

Cultural Research Center



2025 Trends Outlook

CRC's Barna Describes Faith and Cultural Trends Likely to Emerge in 2025

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(GLENDALE, AZ) – With the return of Donald Trump to the White House and the Republican Party holding the majority in both chambers of Congress, 2025 promises to be a year of significant political change. But the transitions will not emanate solely from Washington, D.C. According to Dr. George Barna, the veteran researcher who heads up the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, 2025 will usher in numerous other significant changes that will combine to continually redefine the American experience.

Barna released a brief report identifying a dozen important trends likely to redirect life in America this year. Among these are five faith-related trends and seven social transitions.

Likely Religious Trends

The Cultural Research Center (CRC) at ACU is completing its sixth year of measuring the faith of Americans. In addition to its annual *American Worldview Inventory*, the only worldview tracking survey in the nation, CRC regularly surveys a wide array of faith factors in the United States. Based on an analysis of its vault of data, seen through the lens of 40-plus years of religious trend tracking, Barna identified five faith patterns that are likely to be on display this year.

Reshaping God to Our Liking

Americans will continue to move away from the biblical characterization of God toward imagining and following a god they perceive to be more accepting and less demanding. There has been a steep decline over the past 30 years in the percentage of adults who believe in the God of the Bible—a deity who is personal, loving, omniscient, and omnipotent, but also morally unyielding and who expects us to take seriously the standards and boundaries He gave us. That kind of rigorous discipline does not appeal to most Americans.

Currently, about half of all U.S. adults believe that the God of the Bible is real, but less than half chose to worship or follow that deity. The fastest growing faith segment in the nation are the “Don’ts”—people who don’t know, don’t believe, or don’t care whether a supernatural deity of any type, such as the God of the Bible, exists. Reimagining a divine being or supernatural authority, one based on human characteristics and capacity, is on the docket for millions of Americans. Barna expects the Christian churches that continue to assume that people will wake up and realize that the God of Israel is the only true deity will steadily lose influence with the populations they do not understand.

The Syncretism Trains Keeps Rolling

For the past 30 years, since Barna started measuring worldview in America in the early 1990s, the incidence of biblical worldview has been steadily declining. The pace of that decline has rapidly increased since the turn of the millennium. With just 4% of adults, 2% of parents of preteens, a mere 1% of teenagers, and just 37% of Christian-church pastors possessing the biblical worldview, the incidence level cannot get much lower.

Biblical worldview incidence has declined with each succeeding generation. Today, 8% of Boomers, 5% of Gen X, 2% of Millennials, and 1% of Gen Z are Integrated Disciples—that is, possessors of the biblical worldview. As the size of the Baby Boomer generation shrinks and teenagers age to replace them in the adult population, that national incidence figure is prone to drop to the 2% to 3% level.

Syncretism, the worldview that already has a 92% incidence in the United States, is most likely to increase as a result of the falling biblical worldview numbers. Syncretism is the term used to describe a customized blend of multiple philosophies of life that a person pieces together for their own satisfaction. It is the result of appropriating elements of various recognized worldviews toward creating an idiosyncratic, personally pleasing understanding of and response to reality.

Although this trend toward Syncretism is likely to continue, the reported rise in Bible sales and signs of spiritual interest among Gen Z may help to slow or even reverse the biblical worldview decline within the coming few years. With the diluted impact of biblical teaching on our culture, there is also likely to be a slow increase in the popularity of religious faith systems that emphasize maximizing life in the here and now, and expecting to be reincarnated, rather than adopting the biblical exhortation to live for God and prepare for spiritual eternity through a relationship with and service to Jesus Christ.

Discipleship Drops Off the Radar

Although churches and parachurch ministries use discipleship claims to attract attenders, raise funds, and adjust public perceptions of church focus, the act of biblical mentoring is uncommon these days. Existing research provides no basis for expecting an upturn in serious discipleship activity. CRC estimates that only about one out of every 10 born-again adults (who represent just one-third of U.S. adults) is an active disciple of Jesus Christ. And a surprisingly small proportion of them are discipling other people. Thousands of the nation's Christian churches say they are committed to discipleship, but strikingly few do much beyond encouraging note-taking during sermons, independent Bible reading during the week, and attendance at church-initiated small groups, which research indicates are generally ineffective at making disciples.

CRC is currently immersed in two large studies related to adult discipleship dynamics, and the preliminary findings suggest few churches or individual believers plan to engage in serious discipleship efforts. Without an immediate increase in deep discipleship efforts, along with appropriate assessments of growth and impact, the Christian body in America is unlikely to experience increases in spiritual maturity, either quantitatively or qualitatively.

Organized Christianity Takes a Hit

CRC estimates that between now and the end of this decade, the United States will witness a significant decline in the number of Christian churches, as well as a dip in the number of full-time pastors. These significant transitions within the church coincide with a widespread retooling of people's faith commitments and connections that was triggered by the COVID lockdowns and adaptations.

As a result of new religious routines and objectives embraced since 2020, expectations and behaviors are now different. For instance, a greater number of people now view the local church as a source of benefits rather than a center for mutually accountable, faith-based community. Also, there is less interest and participation in spiritual outreach efforts, which churches are replacing with more extensive and sophisticated marketing efforts.

At the same time, several conventional indicators of church health are likely to suffer. Those include church attendance, individual prayer, number of people donating, rates of program participation, and the number of programs offered—all of which will trend downward. Paradoxically, there is also likely to be an increase in the proportion of people who have regular and intentional exposure to the Bible, largely driven by Gen Z.

Signs of Backbone

The return of Donald Trump to the White House will initiate a period of greater political awareness among a small but noteworthy segment of conservative churches. Those churches will cautiously enter the political arena by teaching more frequently about biblical perspectives on current issues, distributing voter guides, and inviting candidates to the church grounds to speak to congregants. Most of these churches will make this shift without public fanfare and will seek to provide such teaching and programming apart from overt connections to upcoming election seasons.

Likely Cultural Trends

While the religious environment of the United States continues to morph into a new landscape, American culture will also bloom in some new and unexpected ways. This societal evolution is neither novel nor inexplicable: every culture constantly recalibrates itself, altering its identity and conduct in ways large and small. Barna addressed seven realignments that he believes are coming and are especially noteworthy.

Rethinking College Education

The reshaping of the American economy and the enduring move toward a globally integrated economy will magnify the escalating disenchantment with the quality and cost of a college education. One ramification will be a steeper decline in college enrollment. The nation's expected (temporary) movement toward a more centrist outlook will conflict with the widespread tendency of college educators to push progressive sociopolitical ideas. That conflict will further dampen the appeal of a college education in various population sectors. Expect several dozen colleges and universities to succumb to financial pressures to close their doors for good. Meanwhile, trade schools and technology training centers will experience a resurgence, as the international economic war heats up and America reinvigorates its manufacturing base.

Mental Health Issues Escalate

What do you get when you are bombarded with information about institutional demise, leadership incompetence and corruption, climate turbulence, financial chaos, expanded global terrorism, unmitigated crime, unhealthy foods, national disunity, discrimination and targeted persecution, and social alienation? The mostly likely outcome is increased anxiety, depression, fear, suicidal thoughts, and addictions. Given the state of the world today, it does not take a genius to anticipate growth in mental health deterioration, but it may take one (or more) to do something about it.

The mental health crisis will be so exaggerated that new levels of unhealthy behavior will become normative, including a concurrent relaxing of mental health standards. Transformations in relationship

patterns will contribute significantly to these shifts. Loneliness will explode, partially attributable to the emphasis upon digital rather than face-to-face relationships. But this is also related to the absence of communications skills and biblical morality among young people. The typical American will have a smaller circle of friends than was common in years past, along with a frequent yet debilitating change in members of the circle.

As a distraction—and in the view of some, a solution—people will invest more of their time and money on physical self-enhancement (e.g. beauty products, vitamins, workout tools and regimens) and mental support solutions (e.g. counseling, online self-help programs, medication protocols). Governments will throw money at the problem.

Parenthetically, recent [CRC research](#) revealed that one of the most effective ways to combat mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, and rampant fear is to guide people away from Syncretism toward Biblical Theism. Yes, worldview transformation is a powerful mental health medicine.

Reinventing the Senior Life

Baby Boomers are known for more than simply being the largest generation in history. They are also a group that has reshaped many ways of life with material innovations and new perspectives on lifestyle and well-being, including music, home contours, religion, relationships, dieting, and more.

Boomers will continue to reinvent “senior life” just as they reinvented so many other aspects of the American experience. Among the areas they will normalize are turning hobbies into small businesses; integrating technology into a slower, more predictable lifestyle; devoting more time to adding value to their community; pushing for alternative, affordable health and medical care; pressuring political leaders to maintain the government-based (and, in some cases, mandated) financial instruments they invested in (Social Security, Medicare); and helping to shape new models of assisted living. Their influence will continue to be felt in sports (e.g. championing pickleball) and new modes of faith experience (e.g. streamed church services, online Bible study, and prayer groups). It’s also likely that Blacks and first-generation immigrants will also exercise substantial influence in the reshaping of elder life.

Altering the Political Conversation

A new slate of social issues will emerge as weary citizens retire issues that have caused fatigue and frustration by outliving their welcome. Abortion, having failed to ignite sufficient interest for Democrat candidates in 2024, and currently generating limited engagement among young adults, will slide to a second-tier issue. Climate change will be redefined (again) to produce a new focus while de-emphasizing aspects the “movement” that never caught on with the public.

Political party identification will be abandoned by millions of adults as citizen journalists (i.e. social media creators) harp on the flaws of both major parties. Gender issues will grow in interest, moving beyond “transgenderism” to new frontiers in the gender rights and sexual autonomy battles. Political leaders will need to confront declining life satisfaction levels—disappointment with a range of realities from relationships, careers, living conditions, financial burdens, lawfare, and institutional distrust. Personal frustrations will be aggravated by the intrusion of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the effects of government incompetence and aggression, and the absence of the Christian faith and churches as the basis of America’s moral conscience in public policy.

Public Schools Will Suffer

School closures and online education during the COVID lockdowns raised a multitude of questions and concerns about the quality and content of public school education. Extensive anecdotal evidence has shown various school systems are indoctrinating students with dubious political, spiritual and sexual philosophies and tales rather than the traditional “three R’s.” The marketplace reaction has been a significant downturn in public school student enrollment and the concurrent rise in private school and homeschool activity. The exodus is not yet complete.

Serious challenges to the quality and substance of public school education will continue in the foreseeable future. During 2025 expect educational quality suffer due to an inadequate number of teachers and relaxed teacher qualification standards. (New York and New Jersey, for instance, have eliminated their laws requiring that teachers pass a simple literacy test to be certified for the classroom. Other states are following their lead.) Those changes, plus ongoing parental concerns about classroom quality and substance, will facilitate a continued exodus of students to other educational options. Also expect to hear of a further decline in the international standing of American students, and heightened student safety concerns on school grounds. All of these issues will add fuel to the incoming president’s intention to refashion the federal government’s relationship with public schools and teachers’ unions.

Reimagining the Family

Family, once an untouchable, well-defined element of American society, will arise as a much-debated and maligned social construct in 2025. Opponents of the traditional family concept will push to re-establish the meaning and substance of “family” in light of the rights claimed by transgender and homosexual people. However, three decades of battles related to biblical-family standards have resulted in a confused population that is uncomfortable with the debate and likely to “settle” for solutions that lean toward inclusive options rather than biblically defined standards.

In practical terms, families will be reshaped by a continued decline in household and family size; decreased interest among young adults in having children; heightened turbulence over parental roles and rights; renewed battles over acceptable methods of intentional socialization; and fewer people choosing traditional marriage while expanding numbers opt for serial cohabitation. “Outsourced parenting” will likely increase in popularity, despite evidence of the approach’s failure to serve the best interests of children. “Outsourced parenting” was identified as one of five troubling trends in American parenting discussed in [*Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind and Soul*](#), by George Barna (Arizona Christian University Press, 2023).

Reconfiguring the Media Universe

When the ideological bias of the mainstream media became obvious over the past decade, millions of Americans were frustrated at the limited alternatives they had at their disposal. That need triggered a slow but steady emergence of media alternatives and a parallel realignment of people’s media preferences. But perhaps the most important change that emerged from burst of new media options was the freedom that consumers suddenly recognized they had to develop a customized media universe that fulfilled their needs.

News and entertainment providers often referred to as the mainstream or legacy media will continue to lose market share, audience reach, and cultural influence. In response, many of those entities will participate in mergers, acquisitions, repositioning campaigns, executive officers being fired, and

reorganization efforts. The public response will be the continued creation of customized media supply chains that feature lesser-known and often less heavily funded media.

The public will also be more comfortable blending multiple media platforms, such as podcasts, streaming networks, digital niche news entities, and social media apps, to form their unique media world. This nascent movement will create a new and difficult-to-navigate (and control) body of information, echo chambers that ultimately facilitate rather than eliminate individual isolation, universally shared news perspectives, and national division.

Putting Trends in Perspective

Dr. George Barna, Director of Research at ACU's Cultural Research Center, first experienced widespread recognition in 1990 with the publication of his bestselling book, *The Frog in the Kettle*, which described dozens of trends he forecast for that decade. Since then, he has been a widely trusted source of spiritual and cultural interpretation and insight for the nation's leaders.

According to Barna, "Cultural change is always interesting to study but challenging to predict." He commented, "People are uncomfortable with change, but it is inevitable—and it is constant. Change keeps a culture vibrant, and many culture changes improve people's quality of life. But cultural change is a competitive marketplace."

As Barna explained, "It is a leader's job to nurture the kinds of changes that enhance people's well-being and to block those changes that will diminish quality of life. Leaders can only do that if they are thinking about the future and anticipating possibilities rather than pining for the past or being overwhelmed by the present."

Effective cultural leadership also requires assembling complementary transitions into a unified whole, he noted. "A healthy culture is one that is open to change but maintains balance among the things that serve the people well. Identifying and facilitating those things takes wisdom, vision, perseverance, and accurate information. You cannot be a great leader of people if you're constantly blown by the winds of fad and popularity."

Looking to the near future and his list of emerging trends in America, Barna emphasized the importance of faith and worldview in shaping a balanced and viable society.

"Because a culture is a reflection of people's choices, and those choices are a reflection of people's worldview, and that worldviews are founded on the faith perspectives held by the public, attending to the worldview of the citizenry must be a central focus of family, government, educators, and journalists," Barna explained. "The fact that most of the leaders in those groups allow the nation's worldview to develop rather randomly and without balance and comprehensiveness helps to explain why America has been stumbling the past couple of decades."

Barna is on the faculty at Arizona Christian University, which is renowned for its emphasis just on immersive and intentional worldview development among its students. He cautioned that given global conditions, the coming five years or so represent a prime time for biblical Christians to add direction and value to their culture by strategically and intentionally introducing God's ways and truths into what is presently a turbulent cultural milieu. He also noted that Christian parents and churches could play a crucial role in helping the nation get back on track spiritually and morally.

"The American public has been adrift for more than a decade, trying to figure out who we are, why we're here, what success looks like, and if there is a bigger source of authority to relate to than ourselves or the

government,” Barna added. “These are all central worldview questions, again pointing us back to the importance of identifying what we believe, why we believe it, and how we will integrate those core perspectives into a complementary lifestyle.”

“Parents, churches and other cultural influencers would serve those they influence most effectively by returning to these basic questions of life, clarifying the worldview options we face, pointing people toward truth, and helping them to find peace and passion for life through that clarity,” Barna explained. “In the end, it’s all about worldview. And for those who seek a worldview based on truth, it’s all about pursuing the God of the Bible for the answers and connection we deeply desire.”

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 worldview and cultural transformation. National studies completed by the Cultural Research Center (CRC) have investigated topics related to family, values, lifestyle, spiritual practices, and recent election-related activity and political views.

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 time just prior to graduation. The results of that student census enable the University to track and address the worldview development of its students from a longitudinal perspective.

Research studies conducted by CRC are led by Dr. George Barna. Barna is a veteran of more than 40 years of national public opinion research, having previously guided the Barna Group (which he sold in 2009), and the American Culture and Faith Institute. His research findings have been the subject of more than 60 books he has authored or co-authored, many of which have become national bestsellers. His most recent bestseller is [*Raising Spiritual Champions: Nurturing Your Child's Heart, Mind and Soul*](#) (Arizona Christian University Press, 2023).

Like ACU, CRC embraces biblical Christianity. The Center 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.