

Why Are Millennials Less Religious? Joel Osteen Blames Distractions

It is no secret that millennials are becoming less religious than previous generations. Joel Osteen says one reason may be the many distractions the younger generation seems to face.

The recently released “State of the Bible” survey shows that antagonism toward the Bible has risen to 19 percent, and millennials (ages 18-29) are driving the shift.

Osteen, senior pastor at Lakewood Church in Houston, says these results are “disappointing.”

“I do think there are more influences today—distractions—and it’s a different day than we grew up in,” he said in a Fox News interview Thursday.

“There’s a lot pulling people away, and it does give us a challenge to say, ‘What can we do better?’”

The survey, conducted by the Barna Group, found that while 79 percent of all adults believe the Bible is sacred literature, only 64 percent of millennials agree; 35 percent believe the Bible contains everything a person needs to know to live a meaningful life, as compared with 50 percent for all adults; 39 percent of millennials never read the Bible, as compared to 26 percent of all adults.

“American adults, young and old alike, overwhelmingly recognize a moral decline is taking place in the nation,” says Roy Peterson, president and CEO of the American Bible Society which commissioned the survey. “As they seek solutions, we hope they will find the Bible as the guidebook that can reverse the decline and help its readers make sense of life.”

However, Osteen, who leads the largest church in America, says he sees “a lot of young people that do love God, and thousands that come out to events and churches as well.”

He adds, “Young people can see through any kind of phoniness, and there’s more skepticism today. I think that when they see true people of faith ... that love God—it’s not about the rules or religion or joining my denomination, but it’s about loving God and doing something good for others. The young people I see want a cause. They want to help others.”

Osteen says he tells his 15- and 19-year-old to “honor God with your life. You’re not going to be perfect; you’re going to make mistakes. But God’s loving and He’s forgiving. When you honor God, your life’s going to go better.”

The pastor adds that it can be difficult for people who weren’t raised in church, saying he’s heard that “90 percent of people not raised in church won’t end up in church.”

“On the flip side,” he says, “we do see thousands of young people that are hungry for God, that are doing good things. Hopefully we can spread that message.”

Watch the video of the interview below.