

Evangelical Growth Encouraging, But Some Christians Remain Self-Delusional

A new study by Grey Matter Research reveals that while many evangelical Christians are experiencing a great deal of success in their spiritual growth in these challenging times, while others are simply “outright” self-delusional about where they stand in the kingdom.

Ron Sellers, president of Grey Matter Research, says these are trends of which Christian leaders should take note.

“One-third of evangelicals are highly involved when it comes to spiritual activities,” Seller said in a statement. “Church lay leaders are far more likely than others to be spiritually mature, which is as it should be.

“We’ve demonstrated the clear link between accountability/encouragement and spiritual growth. And most evangelicals realize that they are not where they could be spiritually, which is a necessary foundation for growth.”

The study, which polled 1,000 adults with evangelical beliefs, revealed that only 11% of evangelicals have full spiritual engagement, but another 22% are highly engaged. Someone is considered to be fully engaged (on a scale of 0-25) if they typically:

- Read the Bible daily
- Study the Bible (beyond just reading it) multiple times per week
- Attend worship weekly (whether in-person or online)
- Attend a small group Bible study or prayer group weekly

- Pray multiple times per day

In the success category, the study finds a strong link between encouragement/accountability and higher levels of spiritual engagement. Evangelicals who have someone in their life who regularly encourages them to read the Bible have much higher levels of readership, and those who frequently meet with a spiritual mentor have significantly greater overall spiritual engagement.

The study revealed a “stagnation” category, where:

- Less than 1% of adult evangelicals came to their beliefs in the last year, despite all the time, effort and money spent on evangelism among adults.
- And, when these people displeased God, only 60% attempt to learn and grow from their failure and just 36% take steps to ensure they don't repeat their failure.

The last two statistics are very telling of where a great portion of the church lies.

On the opposite end of the success spectrum, 24% of those polled have low engagement, while another 4% are not involved at all. The biggest numbers came from the moderately engaged at 38%, meaning these evangelical Christians do only a few of these activities regularly or engage on a sporadic or infrequent basis.

Those numbers, Sellers says, should raise flags with church and kingdom leaders. Many evangelical Christians who have prayed the sinners' prayer don't follow up on their salvation by seeking discipleship or by looking for ways they can seek Jesus with all of their hearts, although they continue to hold and even express Judeo-Christian values.

This comes under the “self-delusional” category where, the study says:

- The less spiritually engaged an evangelical is, the more likely that person is to say their spiritual life as a Christian needs no changes or improvements at all.
- Most evangelicals who don't regularly attend church do not list a return to church as their greatest need for growth. Instead they wish to grow without involving church. The same is true for Bible readership as infrequent and non-readers rarely list Bible readership as their greatest spiritual need.

This makes sense because if they are not reading the Bible, then they are not aware of the words in Hebrews 10:25 that reads, "Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but let us exhort one another, especially as you see the Day approaching."

"Most evangelicals are not involved in sharing the gospel with others," Sellers said. "Only about half have really prepared themselves for spiritual growth. Many truly don't appear to understand—or maybe care—what role church and the Bible play in spiritual development, and a significant minority have essentially checked out entirely even though they continue to hold basic evangelical beliefs.

"There's definitely good news, but there's also a tremendous amount of work to do." {eo}

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