



Nashville, Tennessee  
Associated  
Baptist Press

Editor: Bob Allen  
Executive editor: Greg Warner

Phone: 800.340.6626  
Fax: 904.262.7745  
E-mail: bob@abpnews.com

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### **Kids view growing up in the '90s more favorably than do parents**

NEW YORK (ABP) -- While parents worry about youth problems like guns, violence and drugs, their children have a brighter view of being a kid in the '90s, according to a recent survey.

Time Magazine and the children's TV network Nickelodeon sponsored the survey of children and their parents. Conducting the survey the last two weeks of May, just weeks following the high school shootings in Littleton, Colo., New York pollsters Penn, Schoen and Berland Associates interviewed 1,172 kids, ages 6 to 14, at shopping malls in 25 U.S. cities. They also interviewed 397 parents, according to a report in the July 5 issue of Time.

Overall, children reported they were happy to be kids and don't perceive their world to be as dangerous or negative as their parents do, the magazine reported.

Parents listed crime (26 percent), youth violence and guns (13 percent), peer pressure (13 percent) and drugs (5 percent) as bad things about being a kid. Young people, meanwhile, listed "getting bossed around" (17 percent), school/homework (15 percent), "can't do everything I want" (11 percent), chores (9 percent) and being grounded (9 percent) as the things they like least about childhood.

Despite widespread concern about highly publicized instances of school violence, only 5 percent of kids in the survey said they feel unsafe in their school. Nearly half (49 percent) said they feel "very safe," while 44 percent said they feel "pretty safe."

Contrary to what their parents think, kids aren't in a hurry to grow up. Eight out of 10 of the 6- to 11-year-olds said they were not anxious to grow up. That is because younger kids have more fun, insisted 64 percent.

About the well-documented breakdown of the family? Four in five (79 percent) of kids said their parents were among the top three people they look up to the most. Another 19 percent said grandparents, and 13 percent said athletes.

Forty-one percent said they spend about an equal amount of time with both their father and mother. Of those who spend more time with one parent, 47 percent said it is with Mom and 11 percent with Dad.

Faith is important to kids, the survey said. Ninety-five percent said they believe in God. Nearly half said they attend religious services every week and eight out of 10 said they pray.

More than half (53 percent) said it is very important to wait until you are married to have sex. Another 23 percent said it is somewhat important, while a smaller percentage (22 percent) said it is not important to wait until marriage.

Asked what age they think premarital sex is appropriate, kids said 23 years old. Their parents said 18.

Children differed with their parents in their perceptions of how much respect adults have for kids. While 52 percent of parents said "a lot," 42 percent "some," 6 percent "a little" and 0 percent "none," young people's responses were a lot, 31 percent; some, 48 percent; a little, 16 percent; and none, 5 percent.

Asked what are the most important things that kids at their school use to decide who fits in, younger kids, ages 9-11, said "being a good friend" (45 percent), being good at sports (35 percent), popularity (31 percent) and being funny (31 percent.) The picture changed for ages 12-14, however. They said clothes (44 percent), popularity (37 percent), being good looking (34 percent) and being a good friend (33 percent).

Kids and adults share a jaded view of politics. Just 36 percent of kids said they would like to be President of the U.S. and 31 percent of parents said they would want their child to be. The majority of both kids (62 percent) and parents (58 percent) answered no to that question.

Two thirds of children (67 percent) said they would rather be Bill Gates than Bill Clinton, while 21 percent said they would prefer to be Clinton.

The margin-of-error for all kids was reported to be plus-or-minus 3 percent and for parents plus-or-minus 5 percent.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Tobacco firms found liable in Florida class-action suit**

MIAMI (ABP) -- In what observers said could be a crushing blow to the tobacco industry, a jury in Miami found cigarette makers liable in a class-action lawsuit filed on behalf of 500,000 Florida smokers.

The jury said tobacco companies conspired to "misrepresent information relating to the health effects of cigarette smoking" and acted with "reckless disregard" in selling cigarettes to smokers.

The July 7 verdict came after more than eight months of testimony. Afterward, the suit entered its second stage, where the same six-member jury was to decide damages. The lawyer for nine smokers who filed the lawsuit has asked for \$200 billion.

While cigarette manufacturers have lost cases filed by individual smokers, this is the first-ever class-action loss. Damages could run into the billions, far more than tobacco companies have paid in other lawsuits.

While tobacco opponents hailed the verdict, they cautioned that the plaintiffs' victory is not yet certain because of possibility it could be overturned on appeal.

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-- By ABP staff

## 'Multicongregational churches' becoming trend in U.S. worship

By Greg Warner

(ABP) -- "Thank you for calling Grace Community Church. If you are calling in regard to our traditional worship service, please press 1. If you looking for celebrative worship in a casual, non-threatening atmosphere, please press 2. If you're not into religion but you believe in God and own a pair of Timberlands, then our GenX service may be for you. Press 3 now. If you don't know where you fit in, please press 4 to make an appointment with our counseling service. And have a great day."

The day of one-size-fits-all worship is apparently a thing of the past -- if it ever existed. The watchword for worship in the new millennium is "diversify."

Thousands of churches across the country are adding worship services to reach different groups of people. Traditional churches are starting services for baby boomers. Boomer churches are reaching out to GenXers. Some churches are even targeting the fastest-growing subculture -- senior adults.

The trend knows few bounds. From the struggling traditional church in the city center to the thriving suburban megachurch, multiple worship services are becoming the solution of choice for churches looking to reach new people or avoid decline.

"That's happening all over the country in tens of thousands of churches," says church consultant Bob Gilliam of Aurora, Colo.

Charles Arn, a church-growth researcher from Monrovia, Calif., estimates that half of the country's 355,000 Protestant churches would benefit from starting a new worship service, either to reach a new group of people or to bring in more of the same.

Arn and others say new worship services grow faster than existing congregations. With an estimated three-fourths of American churches either plateaued or declining, adding a worship service for a new target audience is one way to breathe in new life.

The formula varies widely. Some churches offer new styles and formats for worship. Some offer more convenient times. Some target different subcultures -- from punks to cowboys. The most common pattern for multiple services, Arn says, is "from one generation to its succeeding generation," which also usually includes a more contemporary worship style.

The result of all this diversification is a uniquely American addition to the religious lexicon -- "multicongregational churches" -- where two or more distinct groups live together as one local church.

But does it work? Is it healthy? Is diversity of worship the answer for every church or only some? And what holds a church together when it meets in separate services?

"Those are going to be hot debates for the next 10 to 20 years," predicts David Hughes, a pastor who studied the trend and led a traditional church to make the transition.

The idea of "a church within a church," as some call it, is not entirely new. In reality, any church with more than 100 or so members is a collection of subgroups, "a federation of tribes within a tribe," says Hughes, pastor of First Baptist Church of Winston-Salem, N.C. Sunday school classes, age groups or ministry teams each can function as a subgroup.

But when those subgroups meet separately for worship -- the one activity they used to do all at once under one roof -- subtle distinctions become pronounced.

Worshiping in subgroups became popular in the 1980s. It followed a national trend toward demographic segmenting and target marketing, "which probably began when the baby boom generation arrived on the scene," notes Arn, president of Church Growth Inc.

For many congregations, the story is strikingly similar. Baby boomers did not respond well to traditional church methods and programs, but they flocked to churches that made worship and other ministries relevant to the boomer experience. New churches designed with boomers in mind flourished, while those founded earlier by the builder generation struggled to keep up.

While some traditional churches tried to adapt, others resisted major changes, particularly to their style of worship. The rock-based worship music of the boomers was too much of a departure from the tradition of organ and hymn. Yet as many builder churches stopped growing, the prospect of missing a whole generation of Christians spurred some to action. The solution for many was segmented worship along generational lines.

First Baptist of Winston-Salem is a historic downtown church with a formal worship style. In 1991, David Hughes led the 1,200-member church to start an early-morning contemporary service for the baby boomers who were not responding to the church's traditional ministry. Though only a fourth the size of the traditional congregation, the new service accounts for most of the church's growth.

Meanwhile, some boomer churches, after a decade or more of growth, found their appeal to the baby-bust generation likewise was limited. The cultural gap between boomers and busters was in some ways even wider. So beginning in the late 1980s, subcongregations for the post-1964 generation began to appear.

Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago, the quintessential baby boomer church, established a new service for baby busters when it became clear they weren't attracted to Willow's patented seeker services. Dieter Zander, who in 1986 founded one of the country's first buster churches in West Covina, Calif., was hired in 1994 as the teaching pastor for Willow's new congregation.

Arn says segmented worship is the best strategy for reaching any new group of people. After studying the experience of several hundred churches over a five-year period, he found that 80 percent of churches that add a new worship service show an increase in total attendance, contributions and conversions.

But multiple worship services don't work for every church. What makes the difference?

The one essential ingredient, according to pastors and consultants alike, is an outward focus. Churches that are committed to those outside their fellowship can muster the resources and tolerate the changes required to make multiple worship work.

That commitment is called different things -- a growth orientation, evangelistic fervor, Great Commission thinking. A growing league of scholars and researchers refer to an "apostolic mindset," recalling the outward focus of the first-century apostles that spread the gospel throughout the Mediterranean.

"An apostolic mindset is absolutely essential," says Jim Johnson, who has led Dunwoody Baptist Church in Atlanta through a transition from a traditional church to one targeting boomers and busters. "The average lifespan for a church is 50 years, after which it follows a bell curve and begins to decline. For a church to survive and thrive after that, it has to make arrangements to reach a succeeding generational group or succeeding mindset."

A church focused on preserving the past, protecting its fellowship, or simply surviving won't have the commitment to start multiple worship services, says Arn, author of "How to Start a New Service." His studies suggest half the Protestant churches in the country fall into that category.

"For a church that does not have a Great Commission conscience, there really is little or no alternative other than stagnation and death because that, more than any other ingredient, is necessary for a church to grow," he says.

Arn worries about what he calls a "spiritual selfishness" that keeps many churches from focusing outward. "There is a plague of self-centeredness which spends far more time than appropriate on our own spiritual growth and far less than appropriate ... on reaching beyond ourselves."

## 'Multi' congregations take different forms

By Greg Warner

(ABP) -- Not all multicongregational churches look alike. Several distinct models are emerging.

-- Different services. Two congregations meet separately for worship but are led by the same pastor. This is the most common pattern for multicongregational churches. But not all pastors and music directors can minister effectively within two generations or two styles.

-- Different congregations. Two congregations share facilities but not the same staff. Each congregation is led by a pastor who identifies with the target group. The older congregation usually is led by the senior pastor. But success can bring problems. What happens when the newer congregation becomes the strongest? Few churches have thought about generational succession.

-- Different churches. One congregation "plants" another one to target a different group. But the new congregation eventually stands on its own, much like the mission-church model used effectively in the past. This approach is not as popular right now, since it does nothing to guarantee the future of the mother church. But that may change.

Dieter Zander left Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago last year and now works for Bay Marin Community Church, planting churches in nearby San Francisco. His departure was sparked by differences over how the baby buster congregation fit into the larger church body, he says.

"We all said we wanted to do something to reach the next generation ... but we weren't really saying the same thing." Pastor Bill Hybels expected the new congregation eventually to "fold into the main ministry of the church," Zander explains.

But baby busters will never worship and think like boomers, say Zander and others, because the differences are more than generational.

"There is something more at stake here than a generational shift," says Brad Cecil, who leads the buster congregation at Pantego Bible Church in Arlington, Texas. Baby busters, or GenXers, are the first generation raised with a postmodern worldview, which means they experience and process truth differently than boomers and builders, most of whom have a modernist mindset.

Don't expect busters to be assimilated into boomer or builder congregations, Cecil says. "I don't think conversion to modernity is what's going to happen."

Zander and Cecil do believe a true church within a church -- separate ministers serving distinct congregations -- can work for churches that want to reach busters. "It works if the senior minister embraces the concept," Zander adds.

He says he has no hard feelings about Willow Creek. "They are consistent with who they feel God wants them to be." But his experience emphasized the need for clear direction and understanding for any church beginning multiple worship services. "Where is this going ultimately? We did not fully answer that at Willow."

For a multicongregational church to work, the groups have to have the same doctrine and philosophy of ministry, says Bob Gilliam, who directs the Center for Church Effectiveness. And the groups have to believe "we are working together to accomplish something we both believe in."

Even with those shared values, problems are inevitable.

"The first and most predictable response you will hear," says researcher Charles Arn, "is 'we won't know everyone anymore' or 'we will become two churches.'" The reality, he says, is that two groups worshipping separately are much like two churches.

There is something lost when a church is divided for worship. "What we are losing is fellowship," says Gilliam. "But fellowship is something that can only be maintained with 70 to 90 people at a time."

Jim Johnson preaches for both the traditional and contemporary services at Dunwoody Baptist Church in Atlanta and, yes, he feels like he is pastor of two churches. But he notes: "Large congregations have multiple congregations anyway. We now just have multiple worshiping congregations."

The idea that a church is unified by worshiping together under one roof is misleading, says David Hughes, pastor of First Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., a historic downtown congregation which started a second contemporary service in 1991. "I hope we all know that is a very inadequate definition of unity. There is more than that to being unified as the body of Christ."

What most churches have had all along are "familiar strangers," he says. "They move in and out, but do they really know each other?"

"What we've all got to do is be very intentional about building community in the midst of diversity, to build as many bridges as we can among the disparate parts of the church," Hughes says. Common ground, he adds, can be established around coffeepots, through joint worship services and intergenerational seminars. "Start with the willing."

Worship is not the time to build community anyway, the pastors and consultants agreed.

"I don't believe the primary purpose of worship is community with each other but to commune with God," says Charles Arn, a church-growth researcher from Monrovia, Calif.

By far the biggest obstacle a church faces in moving to multiple services is resistance to change.

With the larger culture changing so rapidly, "people are looking for little oases of non-change," says Hughes.

But that can be a death sentence for churches in the future, says Gilliam. "An average of 12 to 15 churches close their doors every day," he says, in part because they can't attract younger members. "If they are unwilling to change, they will not reach out to this constituency."

Many churches that want to be "multigenerational" still are geared to reach only one generation, says Hughes. "If you are serious about having boomers and busters, you have to at least be generationally sensitive. Otherwise you are going to be bypassed."

But it's hard for a church to face such harsh realities.

"It sounds a little like saying ... 'We don't want to change, but we don't want to die,'" notes Dieter Zander. "But it is usually out of pain that a church changes. People don't change when things are going well."

Of course, multiple worship services are not the only way to adapt. Many churches are unwilling to pay the price of segmented worship -- loss of fellowship, generational segregation, added workload.

Some of them are finding "blended worship" a better solution. The chief advocate is Robert Webber of Wheaton University, who teaches a workshop on blending the classic church traditions with the best elements of contemporary worship.

Some churches are so deeply committed to their style of worship that blending is not an option. Others find blended worship unsatisfying. "No one church service can be everything to everyone," says Arn. "Those that try end up being very little to anyone."

All change is hard, and it's not just churches that feel the intense pressure to adjust, Hughes says. "Inflexible institutions of all kinds are on the endangered species list."

Churches facing the future may find themselves subject to a kind of "spiritual Darwinism," he adds.

"It may be the survival of the flexible."

## **Missions, not consumerism, driving change, proponents say**

By Greg Warner

(ABP) -- What's driving the trend of multiple worship services?

To some observers, the new diversity in worship reflects a kind of unsavory Christian consumerism, in which the church shopper becomes like any other consumer in search of a product tailored to his or her needs, even at the expense of time-honored traditions.

But to others, worship diversity is more than target marketing. It's cross-cultural missions.

As our culture becomes more diverse, Americans no longer share a common Christian heritage. While a healthy dose of Christianity used to be part of the normal American childhood, more and more Americans grow up without first-hand exposure to Christianity. Meanwhile, an influx of immigrants has brought new religions to Main Street.

Reaching a culture that is ever less familiar with Christianity means translating the gospel message into the cultural forms of the day -- the music, the language, the mindset. It's the same principle of "indigenous missions" that redefined global missions earlier this century.

"It's more likely we will reach non-Christian people in our target audiences if we don't require them to cross unnecessary barriers," says Charles Arn.

Elsewhere in the world, those barriers may be ones of language and custom. For "unchurched" Americans, the barriers may be organ music, stem-winding sermons and the "language of Zion."

Dieter Zander pioneered ministry to the baby busters (those born after 1964) when he founded New Song Church in West Covina, Calif., in 1986. He says reaching baby busters requires cross-cultural thinking, because the mindset and culture of busters is so different from previous generations.

"We ought to see this next generation the way we look across the ocean at Africa or another culture. They may live next door, but they are an ocean away," Zander says.

Cultural change is not new. But the pace of change is unprecedented.

The church has always had to adjust to shifting culture. And each generation has left its stamp on traditional Christianity, including its worship. But the explosion of technology and communication in the late 20th century is "pushing us far beyond our comfort zones," says church consultant Bob Gilliam of Aurora, Colo.

"In a sense, it has always happened, but not as quickly as it is happening now," says Gilliam. For a church, adapting to a changing culture becomes increasingly difficult, he says, because "the target is moving."

The transition from one generation to another, which may never have been painless for the church, now happens at blurring speed. While the Bible speaks of a generation as 40 years, the types of changes that usually accompany a generational shift now occur in less than a decade.

Other transitions -- as when an inner-city neighborhood becomes racially diverse -- are easy to see, says Jim Johnson, pastor of Dunwoody Baptist Church in Atlanta. "What we are experiencing now culturally is just as real but not as easily seen," he explains. A church that doesn't adapt to those less visible changes will be left "as an island within its own mission field."

Johnson is looking for a solution to the "generational lock" most churches fall into. Rather than a church tying itself to one generation, then creating new congregations for succeeding ones, he suggests locking onto an age group, then continually adjusting the style as new generations rise.

"We are trying to become an intentionally culturally regenerating church," he explains. That requires a commitment to provide "indigenous worship and ministries to reach each succeeding generation."

## **Pastor says postmodernism could alter Christian witness**

ARLINGTON, Texas (ABP) -- Will postmodernism change the way people come to faith?

Brad Cecil thinks so. He leads the postmodern congregation at Pantego Bible Church in Arlington, Texas. Trained in the tradition of conservative apologetics -- at Tennessee Temple and Dallas Theological Seminary -- Cecil started ministering to GenXers, only to discover they weren't interested in his logical defense of the gospel against modern skepticism.

"Young adults say, 'I don't really care about that; what I care about is the quality of your community.'"

In the modern era, Cecil says, conversion was characterized by "rationalistic individualism," which meant "any individual accurately informed could ascertain and experience truth." While many Christians try to prove faith with scientific accuracy, postmoderns have no such lofty goal. They say objective truth is impossible to obtain. "Science was the first one to give that up," says Cecil. "The evidentiary apologists have got this whole ball of twine that nobody wants to play with."

For postmoderns, truth must be embodied. "The postmodern church starts in community. It starts with belief that I by myself cannot ascertain truth. I need a group of people to help me process it -- people who will not reject me, who will practice love."

What's the role of the church? "It changes us from a dispenser of truth to a place to facilitate people's journeys," Cecil says.

But that's about all he's sure of. "To be honest, we don't really know what's ahead. Nothing like this has happened for the last 400 years. The last major transition like this was the shift from the medieval to the modern era."

Postmodernism may be good for Christianity, say Cecil and others. "Faith is no longer marginalized. We actually have a better culture to work with."

The postmodern congregation at Pantego Bible is not a "generational fix" to reach GenXers, Cecil says, but an attempt to develop a uniquely postmodern ministry. "It's really not about age. It's about outlook." Don't expect GenXers to go back to faith as usual, he says.

"I don't think conversion to modernity is what's going to happen. ... Maybe in another 400 years we'll grow out of it, but not now."

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-- By Greg Warner

### **Resources:**

-- "How to Start a New Service," Charles Arn, Baker Books, 1997. Who should, who shouldn't and how to get there. A practical guide supported by research.

-- "An 8-Track Church in a CD World," Robert N. Nash Jr., Smyth & Helwys, 1997. A clear analysis from within the traditional church.

-- "A Peculiar People," Rodney Clapp, InterVarsity Press, 1996. If the church is to be taken seriously, it's time to acknowledge the end of Christendom and embrace a new relationship to culture.

-- "Church for the Unchurched," George G. Hunter III, Abingdon Press, 1996. How "new apostolic churches" are erasing cultural barriers to present the gospel.

-- "Inside the Soul of a New Generation," Tim Celek and Dieter Zander, Zondervan, 1996. Understanding and connecting with postmoderns, from two pioneers of GenX ministry. A practical, entry-level tool.

-- "Generating Hope," Jimmy Long, InterVarsity Press, 1997. How postmodernism influences Generation X, as seen through the lenses of sociology, theology and ministry. Simple and practical.

-- "The Worship Phenomenon," Robert Webber, Star Song Publishing Group, 1994. Discusses the convergence and dialogue of styles in blended worship, which Webber describes as "a dynamic new awakening" in the church.

-- Leadership Network, Dallas, Texas, [www.leadnet.org](http://www.leadnet.org)

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## **Texas man surprises car buyers with an 'Owner's Manual for Life'**

By Jeff Huett

DENISON, Texas (ABP) -- Pulling the owner's manual out of the glove compartment is one of the first acts a new car owner performs after making that big purchase. If Ray Ridings and his nonprofit organization have anything to do with it, car buyers will also retrieve an "Owner's Manual for Life"-- the Bible -- in addition to the handbook they expect to find.

An owner of several dealerships over his 35 years in the automobile industry, Ridings knows the impact this ministry could have. And with 70 million new and used cars and trucks being sold in America every year, he knew he could make an impact on an "unlimited" number of people if he could just get the Bibles in the vehicles.

To do that, he would need the support of car dealers. "It's hard to reach auto dealers through the mail or on the phone," Ridings said. "You need to eye-ball them."

So that's what he did.

Since their original printing in 1997, Owner's Manual for Life, Inc., has placed its Bibles in 60 dealerships in Texas, two in Colorado and one dealership in both Oklahoma and Missouri. "I basically do this by myself," Ridings said, "so it's a slow process."

He estimates he has sold 68,000 Bibles to dealers since 1997. "That's not many, compared to what's available," he said.

Dealerships are asked to purchase the Bibles at \$1.50 each and place them in the glove box of each car they sell. To Ridings, "if it makes a difference in one out of every 10,000 people, I'm committed because that's what God wants me to do right now."

Bobby Price began placing the New International Version New Testaments in automobiles at his Sulfur Springs, Texas, Ford dealership when the program began in 1997. He estimates he has given away 7,200 Bibles in his new, used and fleet vehicles.

"I've had very positive responses from customers," Price said. "In fact, a lady sat in the lobby yesterday studying her Sunday school lesson, and she commented what the program had meant to her."

The Bibles have also had an effect on the dealership's employees. Price said his employees are proud to mention the "Owner's Manual" to buyers. "We don't make a lot of fanfare about it, though. We just put the Bible in the glove compartment as soon as we get the car ready," he said.

Price and Ridings, who have been friends since before each got into the car business more than 35 years ago, share their enthusiasm for the program. Ridings' enthusiasm stems from his 12 years as a member of the Gideons. As a member, he has seen firsthand the difference just having a copy of the Bible can have on spreading the word of Jesus Christ.

"The Gideons put Bibles in hotels, hospitals and nursing homes world-wide," Ridings said. "I have heard the testimonies from people around the world that have read Gideon's Bibles, so I figured, if they'll read it, so will car buyers."

In addition to the New Testament text, the owner's manuals feature sections on general Bible information, instructions and self-help guidelines and study guides to aid its readers. The Bibles are printed by the International Bible Society and are bound in a red, white and blue cover.

The only sticking point so far is organization. Currently, the organization consists of Ridings himself and a board of directors that adds an additional two or three sets of hands to the ministry.

"I need to get organized and get other people interested in the ministry to get it put across the country," Ridings said. To succeed in this, he said, he would need to get young people involved and set up a large network of dealers in Texas and across the country.

Financial support from a dealer network would not only provide for the printing cost of each Bible, but also help provide copies of the manual to churches, youth groups and other special groups without charge -- a calling Ridings feels.

What began as a comment to car and truck owners upon noticing a Bible lying on the dash of a vehicle he was appraising, has now turned into a growing ministry.

"I would always say to the car owners, 'I like your owner's manual there,'" Ridings said.

Now, instead of merely commenting on seeing a Bible in a vehicle every so often, he's trying to make sure there's a copy in every single one.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: For more information on the manuals, contact Owner's Manual for Life, P.O. Box 96, Sherman, Texas 75091 or call (903) 892-9293.

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