

Poll: Failing to Read Bible Related to Declining Morals in US Society

A new report released Tuesday finds that Americans overwhelmingly believe morals and values are declining in the U.S. (77 percent). The most-cited cause for the decline? A lack of Bible reading.

The findings are reported in American Bible Society's annual State of the Bible survey released Tuesday. The report details Americans' beliefs about the Bible, its role in society, its presence in U.S. homes and more. As in previous years, the survey found that the Bible remains a highly valued, influential force in America.

But beliefs about the Bible and its role in society are becoming increasingly polarized—particularly when the data is examined by age group.

The research also uncovered a significant disconnect in belief versus behavior. While 66 percent of those surveyed agreed that the Bible contains everything a person needs to know in order to live a meaningful life, 58 percent say they do not personally want wisdom and advice from the Bible, and about the same number (57 percent) read it fewer than five times per year.

The State of the Bible 2013 survey, conducted by Barna Group on behalf of American Bible Society, found that:

- The Bible continues to dominate both mind space and book retail space as America's undisputed best-seller.
- One in six people reported buying a copy of the Bible in the last year.

- 80 percent of Americans identify the Bible as sacred.
- Americans have plenty of copies at their fingertips—an average of 4.4 Bibles per household.
- 56 percent of adults believe the Bible should have a greater role in U.S. society.
- Actual Bible reading and perceptions about the Bible have become increasingly polarized, with 6 million new Bible antagonists in the last year alone.
- More than half (57 percent) of those ages 18-28 report reading the Bible less than three times a year or never.
- While those ages 18-28 are the least likely age group to read the Bible, they are the most interested in receiving input and wisdom from it on several topics including:
 - Parenting (42 percent, compared to 22 percent of all adults)
 - Family conflict (40 percent, compared to 24 percent of all adults)
 - Dating and relationships (35 percent, compared to 16 percent of all adults)
 - Romance and sexuality (30 percent, compared to 17 percent of all adults)
- In a non-election year, an increasing number of adults believe the Bible and politics do not mix (54 percent, compared to 49 percent in 2012). However, 69 percent still say their faith influences their views on political issues.
- Full findings and infographic of study highlights at .

"Americans overwhelmingly recognize the decline of morality in our nation," said Doug Birdsall, president of American Bible Society. "The good news is the Bible is the ultimate instruction guide on how to live a moral life. Unfortunately, more than half of Americans rarely, if ever, read it."

The disconnect between belief and action when it comes to Bible reading is troubling, says Birdsall.

"If we had a cure for cancer, wouldn't everyone with cancer take it? Americans are telling us that the cure for declining morality is sitting on our bookshelves," says Birdsall. "But more than half of Americans are simply letting the cure gather dust."