

What Constitutes Moral Decline?

Most Americans surveyed in a recent LifeWay Research study agree that America is in a moral decline. But that's where the agreements end.

The recent survey of 1,000 Americans found 81 percent are "concerned about declining moral behavior in our nation." How they view right and wrong and where their moral influences come from, however, run the gamut.

For example, 60 percent of Americans older than 45 say right and wrong never change. Of those 35 and younger, just 40 percent feel the same way, which demonstrates a significant generation gap in how Americans view morality, LifeWay says. Another third (32 percent) of all surveyed say whether or not someone gets hurt plays a role in determining if something is right or wrong.

Author, religion and culture expert and national radio host Dr. Alex McFarland () says the survey is a telling reminder that a person's beliefs, and sometimes upbringing, dictate how they view society.

"Morality and right and wrong were once very black and white," McFarland said. "But as the culture becomes more complicated, and as views on morality—Christians' views as well—evolve, issues of right and wrong and even sin aren't as clear-cut. But the truth is that the Bible has not changed, and never will. Even though society may tell us that something is right and acceptable and 'tolerable,' God's Word is forever. And because of these shifting views on right and wrong, there has never been a more important time for Christians of all ages to become grounded in the Bible and know how God defines these matters, rather than how man defines them."

McFarland was also recently interviewed by The Christian Post on the changing views of same-sex marriage by evangelical Christians. The article cited a new study from the Pew Research Center that found that support among evangelicals for gay marriage has more than doubled, from 14 percent to 35 percent, over the past 10 years, and about half—47 percent—of young white evangelicals support gay marriage.

“Several things are coalescing in our culture,” McFarland told The Christian Post. “We’ve got a public school system and a public university system that for decades now, 50 years at least, has been trending away from belief in morality and belief in God.”

Other findings from the LifeWay survey include:

- 63 percent say “implementing laws to encourage people to act morally is not effective.”
- 44 percent say: “The fewer laws regulating moral standards, the better.”
- Those surveyed also listed influences on their views on morality, which included parents, religious beliefs, personal feelings, friends, teachers and media such as books, movies and music.
- The greatest influences are parents (39 percent), religious beliefs (26 percent) and feelings (18 percent). Friends (4 percent), teachers (2 percent) and media (3 percent) were less influential. {eoa}