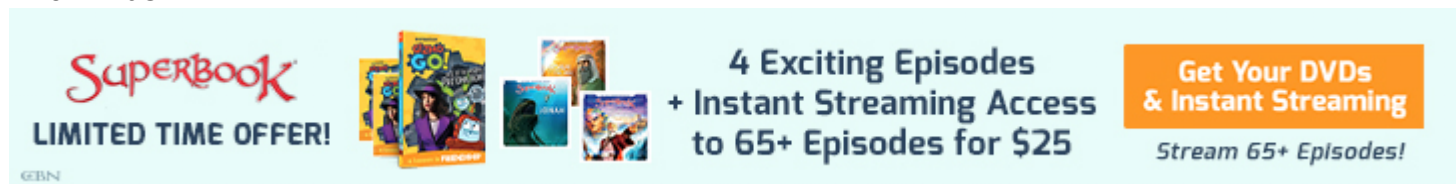


Allow Ads



Superbook
LIMITED TIME OFFER!

4 Exciting Episodes
+ Instant Streaming Access
to 65+ Episodes for \$25

Get Your DVDs
& Instant Streaming
Stream 65+ Episodes!

Unapologetically Christian: Alternatives to Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts See Big Membership Increases

08-27-2021

[Mark Martin](#)

The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts are seeing big drops in membership. Reasons include the pandemic and social trends.

But leaders of Christian alternatives believe there's more to the story, and their groups are seeing huge increases in membership.

Trail Life USA

"On my honor, I will do my best to serve God and my country, to respect authority...."

Ryan and Elliott Parks recite the oath for [Trail Life USA](#), described as a "Christ-centered, boy-focused, character leadership and adventure organization."

"I really like being a part of it just because there's a lot of fun like I love being outdoors, and I love camping and hiking and kayaking, and there's a lot of that in Trail Life," Ryan told CBN News.

Instead of a Periodic Table of Elements, Trailmen complete what's called a "Periodic Table of Advancements", dozens of skills with the goal of becoming a Freedom Rangementan.

Christian Emphasis

Younger brother Elliott describes Trail Life's Christian focus.

"One time we talked about Christ being our Cornerstone and how we need to rely on him, and so I thought that that's really important," Elliott shared.

Their troop master is also their father.

"We ruled out the Boy Scouts; we just did not choose them, mainly because of a lot of decisions that they had been making, and we just decided that wasn't going to be a good fit for us," explained Jon Parks to CBN News.

"We were looking for something that really reinforced our beliefs and how we read the Bible, our understanding of God's Word," he continued.

Boy Scouts 'Lost Their Way?'

For years, the Boy Scouts have been mired in controversy that has caused numbers to plummet. Issues range from bankruptcy due to lawsuits, to opening the Scouts to girls, and gay youth and adult leaders, to participate.

Those items combined with the pandemic led to a membership drop from almost two million members in 2019 to around 762,000 this year.

A Boy Scout spokesperson told [The Hill](#), "Like many youth-serving organizations, we saw an overall decline in membership in 2020."

"However, most Cub Scout packs and Scouts BSA troops that were registered at the beginning of 2020 have signed up for another year of Scouting," the BSA spokesperson continued.

******Please sign up for [CBN Newsletters](#) and download the [CBN News app](#) to ensure you keep receiving the latest news from a distinctly Christian perspective.******

"The Boy Scouts kind of lost their way; they were an organization that has given us presidents and senators and astronauts and community and civic leaders," Trail Life USA CEO Mark Hancock told CBN News. "They had a magic sauce; they had the magic for how to grow boys into good strong men."

"But they began to abandon those traditions through the changes that they made over the last couple years, and I think the families said, 'No, we want an organization that understands that boys and girls are different,'" he continued.

"We want our sons to be raised in an organization that's male-focused, that helps them to understand and to be encouraged to grow into winning and godly men," Hancock added.

Hancock tells CBN News, Trail Life USA has seen a tremendous 70 percent growth in the last year. And with more than 30,000 Trailmen across all 50 states, he's not watering down the Christian emphasis.

"It's who we are, and it's really what makes us different," he said. "If we cease to do that there's no reason for us to exist. And we also in our hearts, we want to see the Kingdom grow. We want to see boys impacted for Christ."

"We want to see boys and families making decisions for Christ," he continued. "And we see that basically on a daily basis."

American Heritage Girls

The founder of Trail Life USA's sister organization says frustration over the Girl Scouts' direction inspired her to start [American Heritage Girls](#).

"American Heritage Girls is Christ-centered, which differentiates us from other scouting organizations," Founder Patti Garibay told CBN News. "We were started in 1995 as a result of the changes in the Girl Scout program."

"I had been a Girl Scout volunteer for 13 years, ministering to girls along that program path," she continued. "However, when they made a change in the Girl Scout promise to no longer mandate an oath to God, it was very concerning to me."

She's referring to the asterisk that's now in the [Girl Scout Promise](#) that reads, "On my honor, I will try: to serve God*". It means "*Members may substitute for the word God in accordance with their own spiritual beliefs."

Garibay wanted something stronger.

"A character development program has to be based on something," she explained. "Morality's involved, and so what would it be based on if God was now removed or allowed to be flexible."

"And so I tried to make changes locally in the Girl Scouts and also on the national level, but to no avail, and as a result, the Lord called me to start American Heritage Girls," she continued.

After 26 years, troops now operate in all 50 states with girls taking part in 15 other countries.

Unapologetically Christian

Like Trail Life USA, American Heritage Girls is an unapologetically Christian organization. Garibay says it just makes sense.

"It is very important," shared Abby Smith, who completed the entire AHG program. "We always put God first in our attitude, integrity, everything about the creed, and our oath is centered around God and faith and just putting your trust in Him above all else."

"It's definitely the most important thing," she continued.

"It's nice because the other girls know Jesus, and they know just what he does and how good he is," said Aubrey Poynter, an AHG Tenderheart.

The faith aspect clearly sets American Heritage Girls and Trail Life USA apart – a critical component in a world competing for the attention of girls and boys.