

American Worldview Inventory 2024

Release #1: America Needs Spiritual Renewal More than a Political Majority

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Cultural Research Center



As increasing attention shifts to the approaching 2024 election, many Americans hope that the next leader of the nation will restore unity to our divided country. A new survey conducted by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, however, suggests that such an outcome is improbable.

Regardless of who the candidates are, and who gets elected, the survey underscores that the foundational beliefs of Americans are so fragmented that Americans are presently incapable of developing a united perspective on who America is and how we will move forward together.

In fact, the results from a new national research study reveal a startling degree of disunity in the foundational perspectives among the American public, according to veteran researcher George Barna.

The greatness and longevity of the United States is partly attributable to a shared understanding and common pursuit of core characteristics such as truth, purpose, success, responsibility, and community. Those attributes, and many others, were examined in the *American Worldview Inventory 2024*, the annual worldview survey conducted with a representative national sample of adults under the direction of Barna at the Cultural Research Center.

The *American Worldview Inventory (AWVI 2024)* examined the national incidence of 14 different worldviews. The discord in people's philosophies of life was underscored by the fact that only one worldview – Syncretism – is embraced by at least 5% of the population.

The overwhelming majority of American adults—92%—embrace a worldview known as Syncretism – a fusion of disparate ideologies, beliefs, behaviors, and principles culled from a variety of competing worldviews into a customized blend.

Biblical Theism (aka the biblical worldview) was a distant second in popularity, with a 4% incidence. Next were four philosophies of life that are each embraced by 1% of the adult population: Mormonism, Secular Humanism, Nihilism, and Postmodernism.

The other eight worldviews measured each generated a less than one-half of one percent incidence. Those worldviews included Eastern Mysticism, Marxism, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, Judaism, Islam, Satanism, Wicca, and Animism.

National Incidence of Dominant Worldviews in the United States	
Worldview	Incidence
Syncretism	92%
Biblical Worldview	4%
Mormonism	1%
Nihilism	1%
Postmodernism	1%
Secular Humanism	1%
Animism	*
Eastern Mysticism	*
Islam	*
Judaism	*
Marxism	*
Moralistic Therapeutic Deism	*
Satanism	*
Wicca	*

Source: *American Worldview Inventory 2024*, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, U.S. sample of 2,000 adults (age 18+). An asterisk (*) indicates less than one-half of one percent.

The study measured 14 worldviews represented in American culture to determine their influence on the thinking of American adults. In light of the rise of Syncretism, the research sought to evaluate how elements of seemingly fringe worldviews might be creeping into American thinking.

Each of the worldviews examined possesses some common and some unique beliefs. For instance, only four of the 13 distinct philosophies (excluding Syncretism) are theistic – i.e., believe in a single god or supreme being. Those are the biblical worldview, Islam, Judaism, and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. Four others atheistic (i.e., reject belief in a supreme being): Nihilism, Marxism, Secular Humanism, and Satanism.

Another quartet of worldviews are polytheistic (i.e., believe in multiple gods or supreme beings): Eastern Mysticism, Mormonism, Wicca, and Animism. Postmodernism is generally considered to be agnostic (i.e., uncertain if one or more supreme beings exist). The 13 distinct worldviews differ not only on the existence of a supreme being, but on many other factors as well, such as truth, holy literature, purpose, success, the goodness of humanity, morality, the significance of Jesus Christ, life after death, and more.

U.S. adults embraced defining beliefs and behaviors from an average of more than 10 different worldviews. The worldviews with which people share the greatest number of defining beliefs and behaviors are the biblical worldview, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, and Judaism. The worldviews with which people share the fewest defining beliefs and behaviors are Animism and Wicca.

Evidence of Fragmentation

The research highlights the extensive degree of fragmentation rocking American society.

A majority of adults possess the same points of view in relation to less than one-third of the 53 unique

worldview indicators in the *Inventory*.

Barna noted that of those shared perspectives, only nine items represent beliefs or behaviors that would be helpful in building a national consensus for moving the country forward in unity. Those majority-held beliefs and behaviors are:

- Never worshipping a supernatural authority other than the God of Israel
- Believing the Bible is an authoritative and trustworthy guidebook for life
- Deeming Jesus Christ to be an important guide for your life
- Contending that hatred and aggression are not necessary for personal survival
- Choosing to repay any money that you borrow from someone else
- Rejecting the philosophy that you can do whatever you want to do as long as it does not harm other people
- Choosing not to personally participate in an abortion, regardless of their belief about the permissibility of other people having an abortion
- Not attempting to cast a spell on other people
- Taking time to thank, praise, and worship God at least once during the week

The *AWVI 2024* also identified a number of worldview perspectives with which a majority of Americans disagree. Many of those demonstrate the challenge of trying to unite Americans these days. Among the points of view that adults cannot seem to agree upon are:

- Basis of truth
- Whether other people deserve to be respected
- Importance of the God of Israel as an authority source/guide for life
- Belief about the value of human life
- Acceptance of the existence of absolute moral truths
- Existence of Satan
- Means to happiness in life
- Morality of intentionally deceiving other people
- Morality of consensual pre-marital sexual relations
- Personal commitment to discerning and doing God's will
- Appropriate relationship to/treatment of animals

Worldview and Church Relationship

The *AWVI 2024* also revealed a surprisingly weak correlation between a person's worldview and the church they most frequently attend. Most Americans are Syncretists, regardless of their church of

choice—or whether they have any church ties or religious inclinations at all.

The most overt example of the disconnect between church and worldview is that two-thirds of all American adults (66%) claim to be Christian, but only 6% of them possess the biblical worldview. Of the 170 million adults who self-identified as Christian, 92% are Syncretists.

The Christian body is comprised of adults associated with different religious sects. For instance, among the two-thirds of adults who consider themselves to be Christian, about half (54%) attend some type of Protestant church (e.g., Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, etc.).

Syncretism seems to be rampant throughout the Christian church. For example, fewer than one out of 10 who attend a Protestant church has a biblical worldview (9%) , while 88% qualify as Syncretists. One-quarter of all self-professed Christians (25%) are associated with the Catholic church. Among Catholics, 1% have a biblical worldview and 98% are Syncretists. One out of six self-labeled Christians (16%) do not identify with either Protestant or Catholic churches. Of those adults, 4% have a biblical worldview and 96% are Syncretists.

The data show that among other religious groups, Mormons are the most likely to embrace their church’s professed worldview. Although people aligned with the Church of the Latter-Day Saints constitute not quite 2% of the adult population, 26% of them embrace the Mormon worldview, with almost three times as many (74%) meeting the Syncretism criteria.

Very few adherents to other faith groups actually embrace that faith’s worldview. Less than one-half of one percent of the Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus living in America have adopted the worldview of their faith.

People who fit into what the CRC labels “the Don’ts”—defined as people who don’t know if a god exists, don’t believe that a god exists, or don’t care if a god exists—have increased to 25% of the adult population. Within that group, 5% represent Secular Humanism, 3% are Nihilists, 2% embrace Postmodernism, less than one-half of one percent are Marxists, and the other 89% are Syncretists.

Faith Affiliation and Dominant Worldview				
Faith Affiliation	Incidence	Expected Worldview	Incidence	Syncrestism Incidence
Christianity	66%	Biblical Worldview	6%	92%
Protestant	36%	Biblical Worldview	9%	88%
Catholic	17%	Biblical Worldview	1%	98%
Other/No Tradition	11%	Biblical Worldview	4%	96%
Mormon	2%	Mormonism	26%	74%
Jewish	2%	Judaism	*	99%
Muslim	2%	Islam	*	99%
Buddhist/Hindu	2%	Eastern Mysticism	*	99%
Don'ts ¹	25%	Secular Humanism	5%	89%
		Nihilism	3%	
		Postmodernism	2%	
		Marxism	*	
		Satanism	*	
		(Polytheistic Worldview)	*	

Source: *American Worldview Inventory 2024*, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, U.S. sample of 2,000 adults (age 18+). An asterisk (*) indicates less than one-half of one percent.

¹ “Don’ts” are people who don’t know if a god exists, don’t believe a god exists, or don’t care if a god exists.

Placing Hope in the Wrong Things

The survey data reflect a nation desperate for guidance and hope, but that places optimism in the wrong sources of wisdom, according to George Barna, ACU professor and CRC Director of Research who developed and oversees the *American Worldview Inventory*.

“It is disheartening to see how out of whack people’s expectations have become during these chaotic and confusing times,” Barna commented. “Just as the Jews misunderstood the nature of Jesus’s messiahship some 2,000 years ago, expecting a warrior king who raise Judaism to power, millions of Americans are deceived enough to think that electing the ‘right’ president will bring stability, security, unity, and sanity to America.”

Barna continued, “Yet it is not a political awakening that the United States desperately needs but a spiritual awakening that will foster a deeper understanding of self and society in light of our shared spiritual condition.”

After examining the data patterns from numerous national studies he has led in the past decade, Barna lamented the increased short-sightedness—and selfishness—that has, in his estimation, led people astray.

“Every American adult has a worldview, and every American relies on their worldview every day to make each decision in their life. That’s the function of a worldview,” he explained. “It helps us make decisions that are consistent with what we believe and what we desire.”

“Sadly, people have become so self-focused and their beliefs are now so self-serving that no politician elected in 2024 can reasonably be expected to restore common purpose and shared vision to the nation without a serious reshaping of people’s worldviews,” he said.

“The only true hope for America at this point,” Barna continued, “is a period of spiritual renewal that restores a widespread understanding and basis of truth, individual purpose, and personal responsibility within a community context. “Placing the burden of uniting this divided a country on the shoulders of a president or political party is unrealistic. Only a spiritual awakening can usher in the required tidal wave of spiritual wisdom and commitment, and that kind of renewal does not happen overnight or randomly. It must become an intentional and long-term commitment.”

Author of the current bestselling book, [*Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child’s Heart, Mind and Soul*](#), Barna also noted that progress and joy are difficult to achieve these days because of the diminished unity related to the nation’s foundational beliefs and shared vision. He suggested it will take committed, strategic, wise, and winsome leadership from all sectors of our society to usher in an era of renewal.

About the Research

The data referred to in this report are taken from the *American Worldview Inventory 2024 (AWVI 2024)*, an annual survey that evaluates the worldview of the U.S. adult population (age 18 and over). The 2024 survey is the fifth such national survey undertaken by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, under the direction of George Barna.

Begun as an annual tracking study in 2020, the assessment is based on several dozen worldview-related questions that fall within eight categories of worldview application, measuring both beliefs and behavior. The survey also incorporated two-dozen background questions that were used primarily for weighting and crosstabulation purposes.

The *American Worldview Inventory* is the first-ever national survey conducted in the United States measuring the incidence of both biblical and competing worldviews. The current wave of worldview research was undertaken in January 2024 among a nationally representative sample of 2,000 adults, providing an estimated maximum sampling error of approximately plus or minus 2 percentage points, based on the 95% confidence interval. Additional levels of indeterminable error may occur in surveys based upon both sampling and non-sampling activity. The average length of the survey interviews was 22 minutes.

About the Cultural Research Center

The Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University in Glendale, Arizona, conducts the annual *American Worldview Inventory* as well as other nationwide surveys regarding cultural transformation. Recent national studies completed by the Cultural Research Center (CRC) have investigated topics related to family, values, lifestyle, spiritual practices, and politics.

One of the groundbreaking efforts by CRC has been the worldview-related surveys conducted among the ACU student population. The first-of-its-kind ACU Student Worldview Inventory is administered to every ACU student at the start of each academic year, and a final administration just prior to graduation. The results of that student census enable the University to track and address the worldview development of its students.

Research studies by the Cultural Research Center are directed by Dr. George Barna, with Dr. Tracy Munsil serving as the Executive Director of the department. Like ACU, CRC embraces biblical Christianity. CRC works in cooperation with a variety of Bible-centric, theologically conservative Christian ministries and remains politically non-partisan. Results from past surveys conducted by CRC and information about the Cultural Research Center are available at www.CulturalResearchCenter.com. Further information about Arizona Christian University is available at www.ArizonaChristian.edu.

About George Barna and *Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind and Soul*

In addition to being a professor at Arizona Christian University and Director of Research of the Cultural Research Center at ACU, George Barna is a veteran researcher of 40-plus years and author of 60 books. His most recent book is *Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind and Soul*, which immediately became a bestseller on Amazon when it was released in late 2023.

Raising Spiritual Champions, published by [Arizona Christian University Press](http://ArizonaChristianUniversityPress.com) in collaboration with Family Research Council (Washington, D.C.) and Texas-based [Fedd Books](http://FeddBooks.com), covers a variety of topics helpful to parents and Christian leaders. The volume includes research-based descriptions of how a child's worldview develops; the relationships between worldview and discipleship; how parents can develop a simple plan to guide their child to a biblical worldview, and how to become a disciple of Jesus Christ; the role churches and godly church leaders can play in that process; measuring the worldview of children; and more.

For more information about *Raising Spiritual Champions*—including discounts for quantity orders—visit www.RaisingSpiritualChampionsBook.com.