

Study: Most Churchgoers Don't Read Bible Daily

While the majority of churchgoers desire to honor Christ with their lives and even profess to think on biblical truths, a recent study found few actually engage in personal reading and study of the Scriptures.

"Bible engagement" is one of the eight attributes of discipleship identified in the Transformational Discipleship study conducted by LifeWay Research. The study produced the Transformational Discipleship Assessment, which measures an individual's **spiritual growth** in each of these areas of development.

The survey found 90 percent of churchgoers agree with, "I desire to please and honor Jesus in all I do," and 59 percent agree with the statement: "Throughout the day I find myself thinking about biblical truths." While the majority agree with both statements, there is a significant difference in the strength of agreement. Nearly two-thirds of churchgoers (64 percent) strongly agree with the first statement, but only 20 percent strongly agree with the second.

However, when asked how often they personally (not as part of a church **worship** service) read the Bible, a similar number respond "every day" (19 percent) as respond "rarely/never" (18 percent). A quarter indicate they read the Bible a few times a week. Fourteen percent say they read the Bible "once a week" and another 22 percent say "once a month" or "a few times a month."

"Bible engagement has an impact in just about every area of **spiritual growth**," said Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research. "You can follow Christ and see Christianity as your source of truth, but if that truth does not permeate your

thoughts, aspirations and actions, you are not fully engaging the truth.

“God’s Word is truth, so it should come as no surprise that reading and studying the Bible are still the activities that have the most impact on growth in this attribute of **spiritual maturity**,” Stetzer said. “As basic as that is, there are still numerous churchgoers who are not reading the Bible regularly. You simply won’t grow if you don’t know God and spend time in God’s Word.”

The survey also reveals six actions that positively impact the Bible engagement scores of individuals.

1. Confessing wrongdoings to God and asking **forgiveness**.
2. Believing in Jesus Christ as the only way to heaven and the number of years one has believed this.
3. Making a decision to obey or follow God with an awareness that choosing to do so might be costly. Sixty-three percent of churchgoers say they have at least once in the last six months.
4. Praying for the spiritual status of people they know are not professing Christians.
5. Reading a book about increasing their spiritual growth. Sixty-one percent of churchgoers say they have in the last year.
6. Having been discipled or mentored one-on-one by a more spiritually mature Christian. Nearly half of churchgoers (47 percent) say they have been discipled or mentored.

“Bible engagement points people toward maturity and maturing Christians have practices that correspond to Bible reading. Almost all churchgoers want to honor God, but more than a third indicate obedience is not something they have done when it is costly to them,” Stetzer said.

“The impact of the **Word of God** on people’s lives is seen in the relationship between Bible engagement and turning from

wrongdoings and choosing to obey God—two indicators of higher Bible engagement scores,” he added. “Such tangible life changes show the transformational impact of Bible engagement in the life of a disciple of Christ.”