

Why Two-Thirds of Americans Want the Bible in Public Schools

The place of the Bible in public schools has been debated since the 1963 Supreme Court ruling in the consolidated cases of *Abington School District v. Schempp* and *Murray v. Curlett*. The debate continued earlier this year with the Texas Freedom Network findings, "Reading, Writing and Religion II."

But as kids head back to the hallways this week, what do Americans really believe about the role of the Bible—and its values—in public schools?

A recent study found Americans overwhelmingly (77 percent) believe morals and values are declining in the U.S., and 75 percent believe a valid reason to teach the Bible in public schools is because it would provide kids with moral principles that are badly needed. Currently, only Arizona, Oklahoma, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas allow elective Bible courses in public high schools. Arkansas, Wyoming and North Carolina may soon follow suit.

The American Bible Society details the findings in its annual "State of the Bible" survey, which also reports Americans' beliefs about the Bible, its role in society, its presence in U.S. homes and more. The "State of the Bible in 2013" survey, conducted by Barna Group on behalf of the American Bible Society, found that:

- 66 percent of adults think it is important for public schools to teach the values of the Bible.
- 75 percent think teaching about the Bible in public schools could be valid because it teaches moral principles badly needed today.
- 45 percent think a valid objection to teaching the Bible

is that it would favor one religion over another.

- 32 percent fear it might offend people.
- 11 percent think it would take time away from learning other subjects.
- 9 percent believe there is no valid reason to teach the Bible in schools.

American Bible Society President Doug Birdsall says it may not be wise to shelter children and young adults from the best-selling book in history.

“While our intention may be to protect students from the influence of ‘other people’s’ religion, the effect has been that we are raising a generation ignorant about the most influential book of all time,” Birdsall says.

The producer of the miniseries *The Bible*, which beat out *The Walking Dead* in viewership its first week, agrees.

“I really, really believe the Bible should be taught in public schools,” said reality show megaproducer Mark Burnett (*Survivor*, *The Voice*) on *The O’Reilly Factor*. “It is embarrassing for young Americans to go overseas in their mid-20s after college and do business in Rio de Janeiro or Berlin or Paris and not know who David and Goliath are.”