

Revolution study guide

Preface

1. The Revolution is described as “the single trend that is already redefining faith and the Church in our country.” How do you react to this statement? Have you observed the Revolution or experienced it personally? If so, share.
2. Barna states three aims for his book, each of which addresses a different audience: Christians within the church, Christian “Revolutionaries,” and people who aren’t sure where they stand in the kingdom of God. Where do you fall on this spectrum? What do you hope to gain from reading the book?
3. Barna distinguishes between the *church* (local congregations) and the *Church* (worldwide body of believers). Does this distinction make sense to you? Why or why not?

Chapter 1: David and Michael

1. The opening story highlights the differences between David, a revolutionary, and Michael, a nominal Christian. The story communicates that even though two people’s external circumstances may be similar, the state of their heart and faith may be drastically different. Have you observed this in your own life? Have you ever been misjudged because of your circumstances? Discuss.
2. Do you identify most with David or Michael? How does David’s example challenge you?
3. David tells Michael, “It’s not about trying to shoehorn God into your packed schedule; it’s about building your schedule around Him.” Do you agree? Have you found this approach effective in your own life? If so, how?
4. Barna defines Revolutionaries as “people who want more of God—much more—in their lives. And they are doing whatever it takes to get it.” Do you know people like this? What are they like? What motivates them?

Chapter 2: The Revolutionary Age

1. What do you think of when you hear the word *revolution*? Is it overused? Based on Barna’s description, do you think *Revolution* is an accurate term for this movement of faith? Why or why not?
2. Barna lists many things that Revolutionaries will not tolerate, starting with “religious games.” Does this list make you nod in agreement, or does it make you defensive? Why do you think that is?
3. Do you agree with the Revolutionaries’ tendency to leave the local church rather than working to transform it from the inside? Discuss.
4. How might Jesus’ admonition to count the cost of following Him play out in American culture? In your own life?

Chapter 3: What Does God Expect?

1. Barna cites Peter’s words in Acts 11:9 to deflect some criticism of the Revolutionary movement (“If God says something is acceptable, don’t say it

- isn't"). What is your response to the Revolution so far? How might considering this verse modify your reaction?
2. Which of the seven passions of revolutionaries do you most identify with? Which are the hardest to relate to? Which do you see the greatest need for in your life or community? Why?
 3. Reread the passages from Acts at the beginning of this chapter. How do each of the seven passions emerge from these Scripture verses? Discuss.
 4. How does Barna say we can know if faith is genuine?

Chapter 4: How Is the Local Church Doing?

1. This chapter includes many disappointing statistics regarding beliefs and behaviors of born-again Christians in America. Which of these surprised you the most? What might be the causes of such apparent spiritual immaturity among churching Christians? Do these statistics affect your attitude toward the local church? Do they reflect your experience?
2. Barna writes, "Being part of a group that calls itself a 'church' does not make you saved, holy, righteous, or godly anymore than being in Yankee Stadium makes you a professional baseball player." Do you agree or disagree? Why? How has your participation in a local church positively or negatively affected your faith?

Chapter 5: Spiritual Transitions in the Making

1. Barna mentions seven trends that he believes are leading to a revolutionized church. Which of these was the most surprising to you? Have you observed these trends? If so, share.
2. How do you respond to this statement: "You don't have to like the outcomes of things you cannot change, but you do have to deal with them"? Share a time in your life where this was true.
3. Barna feels that the more we can anticipate some of the transitions resulting from these seven trends, the better we'll be able to help shape the world for the kingdom of God. Do you agree? How might this principle about anticipating change apply to other areas of life?

Chapter 6: God Is Active Today

1. Barna defines spiritual transformation as "any significant and lasting transition in your life wherein you switch from one substantial perspective or practice to something wholly different that genuinely alters you at a very basic level." Have you undergone this kind of transformation? What prompted it? How has it affected your life? In what areas of your spiritual walk do you most desire transformation?
2. Are you familiar with the mini-movements Barna describes? What do you consider their greatest advantages? disadvantages? Why do you think they have been effective at transforming lives? If you have been involved with a mini-movement, share your experience.
3. Local churches have not always effectively used their congregants who have been transformed by mini-movements. How might churches provide ministry opportunities to those who have been inspired by mini-movements?

Chapter 7: A New Way of Doing Church

1. How has the increased desire for customization affected faith? How can churches who have taken what Barna refers to as the “one-size-fits-nobody” approach respond to this trend?
2. Which of the “macro-models” or “micro-models” Barna describes is the most appealing to you? What experiences would most challenge and develop your faith?

Chapter 8: Jesus the Revolutionary

1. What does it mean to be “in, but not of, the world”? How did Jesus exemplify this while he was on earth?
2. What are your highest priorities? How do they compare with Jesus’ priorities as revealed through the Gospel of Matthew? Which of these is the most challenging for you? Why?
3. Are any of the descriptions of Jesus’ character surprising to you? If so, why? How can our character draw others to Christ?

Chapter 9: American Christians as Revolutionaries

1. What do you think are the keys to a revolutionary life? Which of these six perspectives seems the most ground-breaking?
2. Barna argues that internal politics have no place in a Revolutionary’s life because no emphasis is placed on human recognition but only on God’s approval. Do you think this is possible, or is Barna too unrealistic? How might Christians develop this perspective?

Chapter 10: How the Revolution Shapes the Revolutionary

1. Barna writes, “[You were] created for the purpose of knowing and loving God, reproducing additional lovers of God, and living in ways that reflect being made in God’s image and for His pleasure.” What do you feel is your purpose in life? How does it affect your actions and decisions?
2. How do you respond to this statement: “Church-goers are more likely to see themselves as Americans, consumers, professionals, parents, and unique individuals than zealous disciples of Jesus Christ. Until that self-image is reoriented, churches will not have the capacity to change their world”? Does this accurately describe your experience with a local church? How can Christians reorient their identity in Christ?
3. Have you encountered a genuine community of fellowship as described here? Discuss. What elements are necessary for a warm, authentic community of believers?

Chapter 11: The Marks of a Revolutionary

1. In what ways does the apostle Paul fit your view of a Revolutionary? How is he different?
2. Barna writes that Paul “was less concerned about religious ceremonies and completing a checklist of activities and events than he was about people being

- tuned in to God.” How do you respond to this? How can “spiritual activities” help or hinder us from being tuned in to God?
3. How can we best make ourselves available to God? What does it mean to surrender?
 4. How do you measure up to this checklist of attributes? Is this a valid assessment of spiritual vitality? Why or why not? What would you add or subtract?

Chapter 12: Why the Revolution Matters

1. Barna writes, “Each Revolutionary consents to be personally responsible for his or her spiritual state—whether that’s growth or stagnation.” Is this strong sense of personal responsibility at odds with our culture? How might your church or faith change if you and those around you took this amount of ownership for your spiritual state? What excuses do we commonly use for our immature faith?
2. One of the seven passions of a revolutionary is family faith, including a desire to actively train one’s children in belief rather than entrusting that responsibility to others. If you are a parent, how effectively do you think you are passing on your faith to your children? Are you raising them to be nominal believers or “spiritual champions”?
3. “The Revolution transforms believers so that they can transform the world.” Does this encourage you in your spiritual journey? How?
4. Barna predicts many long-term effects the Revolution will have on the Christian community, local churches, and American culture. Which of these effects would be the most beneficial, in your opinion? Are you skeptical about any of them?

Chapter 13: What the Critics Will Say

1. Barna refutes several common criticisms of the Revolution. Do you find his arguments convincing? Why or why not? What questions or concerns about the Revolution do you still have? What would help you overcome these?
2. What are the Bible’s most important guidelines for worship? Do you think Christians are required to be part of a local church? Why or why not?
3. Barna describes five reactions to the Revolution, ranging from ignorance to antagonism to acceptance. Where do you fall on this spectrum? Is this where you want to remain? Why or why not?

Chapter 14: This Revolution’s for You!

1. What do you see as the strengths of the Revolution? Any weaknesses?
2. Has this book challenged you to take your faith more seriously? If so, how?

Appendix 1: How a Local Church Can Respond Appropriately to the Revolution

1. Barna describes meeting with two pastors, whose responses to the Revolution were diametrically opposed. How did you react to these stories? Which arguments hold the most weight?

2. If you are involved with a local church, how would you like to see it respond to the Revolution? What would be the most effective way? How might your church integrate revolutionary principles into its practices?
3. What might you or your church leaders learn from Revolutionaries?