

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY<sup>®</sup>

*¿Porqué los*  *son los*  
**padres** *son los*  
*evangélistas*  
*por* **excelencia?**

Glens T. Stanton  
*Director de Estudios de Formación Familiar*



¿Qué dice la investigación  
sobre cómo los jóvenes  
adoptan la fe?

*El estudio es  
extremadamente claro y  
consistente...*





¿Cuál es la *influencia principal* para que un niño *adopte la fe cristiana*?



# *#1 Los padres*





*#1 Los padres*  
*#2 Los padres*







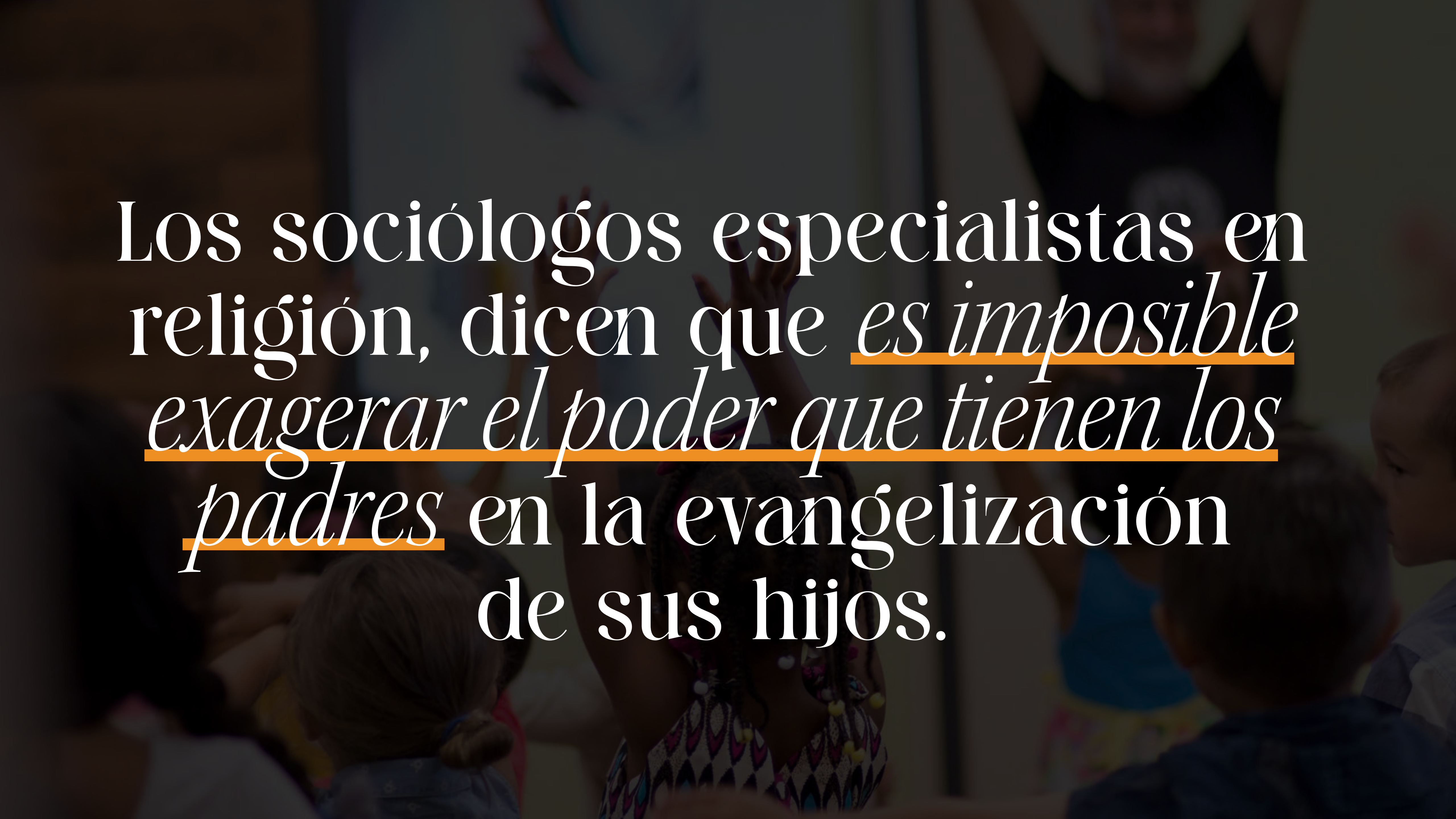
#1 *Los padres*  
#2 *Los padres*  
#3 *Los padres*



#1 *Los padres*  
#2 *Los padres*  
#3 *Los padres*  
#4 *Los padres*  
#5 *Los padres*  
#6 *Los padres*  
#7 *Los padres*  
#8 *Los padres*





A group of people, including children, with their hands raised in a church setting. The background is dark and slightly blurred, focusing attention on the text.

Los sociólogos especialistas en religión, dicen que es imposible exagerar el poder que tienen los padres en la evangelización de sus hijos.





## Transmission of Faith in Families: The Influence of Religious Ideology

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*The family and denominational factors influencing intergenerational religious transmission have been examined in a substantial body of work. Despite research identifying religious ideology as a salient aspect of American religion, however, its role in religious transmission remains unexplored. In this study, I use the National Study of Youth and Religion to test whether children's worship attendance and centrality of faith in young adulthood differ based on whether their parents identify as religiously liberal, moderate, conservative, or none of these. I further test whether the strength of the relationship between parent and child religiosity differs between ideological groups. The primary finding is that religious transmission is stronger among children of religious conservatives than for any other group, while the other groups do not differ significantly from one another. These differences in transmission are largely explained by religious conservative parenting approaches, congregational involvement, and most importantly, more intensive religious socialization.*

*Key words:* religious transmission; family; religious ideology; religious conservative; religious liberal.

### INTRODUCTION

A substantial body of literature confirms a strong relationship between religious beliefs and practices of parents and those of their adult children, often identified as religious transmission. The strength of this transmission varies by family factors, such as parent-child closeness, parenting style, and family structure (e.g., Myers 1996; Smith and Snell 2009). Children's religious outcomes also differ by parental religious tradition (Vaidyanathan 2011). Families from denominations which are relatively strict, have high mean levels of worship attendance, or place a strong emphasis on close-knit community and family cohesion tend to produce more religious children (Armet 2009; Bengtson 2017).

Prior research has not examined whether the strength of transmission varies according to parental religious ideology. Religious ideology, as viewed on

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## Why Are Parents the Crucial Players?



WHY ARE PARENTS *the* most important figures shaping the religious lives and futures of their children in the United States? The primary and powerful role of parents in religious socialization may seem obvious to readers today. But that is because we are familiar with our current system, not because it is historically normal or inevitable. Some older readers may remember times and religious subcultures that worked differently. People from other eras and places in history and the world could also tell about different means of religious transmission across generations. Yet all research in the United States today shows clearly that 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. That is who matters here and now. 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.

This parental primacy in religious transmission is significant because, even though most parents do realize it when they think about it, their crucial role often runs in the background of their often busy lives; it is not a conscious, daily, strategic matter.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, many children do not recognize the power that their parents have in shaping their religious lives, but instead view themselves as autonomous information processors making independent, self-directing decisions.<sup>2</sup> Widespread cultural scripts also consistently say that the

1. Smith, Ritz, and Rotolo, *Religious Parenting*.

2. Smith with Denton, *Soul Searching*.





“Algunos lectores pueden sorprenderse al saber que la única y principal influencia causal en la vida religiosa de los adolescentes y adultos jóvenes estadounidenses, es la vida religiosa de sus padres.”

...Numerosos estudios muestran que, sin lugar a dudas, los padres de los jóvenes estadounidenses juegan el papel principal en la formación del carácter de sus vidas religiosas y espirituales, incluso mucho después de irse de casa y, a menudo, por el resto de sus vidas”.

Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk, *Handing Down the Faith* (Oxford University Press, 2021) p. 1-2

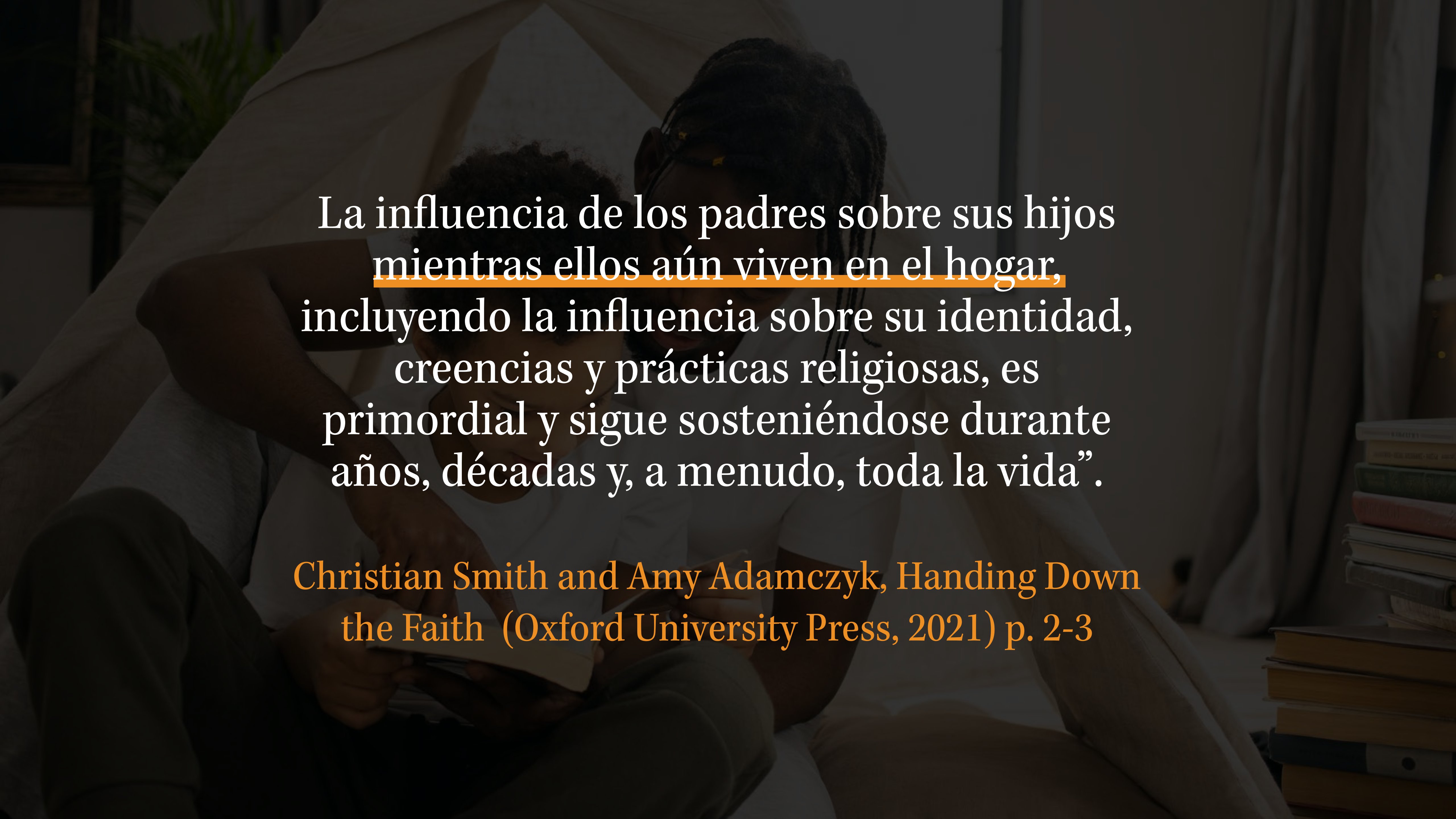




“Además, esta influencia de los padres no ha disminuido su efectividad desde la década de 1970.”

Algunos padres estadounidenses creen perder gran parte de la influencia que tienen sobre sus hijos en sus primeros años de adolescencia; pocos son los adolescentes estadounidenses que actúan como si sus padres no tuvieran mucha importancia en sus vidas. Pero en la mayoría de los casos, esas ilusiones culturales son desmentidas por los hechos sociológicos.

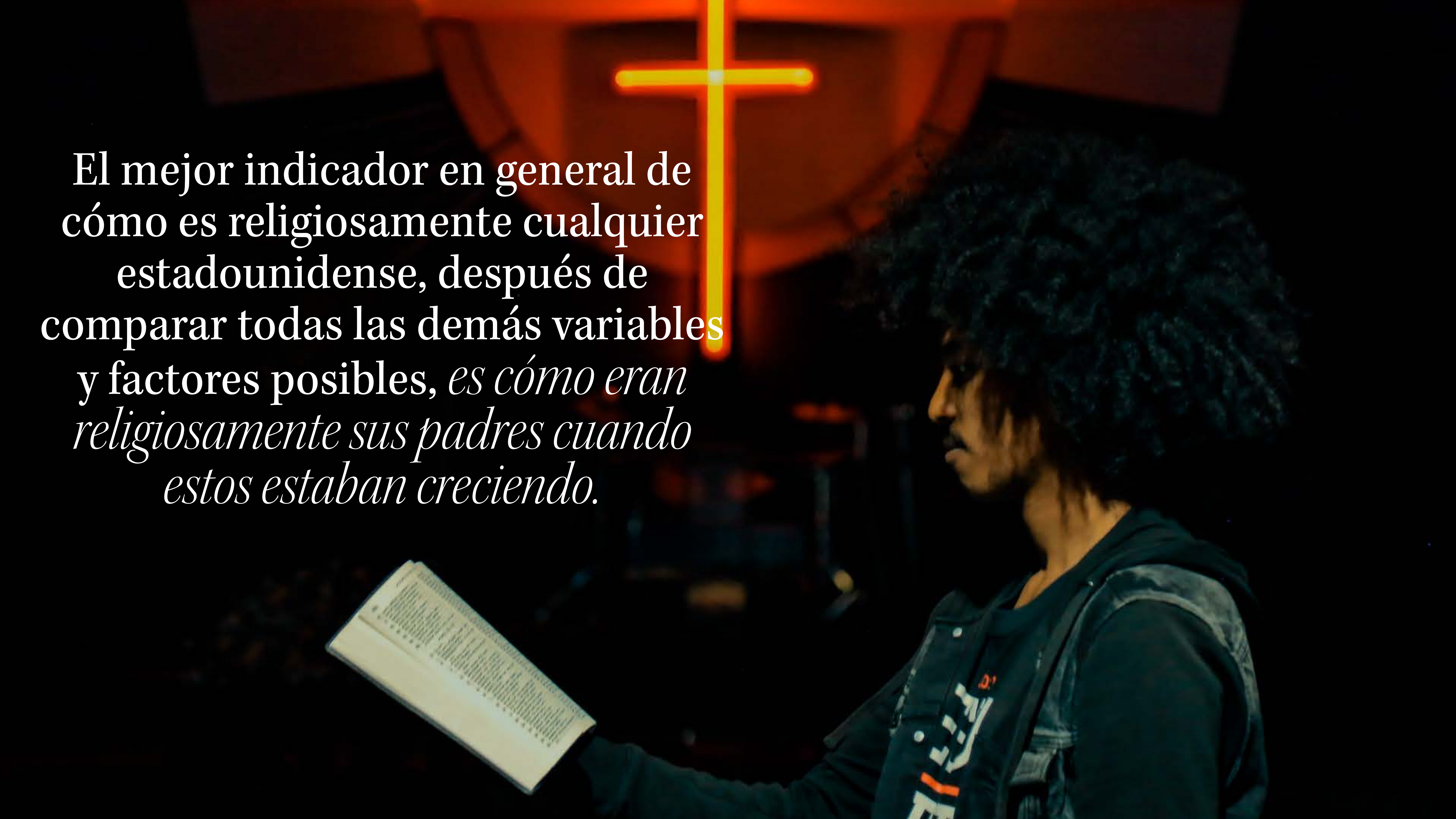


A woman with glasses is sitting on the floor, reading a book to a young child. They are in a library or study area, with stacks of books visible on the right. The scene is dimly lit, with a soft light source from the left. The text is overlaid on the image.

La influencia de los padres sobre sus hijos mientras ellos aún viven en el hogar, incluyendo la influencia sobre su identidad, creencias y prácticas religiosas, es primordial y sigue sosteniéndose durante años, décadas y, a menudo, toda la vida”.

Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk, *Handing Down the Faith* (Oxford University Press, 2021) p. 2-3



A man with dark curly hair and a beard, wearing a dark blue hoodie, is shown in profile reading a book. He is in a church, with a large, glowing orange cross visible in the background. The lighting is dim, with the cross providing a strong light source. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

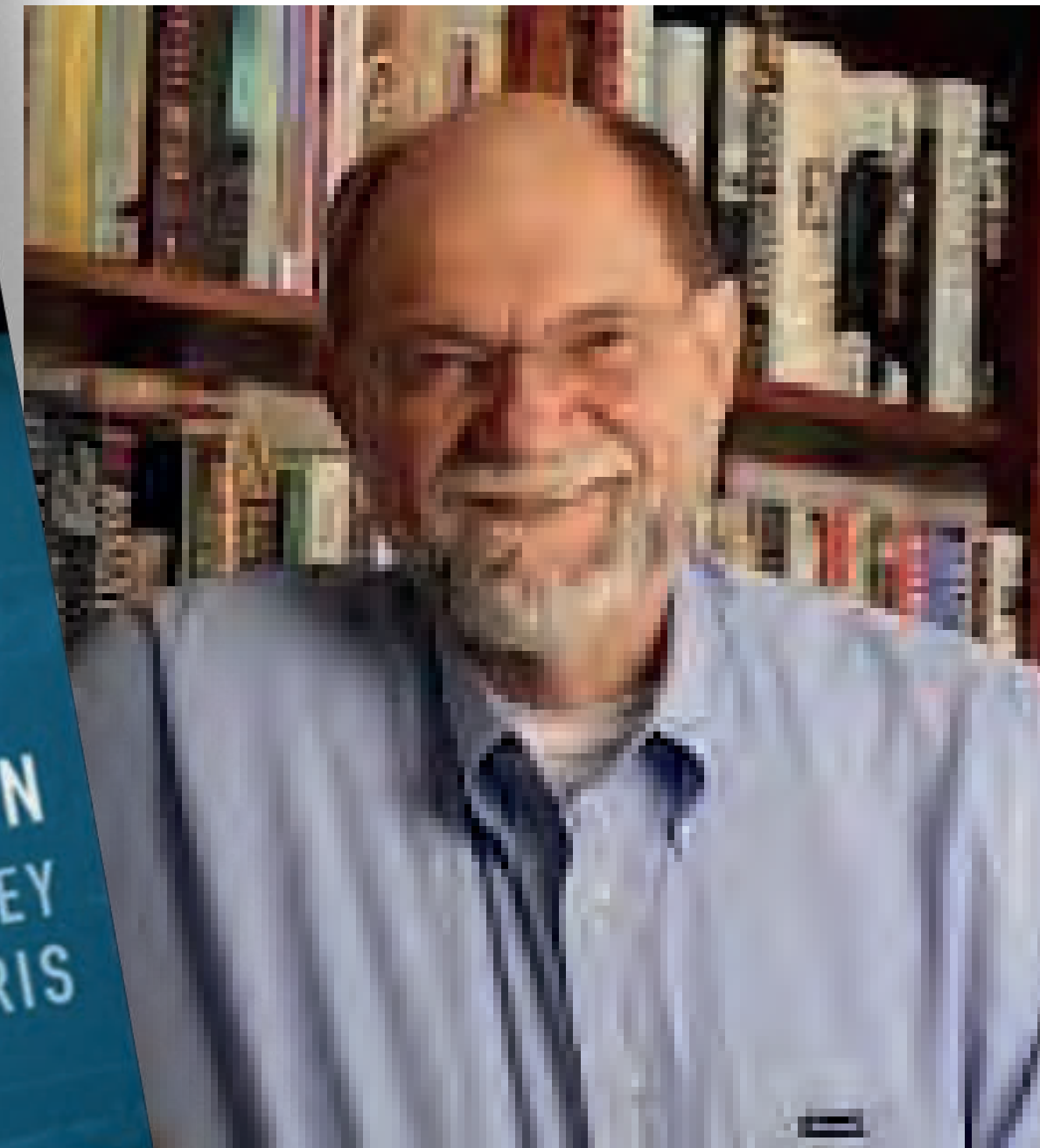
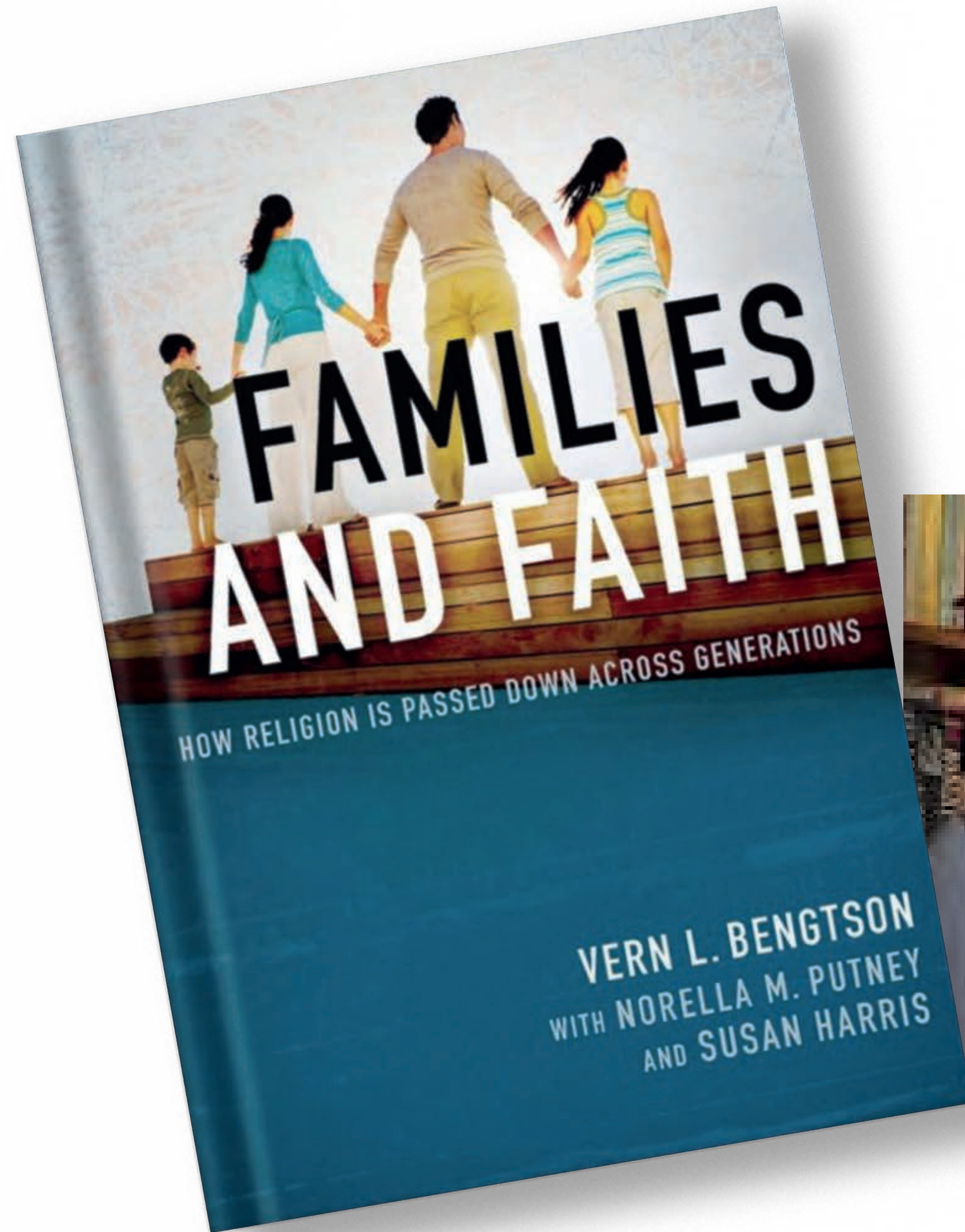
El mejor indicador en general de cómo es religiosamente cualquier estadounidense, después de comparar todas las demás variables y factores posibles, *es cómo eran religiosamente sus padres cuando estos estaban creciendo.*



*Por supuesto que no todos tienen éxito...]* Pero una gran cantidad de estudios recolectados muestran consistentemente que, al ver a los estadounidenses en general, la influencia de los padres en la religiosidad supera cualquier otra influencia, por mucho que los padres y sus hijos supongan lo contrario”.

Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk, *Handing Down the Faith* (Oxford University Press, 2021) p.







“Los educadores religiosos expresan con demasiada frecuencia su preocupación por la falta de participación de los jóvenes, advirtiéndoles a las iglesias sobre la necesidad de construir mejores formas de mantener a los jóvenes en la fe.

Sin embargo, los resultados de este estudio muestran una imagen diferente. En nuestros datos sobre religión y familia, el discurso es más acerca de una continuidad familiar que sobre una diferenciación familiar, y lo que demuestra es más una estabilidad en el tiempo en lugar de una declinación. La influencia de los padres no ha disminuido desde la década de 1970”.

Vern L. Bengtson, *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down Across Generations*, (Oxford University Press, 2013) p. 185



“Un resultado de tales tendencias culturales, familiares y religiosas [liberales/seculares] muestra una disminución de la influencia moral y religiosa de las familias, según muchos comentaristas religiosos y sociales. Con nuestros datos extensos [4 décadas] sobre religión tanto de padres como de hijos adultos jóvenes, pudimos examinar si esto era cierto. Para nuestra sorpresa, no era así.

La medida en que las familias religiosas logran transmitir su fe a las generaciones más jóvenes parece estable a lo largo del tiempo”.

Vern L. Bengtson, *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down Across Generations*, (Oxford University Press, 2013) p. 185



“En resumen, nuestros resultados indican que la disminución de influencia de los padres que muchos asumen, no se ha producido en las creencias y prácticas religiosas. En lugar de rebelarse o abandonar los valores y creencias de sus padres, la mayoría de las personas jóvenes de la generación de hoy parecen haber conservado esos valores y creencias, al mismo tiempo que los han adaptado a un nuevo contexto histórico”.

Vern L. Bengtson, *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down Across Generations*, (Oxford University Press, 2013) p. 185-186





Entonces, ¿qué tipo de  
paternidad marca la  
diferencia?



“Ningún simple factor o técnica explica o predice cómo o por qué la transmisión intergeneracional de la religión puede tener éxito”

Como ocurre con todas las cosas humanamente sociales, los procesos son complejos, contingentes y de varios niveles”

Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk, *Handing Down the Faith* (Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 217



Factores parentales  
*importantes...*





*1. Son constantes y diligentes, no perfectos.*





## *2. Hablan de la fe en la vida cotidiana*



### *The Crucial Practice of Talking about Religion*

We found in Chapter 2 that parents regularly talking to their children about religious matters during the week has a very powerful association with the children growing up to be religiously committed and involved—sometimes stronger than even parent religiousness variables. Why might that be? We think there are various, complex reasons. But one we mention here concerns language learning. Religious beliefs and practices are not only embodied but also linguistically constituted and meaningful. Language and related symbols are central to religion, and they must be learned. Yet religious language is not mainstream Americans' first language; it is a second language at best.<sup>5</sup> So learning to believe and practice a religion requires essentially learning a second language, and that always requires practice talking, even when one is surrounded by native speakers. So when parents regularly talk with children about religious matters in ordinary conversational settings, that provides children with exactly the kind of sustained practice in learning the second language that is necessary for religion to be sensible and possibly interesting.

When families that attend religious services even weekly do not converse together about religious things in the time between, their children only hear religion talked about by mostly others 1 or 2 hours a week. That is like sending





“La forma en que los padres y sus hijos interactúan sobre la religión tiene mayor influencia en los resultados que el mensaje que los padres intentan comunicar.

Las conversaciones más efectivas que los padres tienen con sus hijos están centradas en los niños y no en los padres. Durante estas conversaciones, los niños hacen preguntas y hablan más, mientras que los padres en su mayoría escuchan; las preguntas sobre religión están claramente relacionadas con la vida de los niños”. (énfasis en el original)

Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk, *Handing Down the Faith*  
(Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 5





*3. Los padres transmiten calidez y autoridad*



“Es importante tener relaciones generalmente cálidas y afirmativas con ellos mientras se da la orientación religiosa de los padres a los hijos.

Los padres pueden estar muy comprometidos e intencionales con la orientación religiosa, pero si tienen relaciones emocionalmente distantes y críticas con sus hijos, es probable que sus esfuerzos fracasen o resulten contraproducentes”.

Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk, *Handing Down the Faith* (Oxford University Press, 2021), p.





*4. Los hijos desarrollan  
sus propias disciplinas  
espirituales*



*Padres que han desarrollado su propia fe y  
que apoyan y motivan la fe de sus hijos*

*Oración personal frecuente  
Lectura y estudio diario de  
la Biblia*

*El niño cuenta con el  
apoyo de otros adultos  
mientras vive su fe.*

*Cree en y  
practica la  
castidad*

*Capaz de  
reconciliar  
sus dudas  
espirituales*

*Ha sido  
probado en  
su fe*

*Ha  
experimentado  
el trabajo de  
Dios en su vida.*





## 5. *Constitución* Familiar



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*Padres que practican **la misma fe***

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*Padres **unidos** en matrimonio*

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*Abuelos con **la misma fe***

---

*Padres **involucrados**, es sumamente importante*

---

*Padres con una **fe conservadora***



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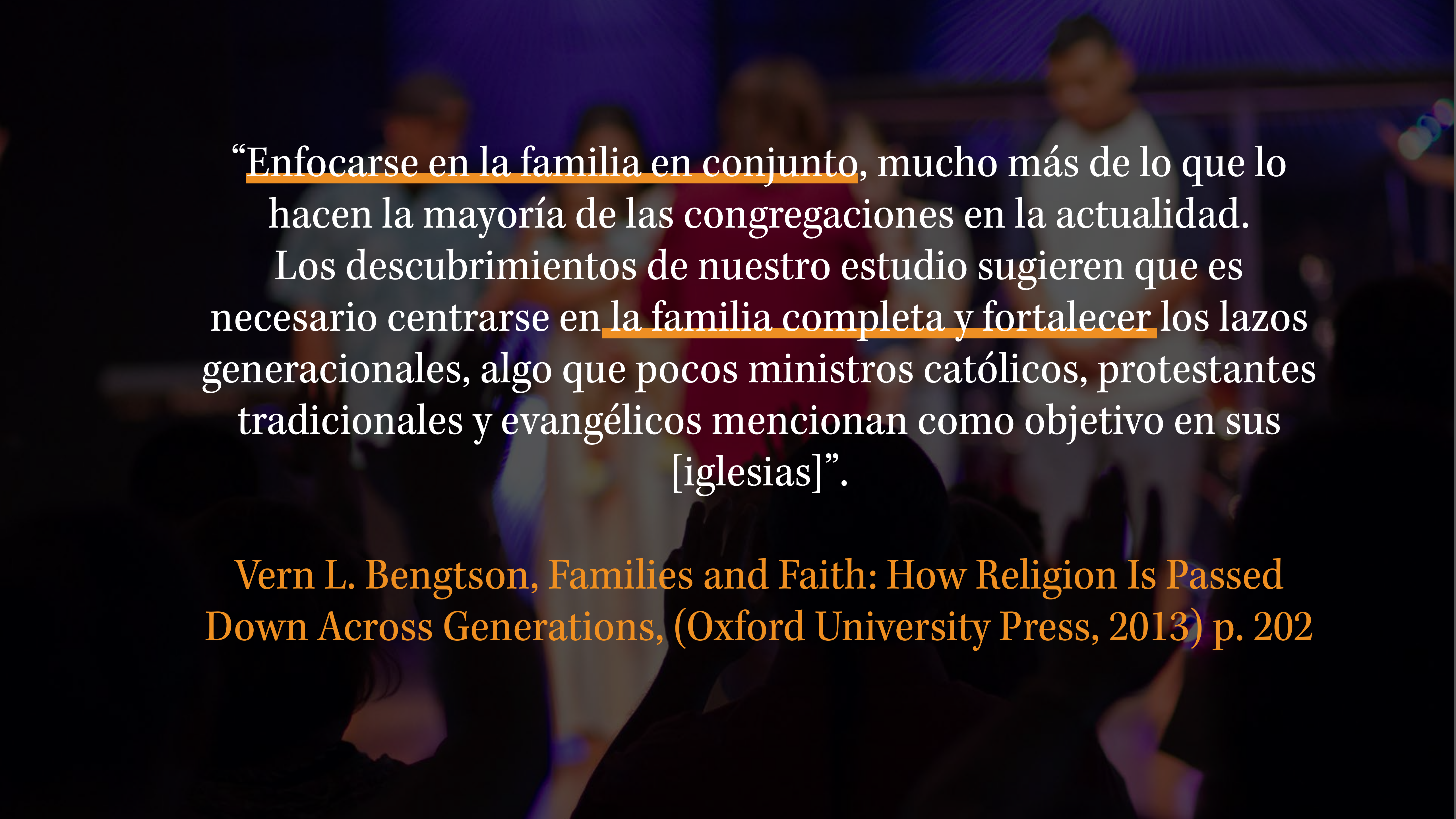






*6. Cuentan con el  
apoyo de otros  
adultos*





“Enfocarse en la familia en conjunto, mucho más de lo que lo hacen la mayoría de las congregaciones en la actualidad. Los descubrimientos de nuestro estudio sugieren que es necesario centrarse en la familia completa y fortalecer los lazos generacionales, algo que pocos ministros católicos, protestantes tradicionales y evangélicos mencionan como objetivo en sus [iglesias]”.

Vern L. Bengtson, *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down Across Generations*, (Oxford University Press, 2013) p. 202



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