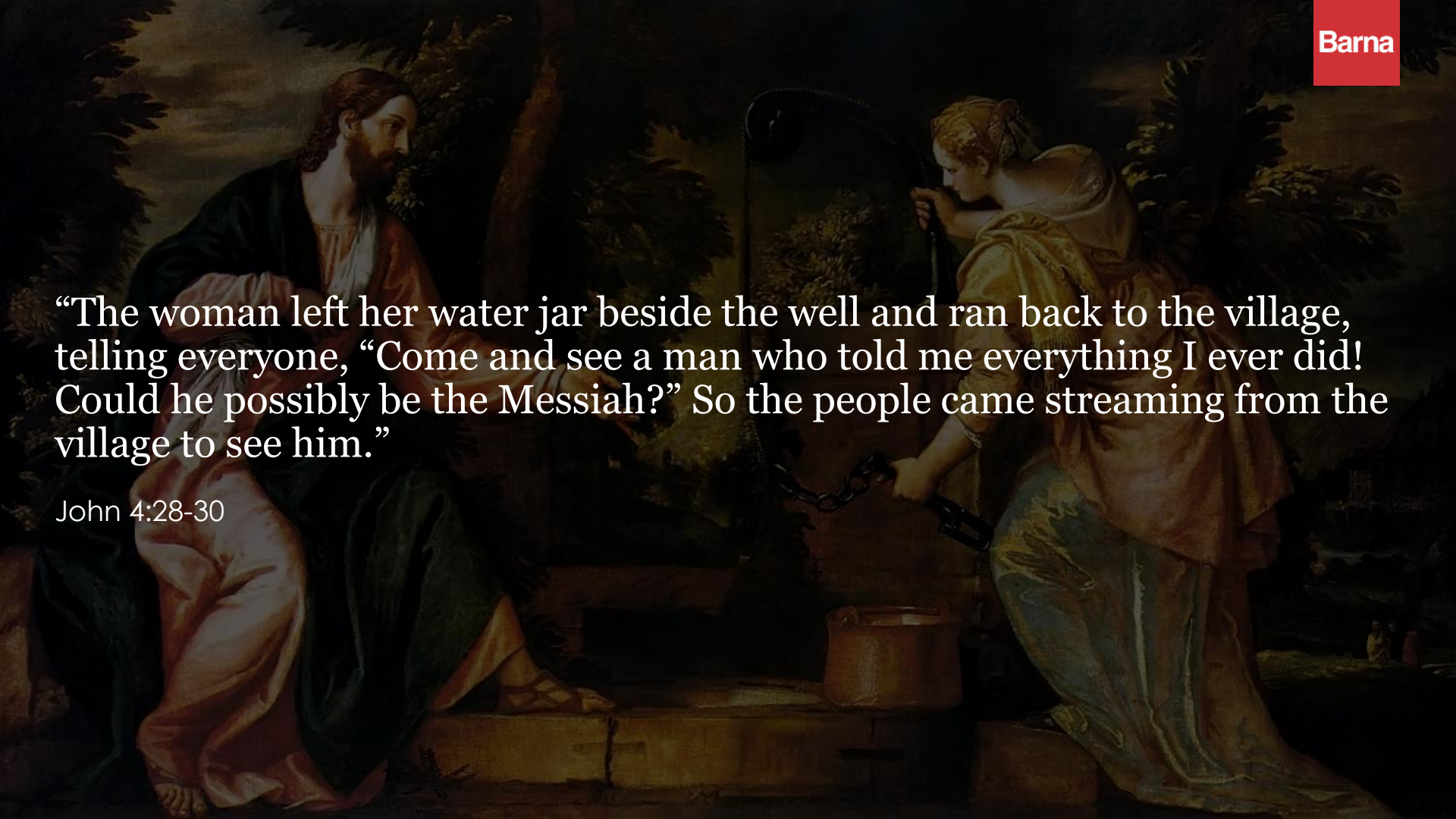




# We are a Storied People.

Gospel community helps us to know and to tell our story in light of Jesus' story.





“The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?” So the people came streaming from the village to see him.”

John 4:28-30



**Research is a powerful way to amplify the backstory of others, including the collective voice of our society.**

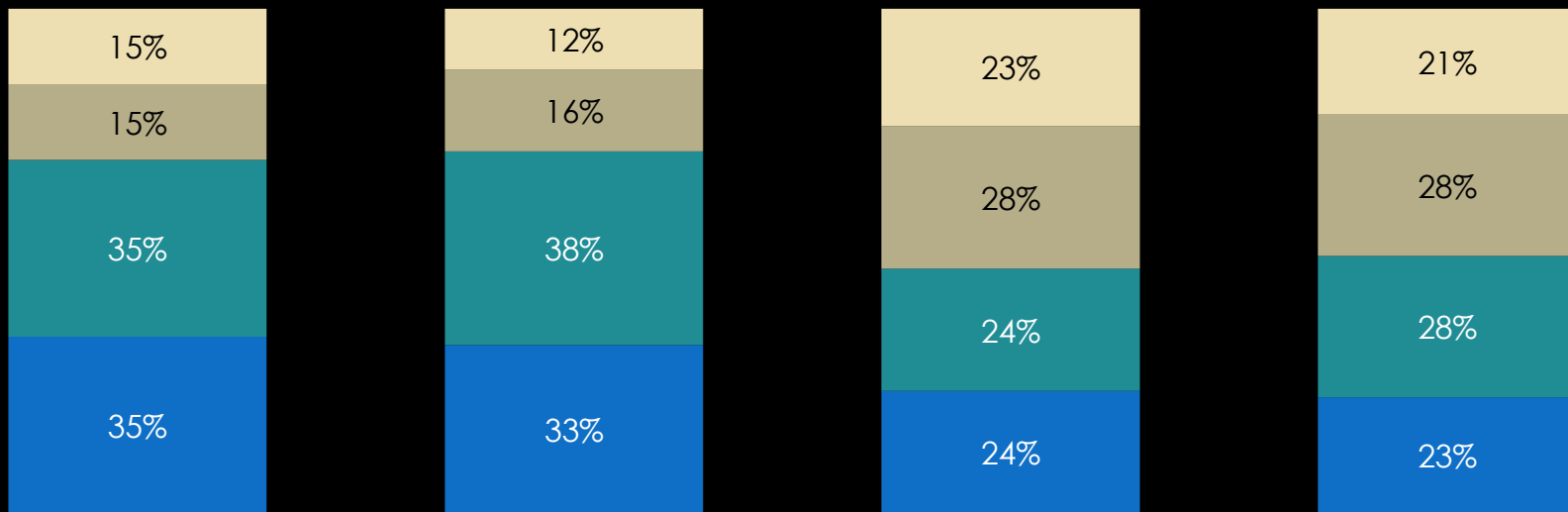


**1.**  
**Some of us are more comfortable than others talking about our faith story.**

# How We Feel About Our “Faith Story”

Still thinking about a person’s faith story. Thinking about this, to what extent would you agree or disagree with each of the following?

■ Agree strongly    
 ■ Agree somewhat    
 ■ Disagree somewhat    
 ■ Disagree strongly



My faith story is important to me

I remember my faith story

I enjoy telling my faith story to others

I enjoy when others ask me about my faith story

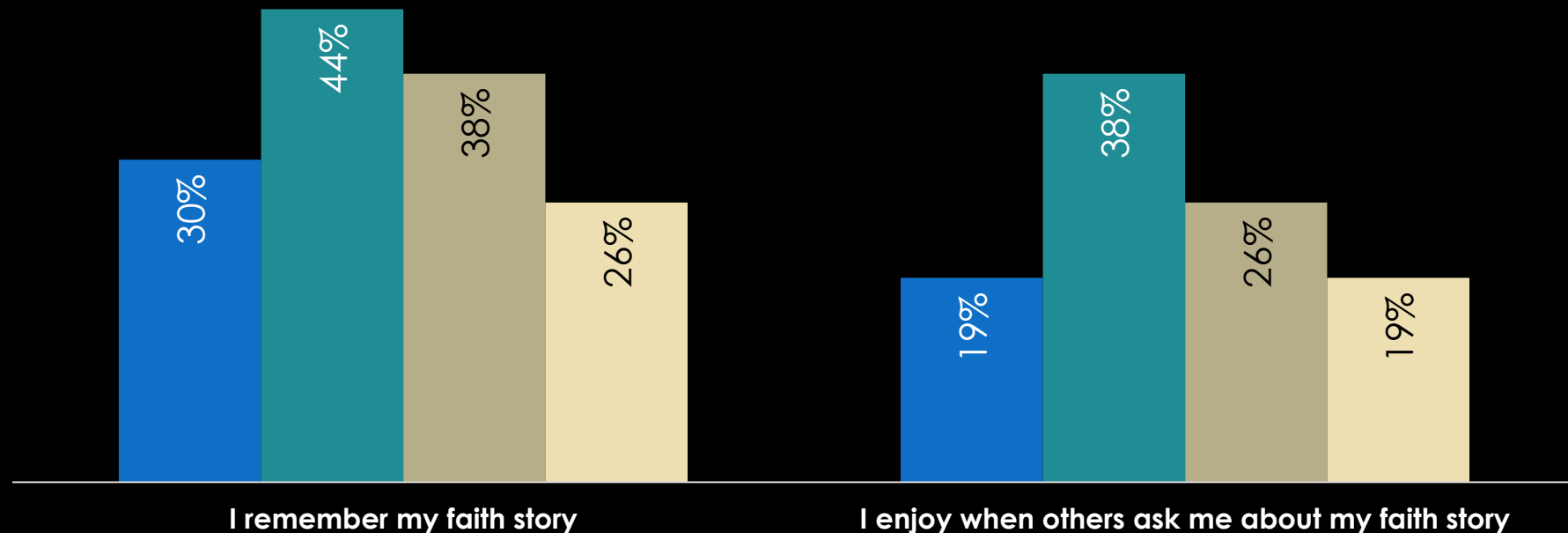


# We Have Different Connections with Our Faith Story

Barna

% Agree strongly

White Black Hispanic Asian



**2.**

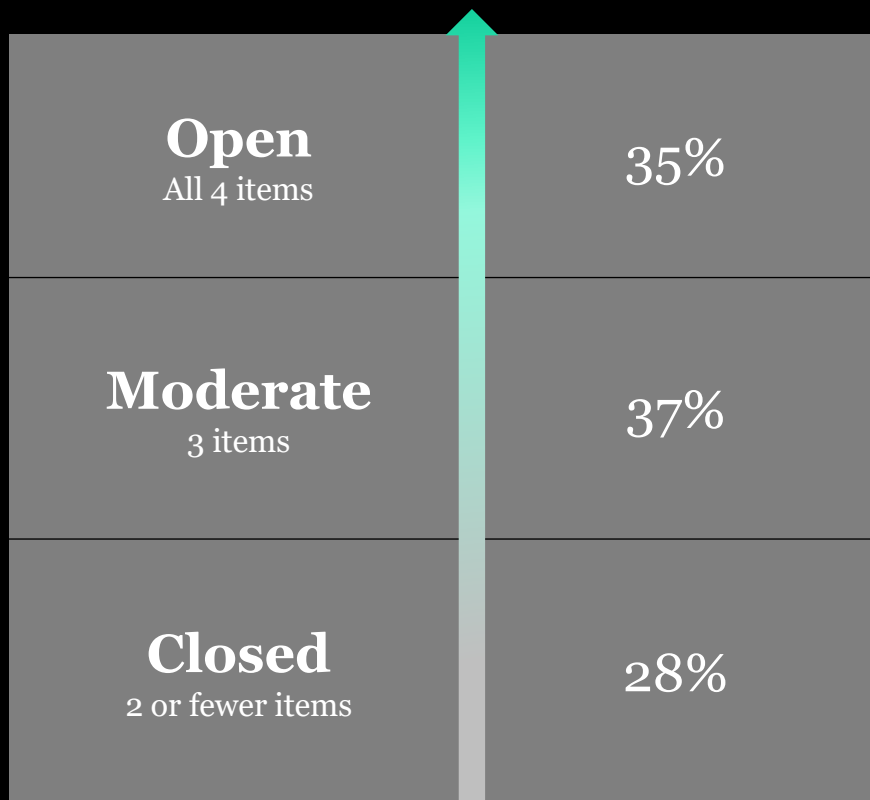
**We continue to see significant spiritual openness in our society.**



**72%**  
**of U.S. adults are spiritually open**

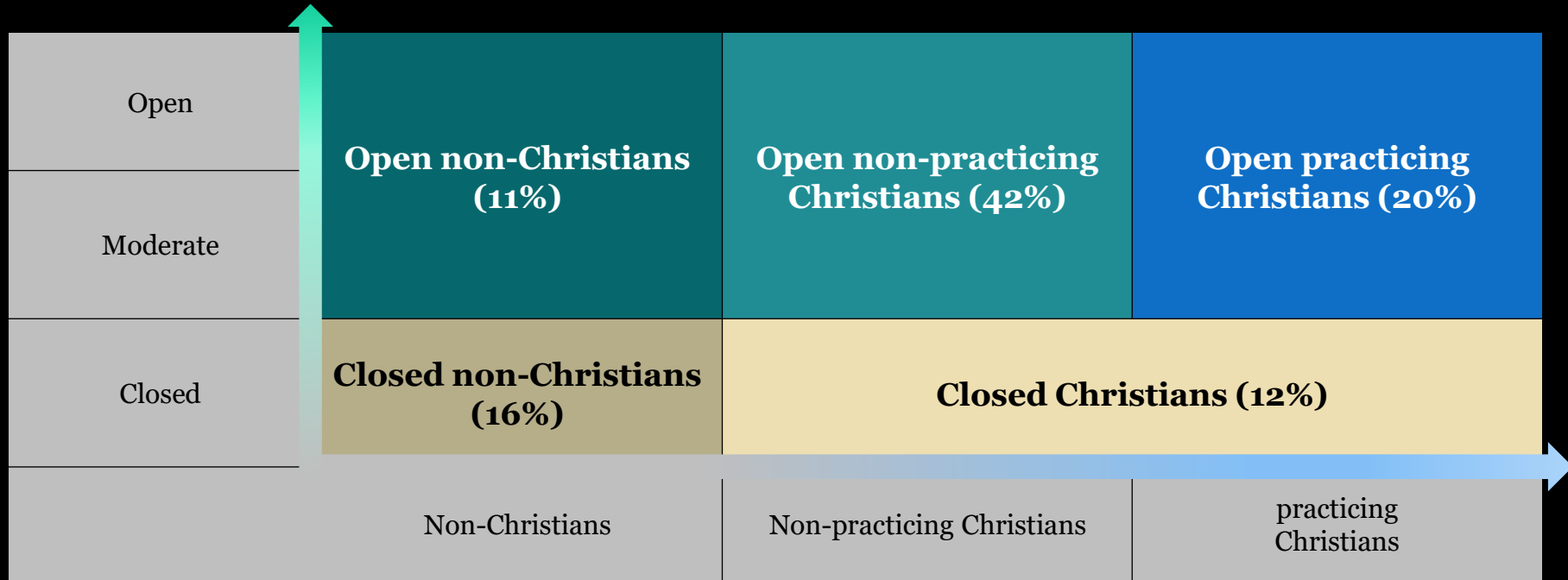
# Spiritual Openness is High

1. I believe it's at least possible that there is a spiritual dimension to life
2. "Exploring," "open" and / or "curious" describe my spirituality
3. I am positive toward "spirituality"
4. I believe there is a God or higher power





# Spiritual Openness x Practicing Faith



**3.**

**How can we become even better listeners to people's backstories?**

# What has Formed Us?

Community and Relationships  
Enjoyment and Experiences  
Behaviors and Actions  
Beliefs and Perspectives



# Catalysts & Crisis

Doubt

Depression

Disillusionment

Deconstruction

**Q:**  
**Today, if a person wanted to know about your personal faith story, what would you say is most important for them to know about?**

**4.**

**Families (especially mothers), kindness and loneliness are major factors to spiritual openness.**



# Childhood Family Experience

Overall, would you say that your family experience before age 13 was:

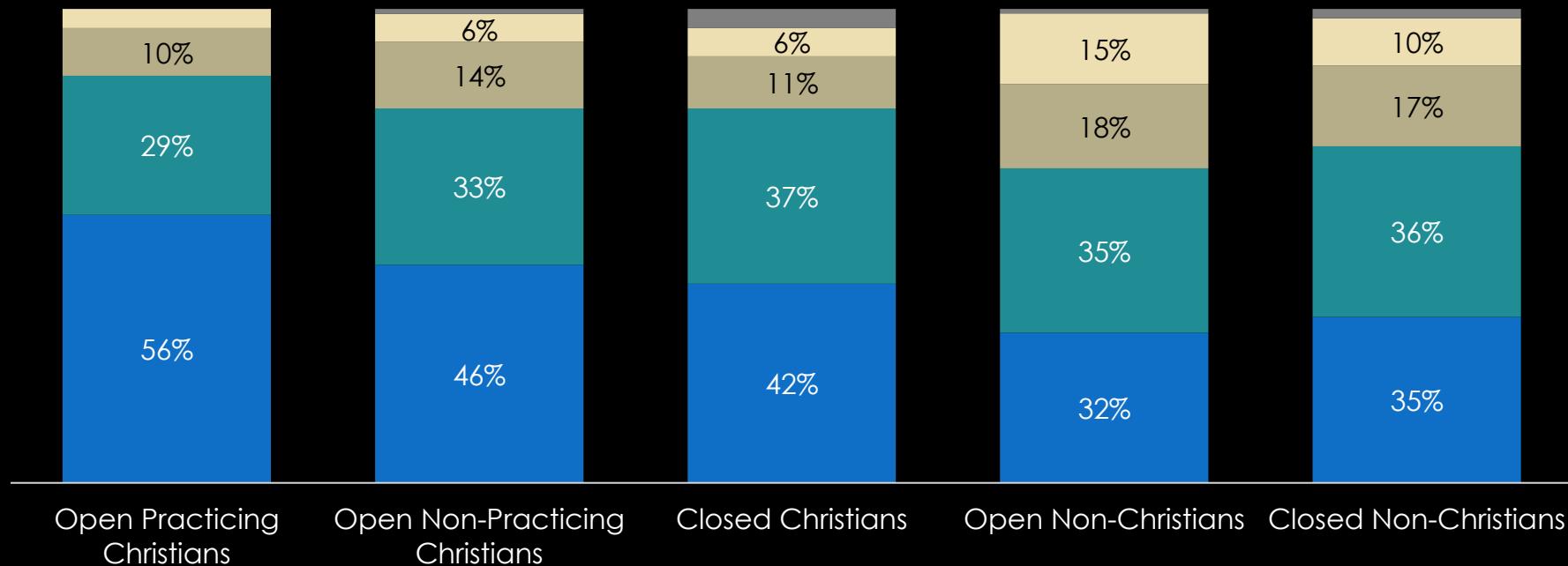
Very positive

Somewhat positive

Somewhat negative

Very negative

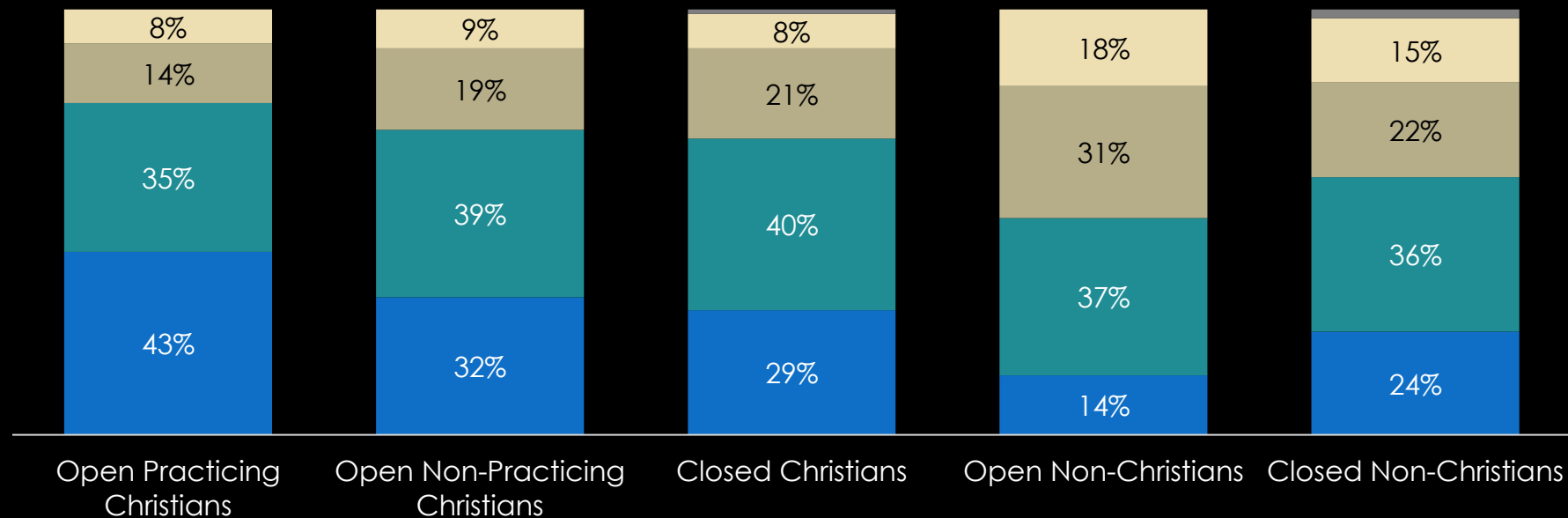
Not sure



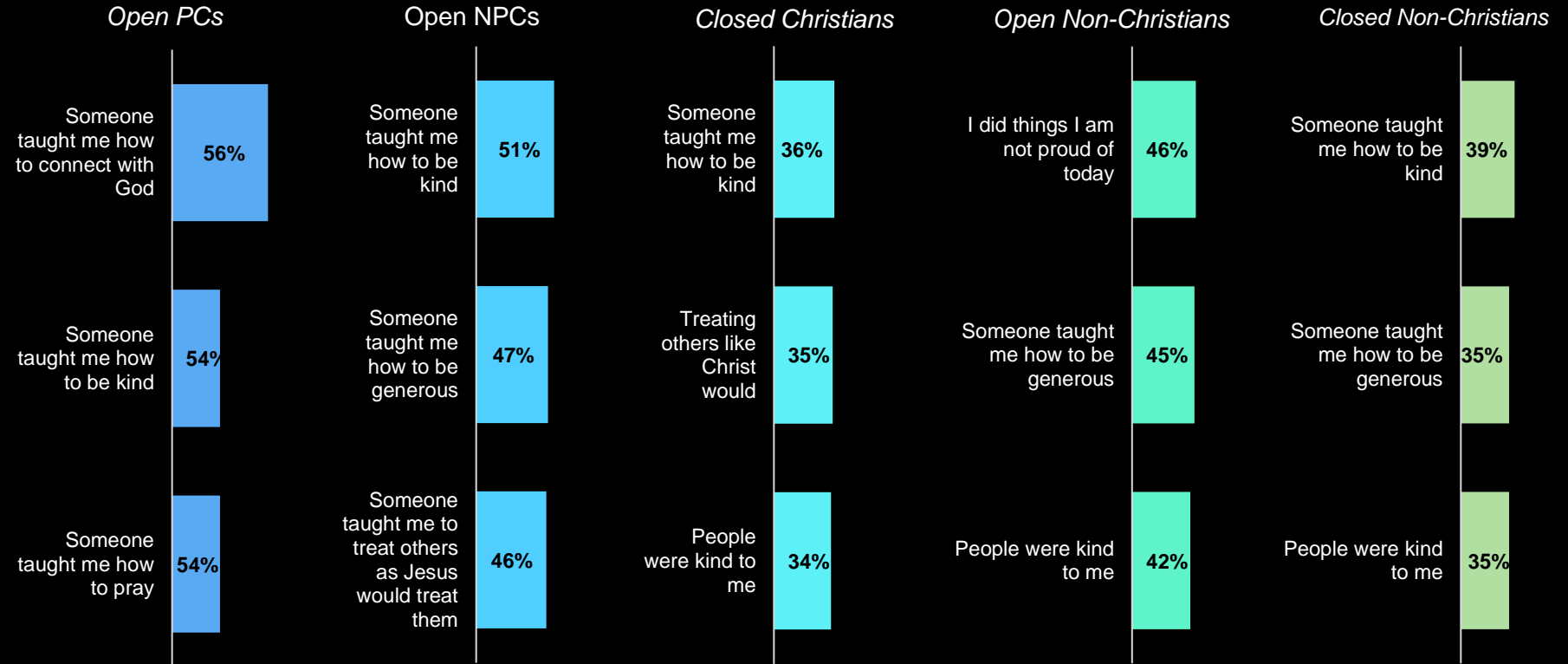
# Teenage Family Experience

Overall, would you say that your family experience during your teenage years was:

■ Very positive   
 ■ Somewhat positive   
 ■ Somewhat negative   
 ■ Very negative   
 ■ Not sure



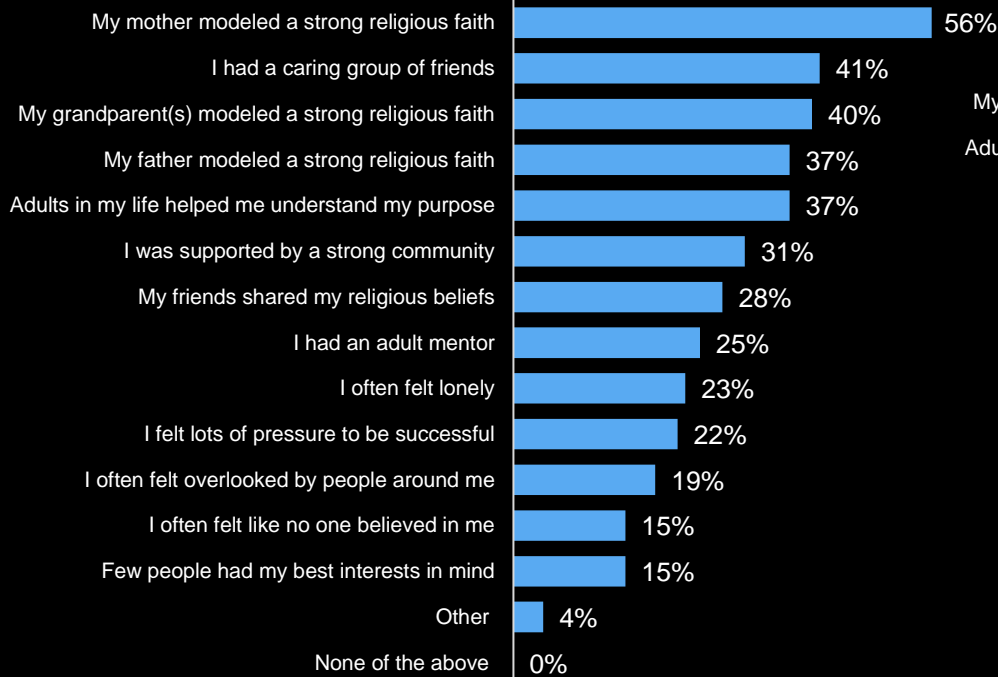
# Today, if a person wanted to know about your personal faith story, which of these would you say were most important for them to know about?



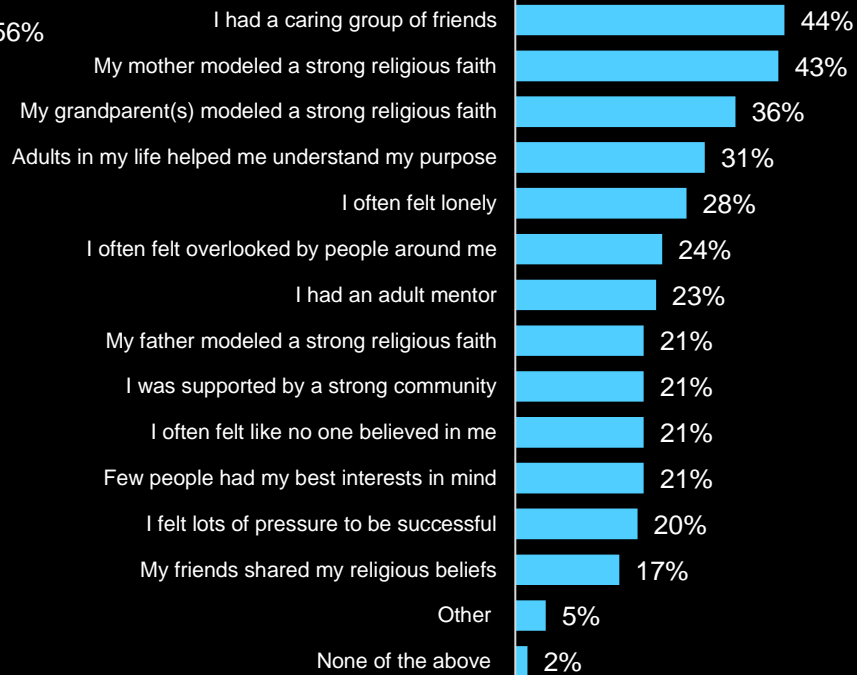


# Today, if a person wanted to know about your personal faith story, which of these would you say were most important for them to know about?

Open Practicing Christians

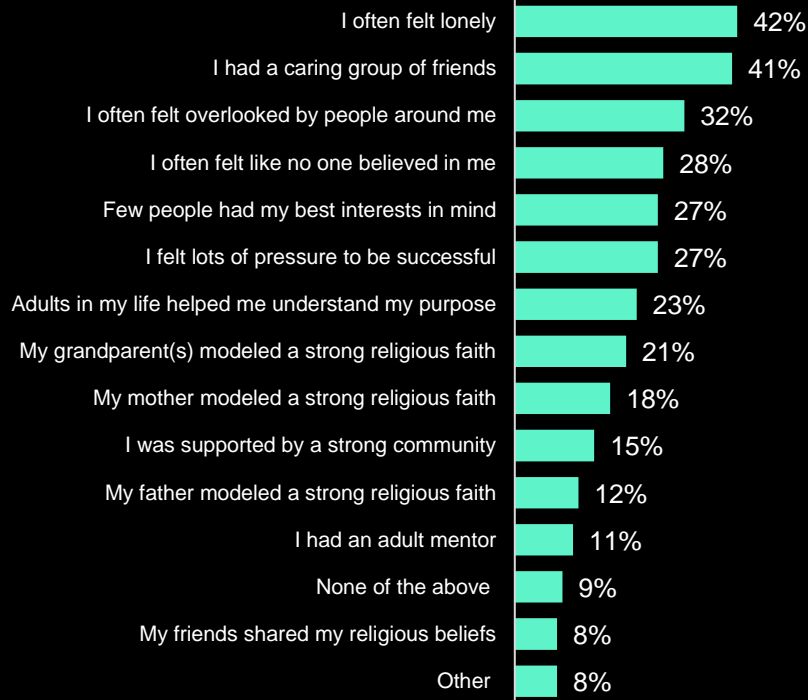


Open Non-Practicing Christians

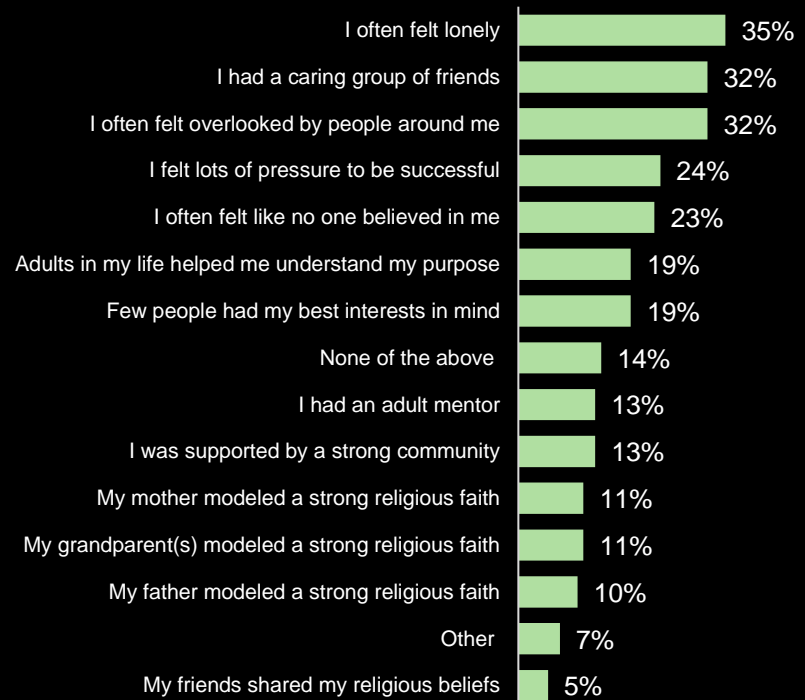


# Today, if a person wanted to know about your personal faith story, which of these would you say were most important for them to know about?

## Open Non-Christians



## Closed Non-Christians



**5.**  
**Why do so many have a Christian  
backstory but are not resilient disciples?**



# Four Types of Christian Experience

Barna

10%

Prodigals  
(ex-Christians)

41%

Nomads  
(lapsed Christians)

24%

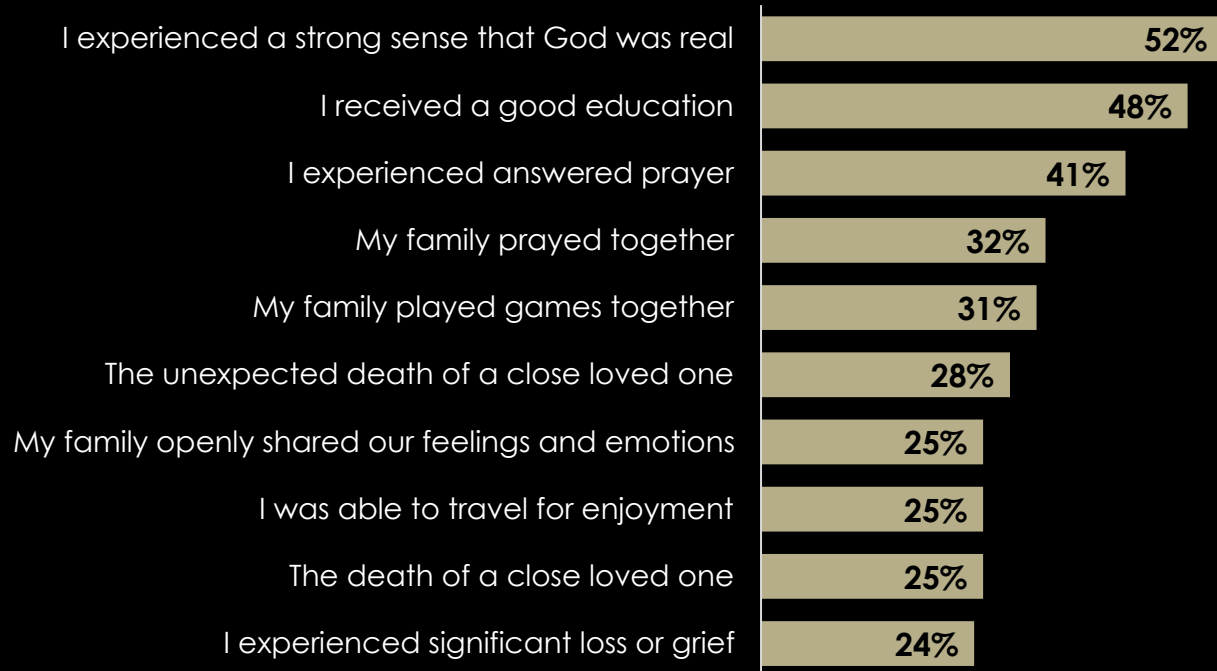
Habitual  
Churchgoers

9%

Resilient  
Disciples

# Habitual Churchgoers

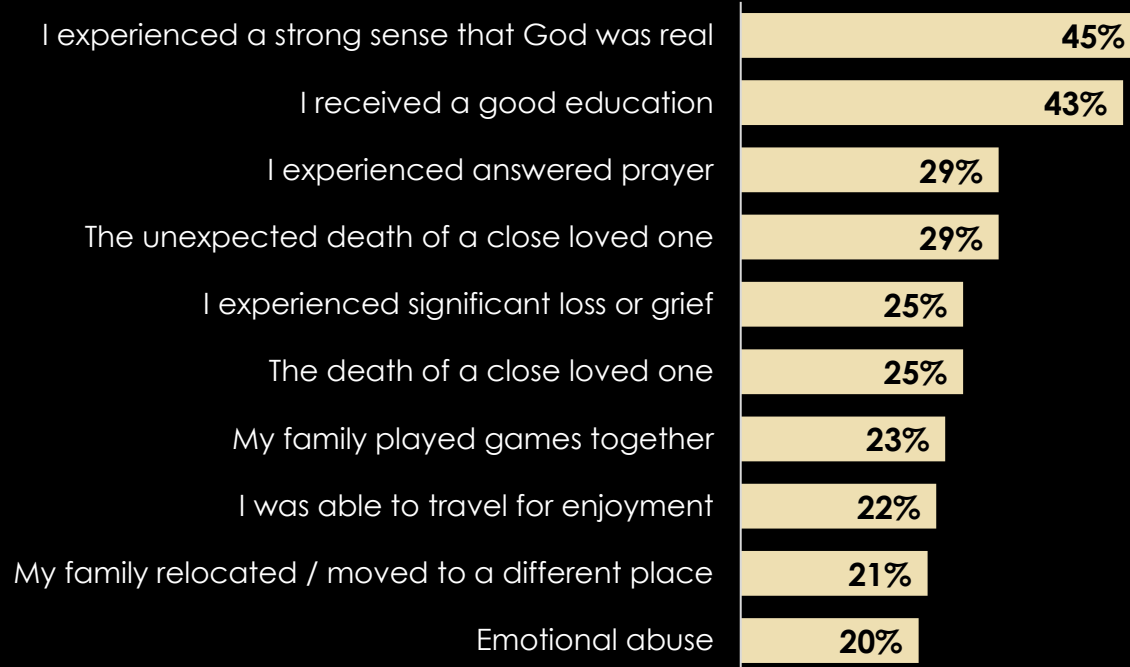
Today, if a person wanted to know about your personal faith story, which of these would you say were most important for them to know about?



24%

# Nomads (lapsed Christians)

Today, if a person wanted to know about your personal faith story, which of these would you say were most important for them to know about?

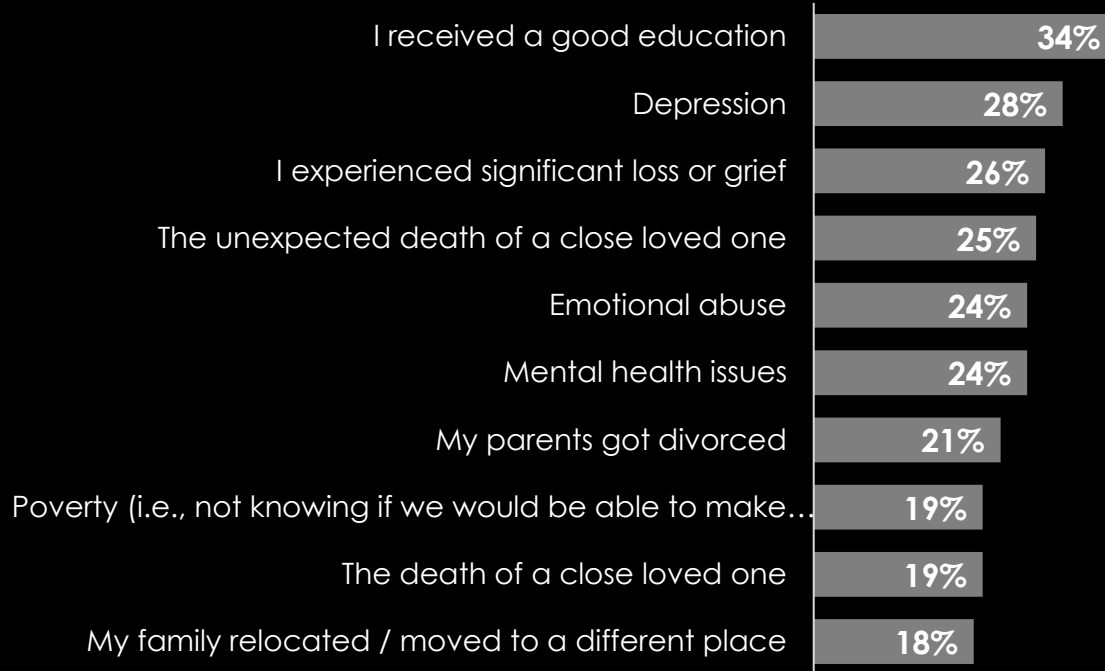


41%



# Prodigals (ex-Christians)

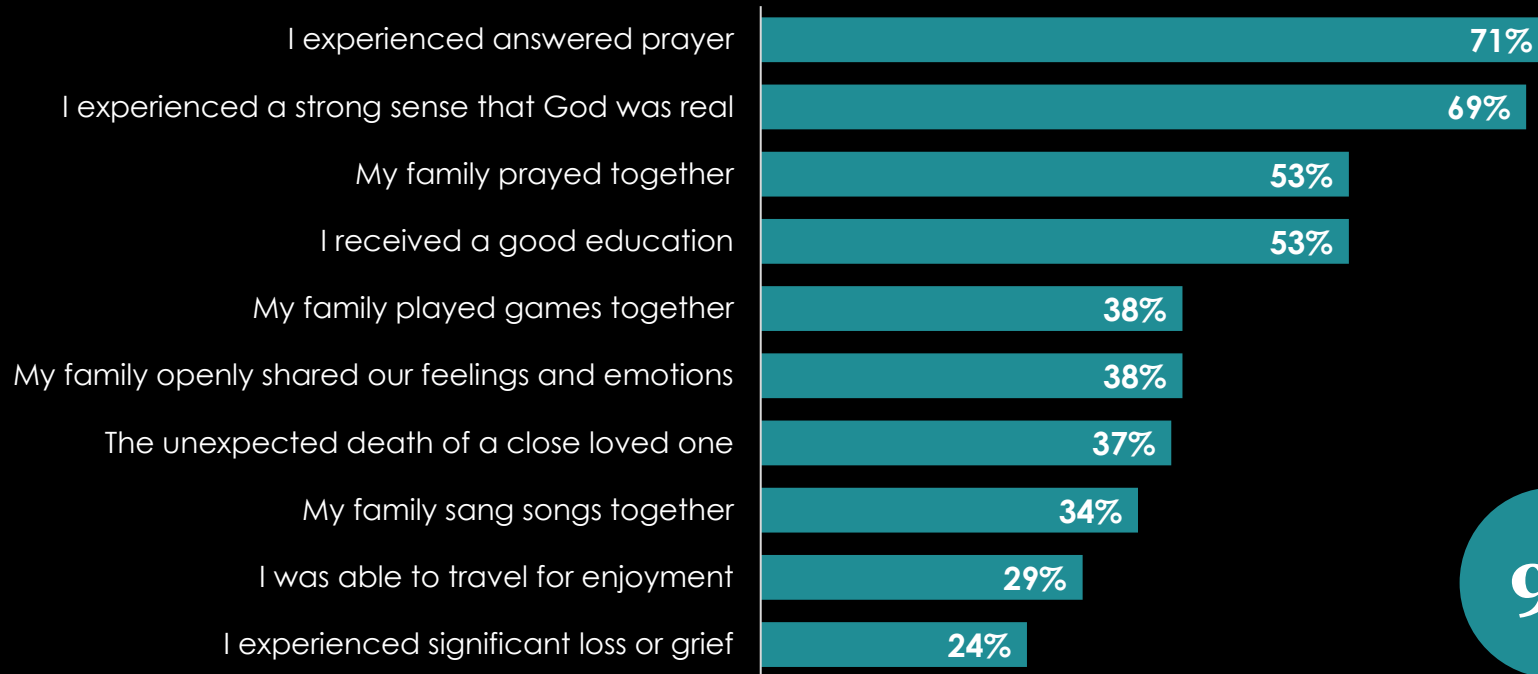
Today, if a person wanted to know about your personal faith story, which of these would you say were most important for them to know about?



10%

# Resilient Disciples

Today, if a person wanted to know about your personal faith story, which of these would you say were most important for them to know about?



9%

**Can we really begin to see people  
for the stories they have lived?**

**STAND  
ON  
THE  
RIGHT**



# **We have choices between hope and despair.**

The Christian story shows we have a God who  
walks through our suffering with us.





**“The difference between a hero and a villain is how they respond to pain.”**

Donald Miller



**Where is God wanting to help  
you to *restory* your life?**





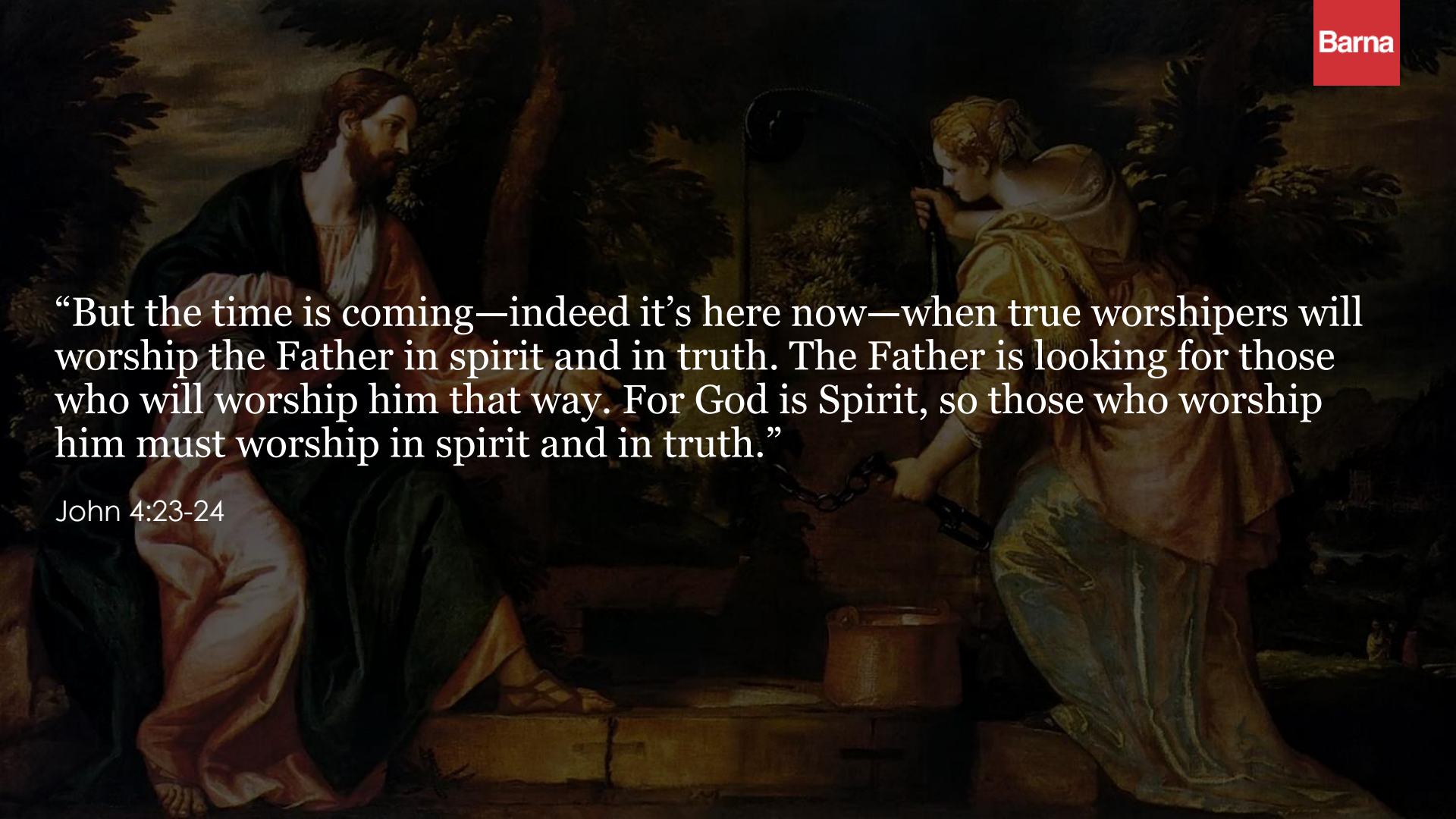




**Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega.**

**Jesus is the Author of Life and of our lives.**

**Jesus is the First and Last Story.**



“But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

John 4:23-24



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