

41.6 Million American Adults Look to Bible for Answers, Study Shows

The annual “State of the Bible” study, commissioned by American Bible Society and conducted by Barna Group, reveals that 21 million new people are looking to the Bible for wisdom and guidance this year. Also, 14.9 million people who were disengaged in 2018 have chosen to interact with the Bible. The study reveals a challenge, too: 9.9 million “Bible-centered” adults have decreased their level of engagement with the Bible since last year. Taken together, these changes have led to a swelling in the ranks of the so-called “movable middle” to 41.6 million adults, those people who interact with the Bible looking for practical advice for their modern lives.

Though the Bible is an ancient book, engagement with it can have impact on modern lives. The study shows that Bible-engaged people are more financially generous than those who are unengaged. When asked to recall the total gifts they gave to charity in 2018, Bible-centered respondents recalled contributing \$1,000 on average, while the Bible-disengaged gave \$20 on average.

Volunteerism also increases with Bible engagement. Beyond financial contributions, Bible-engaged people are more generous with their time: 57% of Bible-centered adults are inclined to be more generous with their time, compared to just 2% of the Bible-friendly and 3% of the Bible-neutral.

Almost 60% of Americans believe that the message of the Bible has transformed their lives. Specifically, Bible users feel peaceful, encouraged and hopeful and have a sense of direction, in that order. Results also show that Bible engagement has a positive influence on behaviors including:

- How they treat people of a different race than themselves.
- Their support for refugees.
- Their decisions at work or school.

“Our research shows that when people engage with the Word, their lives are bettered,” said Roy Peterson, president and CEO of American Bible Society. “They find wisdom, hope and healing. In today’s sometimes turbulent times, the Bible can provide welcome answers.”

For Americans who are curious to know more about what the Bible says (63%), the Bible and clergy rank as the top resources (28% each). Expectedly, the Bible becomes the primary resource for those who already engage with it. More than half of Bible users have also used the Internet on a computer to read Bible content (55%) or searched for Bible verses or Bible content on their phone (56%), and another 44% have downloaded or used a Bible app on their smartphone.

The study also identified where Americans feel comfortable asking questions or seeking guidance about the Bible. Most adults see churches in their city or town as welcoming (83%) and a place where people can go for help (81%). They also see church leaders as advocates for the vulnerable and afflicted (75%).

“For those who are growing in their relationship with the Bible, the church is best positioned to help curious people find answers to their questions,” said Peterson. “For others whose ties to the Bible may have loosened in recent days, the church can help them establish a lifelong practice of Bible engagement that will sustain them through life’s storms.”

American Bible Society is influencing the way Americans interact with and view the Bible in a modern world by studying people’s motivations, sentiments and habits. Publication of the “State of the Bible” is powered by Barna Group. For more

about the latest “State of the Bible” research, visit .