

Are 70% of Believers Afraid of the Future?

If the Bible teaches believers that they have already won the victory over the enemy, then why do a vast majority of them have a growing sense of fear for the future?

A recent study by Lifeway Research revealed that seven out of 10 U.S. Protestant pastors believe there is a growing sense of fear within their congregations about the future of the nation and the world.

Moreover, 63% of Protestant pastors say their churches have a similar dread, specifically about the future of Christianity in the U.S. and around the world.

A majority of pastors feel that churchgoers simply aren't getting the message of 1 John 5:4, which reads, "... for whoever is born of God overcomes the world, and the victory that overcomes the world is our faith."

And how about 1 Corinthians 15:57, which reads, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Not surprisingly, biblical illiteracy could be the major issue among Christians. Prominent pastor and author Michael Youssef believes that is the case.

"Biblical illiteracy is rampant," Youssef says. "And people are going to fall for deception, for false teachings, for anything, because they are not grounded in the Word."

Associates for Biblical Research says that most professing Christians do not possess a sound and coherent understanding of the Bible, and therefore biblical illiteracy is "one of the most serious problems facing the church in the 21st century."

Many Christians fall victim to the enemy's wiles for a lack of knowledge of God's Word. Many believe we are in the end times, but give in to fear of wars, rumors of wars, natural disasters and the coming of the evil one—the Antichrist.

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Jesus himself told us to anticipate all of these things as well as persecution for following him. Matthew 10:22 reads, "You will be hated by all men for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved."

✖ "The Bible tells followers of Jesus Christ to expect trials, tribulations and suffering," says Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research. "However, Scripture doesn't prescribe fear as the response to adversity. Instead, it frequently encourages rejoicing and faithfulness as anxieties are cast upon God."

Youssef says that it will be easy for the Antichrist to deceive people in these chaotic end times.

"When the Antichrist comes and deceives the world, we have no discernment because we do not know the words of Jesus," Youssef says.

Retired pastor Gary Curtis says that biblical illiteracy has produced a current generation that does not know God's critical call to repentance and holy living.

"Biblical illiteracy about these last days' truths need to be individually owned and observed," Curtis says. "We are all vulnerable, in these wicked times, lest we 'also fall from your own firm footing, being led away by the deception of the wicked.'"

"It is one of the things that cost us our steam," Murillo

says. "I believe that we are to function as if we're here another 1,000 years."

The study found that 71% of white pastors sensed fear in their congregations, but only 47% of Black pastors and 62% of Hispanic pastors reported the same.

The report noted that the numbers represented a decline from past years as 74% of Protestant pastors reported a growing sense of fear in 2014. But, McConnell says, fear of the future is still a major issue in the church.

"Compared to a decade ago, a few more churches today are avoiding the impulse to fear changes and adversity around them," McConnell says. "But a large majority of pastors see their congregations moving toward fear rather than away from it." {eoa}

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Shawn A. Akers is the online editor at Charisma Media.