

Can America Ever Recover from Division?

Many Americans hold out hope the next president will bring unity to our fragmented country.

However, a recent survey by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University suggests that such unity is doubtful.

The survey reveals that regardless of the election outcome, the foundational beliefs of Americans are so divided that the nation currently lacks a cohesive perspective on its identity and the path forward.

The United States has prospered and persevered through the years, partly because of a collective comprehension and shared pursuit of fundamental values such as “truth, purpose, success, responsibility and community.”

Dr. George Barna, through the annual American Worldview Inventory (AWVI) survey at the Cultural Research Center, delves into various attributes among a representative sample of adults. The 2024 survey discloses a striking level of discord in foundational perspectives across the American populace.

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Less than a third of the indicators in the survey lead to any sort of consensus among most adults. Dr. Barna notes that among the various shared perspectives, only nine items prove beneficial for national unity and progress:

- Never worshipping a supernatural authority other than the God of Israel

- Believing the Bible is an authoritative and trustworthy guidebook for life
- Deeming Jesus Christ to be an important guide for your life
- Contending that hatred and aggression are not necessary for personal survival
- Choosing to repay any money that you borrow from someone else
- Rejecting the philosophy that you can do whatever you want to do as long as it does not harm other people
- Choosing not to personally participate in an abortion, regardless of their belief about the permissibility of other people having an abortion
- Not attempting to cast a spell on other people
- Taking time to thank, praise and worship God at least once during the week

In the AWVI 2024 findings, several worldview perspectives were pinpointed where a majority of Americans express disagreement. These are examples of the challenges to unity among Americans:

- Basis of truth
- Whether other people deserve to be respected
- Importance of the God of Israel as an authority source/guide for life
- Belief about the value of human life
- Acceptance of the existence of absolute moral truths
- Existence of Satan
- Means to happiness in life
- Morality of intentionally deceiving other people
- Morality of consensual pre-marital sexual relations
- Personal commitment to discerning and doing God's will
- Appropriate relationship to/treatment of animals

As per Dr. Barna, the survey data indicate a nation in search of guidance and hope, yet also imply that individuals are seeking these elements from sources that may not be equipped to provide them.

“It is disheartening to see how out of whack people’s expectations have become during these chaotic and confusing times,” Barna says. “Just as the Jews misunderstood the nature of Jesus’s messiahship some 2,000 years ago, expecting a warrior king who would raise Judaism to power, millions of Americans are deceived enough to think that electing the ‘right’ president will bring stability, security, unity and sanity to America.

“Yet it is not a political awakening that the United States desperately needs but a spiritual awakening that will foster a deeper understanding of self and society in light of our shared spiritual condition,” he continues.

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Analyzing data trends from a series of national studies conducted over the past decade, Dr. Barna voiced dismay over the escalating lack of foresight and what he perceives as increasing self-centeredness. According to his assessment, these developments have led people off course: “Sadly, people have become so self-focused and their beliefs are now so self-serving that no politician elected in 2024 can reasonably be expected to restore common purpose and shared vision to the nation without a serious reshaping of people’s worldviews,” Barna says.

“The only true hope for America at this point is a period of spiritual renewal that restores a widespread understanding and basis of truth, individual purpose and personal responsibility within a community context. Placing the burden of uniting this divided a country on the shoulders of a president or political party is unrealistic. Only a spiritual awakening can usher in the required tidal wave of spiritual wisdom and commitment, and that kind of renewal does not happen overnight or randomly. It must become an intentional and long-term

commitment," Barna concludes.{eo}

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