

2025 American Worldview Inventory – Report #8

Millions of American Christians Deny Their Sinfulness

Dr. George Barna, Director of Research
Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University
Release Date: September 4, 2025

(GLENDALE, AZ) – New research from the [Cultural Research Center](#) at [Arizona Christian University](#) explores the beliefs of American adults about sin. The prevailing views are more flattering than logical, and more culturally fitting than biblically consistent.

One major finding is that just one out of every seven—or about 14%—of self-described Christians have a core theology of sin that is biblically accurate. The findings regarding sin are part of the annual *American Worldview Inventory*, the national tracking research that analyzes the worldview of Americans.

Sin Exists

More than four out of five adults (84%) agree that there is such a thing as “sin.” The research revealed the population segments that are substantially less likely than the norm to believe in the existence of sin, including members of Gen Z, Asians, members of the LGBTQ community, people with no religious affiliations or who doubt the existence of God, those who do not believe the Bible can be trusted to teach truth, and adults who believe in reincarnation or do not believe in any type of existence after death.

The survey also identified some intriguing connections between people’s ideas related to sin. For instance, among people who say sin is a reality, four out of every 10 reject the notion that every human being is a sinner.

Further, a substantial majority of those who believe in the existence of sin agree on how to define sin—nearly three-quarters of them (72%) describe it as disobedience to God. However, a majority of those who believe that sin is a reality (52%) also contend that there are no absolute sins, that is, sins that are constant, regardless of the conditions or context.

Everyone Has Sinned

Only half of all adults (52%) believe that everyone on Earth has sinned. Although the sinfulness of all people is one of foundations of the Christian faith, and the basis of every person’s need to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, just two out of three self-professed Christians (66%)

contend that everyone sins. Adults who attend Protestant churches are far more likely than those attending Catholic churches to believe that everyone is a sinner (73% versus 57%, respectively).

The Arizona Christian University study revealed that the adult members of Gen Z (who constitute the oldest one-quarter of that generation, currently 18 to 22 years old) are far less likely to believe that everyone sins (41%) than are members of the three older generations (49% of Millennials, 53% of Gen X, 57% of Baby Boomers). Blacks (62%) were notably more likely than whites (51%) or Hispanics (50%) to believe all people sin, while a mere one-fourth of all Asians (28%) hold that view.

American Views of Sin						
Sin Perception	All Adults	Self-Identified Christians	Self-Identified Non-Christians	Theologically-Identified Born-Again Christians	Attend a Protestant Church	Attend a Catholic Church
Sin exists; it is real	84%	95%	61%	99%	97%	94%
I am a sinner	52	60	36	74	66	50
Everyone has sinned	52	66	23	85	73	57
Sin is real, but people are basically good at heart*	70	72	65	70	66	82
Source: <i>American Worldview Inventory 2025</i> , Wave 2; interviews completed in June 2025; N=2,000, national sample of adults 18 or older; conducted by Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University. “Theologically-identified born-again Christians” are people who believe that after they die on Earth they will live eternally in Heaven, but only because they have confessed their sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. * Denotes question was asked only of people who believe sin exists/is real.						

Guilty of Sin

Just as half of Americans accept the contention that everyone has sinned, the same proportion (52%) believes that they, personally, can be considered to be a sinner.

There were some noteworthy distinctions among people groups regarding their acknowledgment of sinfulness:

- People 50 or younger were substantially less likely (47%) to say they are sinners than were people over 50 (56%).

- Less than one-third of Asians accept being a sinner (31%), compared to a slight majority of blacks (54%).
- A majority of residents of the Midwestern and Southern states said they are sinners, while a minority of residents in the Eastern and Western states adopted that same stance.

There were a few theological shockers that emerged, as well. Among theologically-identified born-again Christians—people who said they are assured of living in Heaven eternally because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior—one-quarter (26%) refused to categorize themselves as sinners.

Dr. George Barna, the survey director, hypothesized that this might be due to that group believing that because of the forgiveness they have received from Christ, they no longer consider themselves to be sinners.

Four out of 10 self-identified Christians (40%) also rejected the “sinner” label. While a robust one-third of the adults (34%) who regularly attend a Protestant church do not believe they are sinners, a full one-half of those who attend a Catholic church (50%) dismissed that description for themselves.

Within the Protestant world, the incidence of accepting personal sinfulness ranged from a high of 70% among attenders of mainline churches and 69% among adults aligned with independent or non-denominational Christian congregations, to 61% of adults at Evangelical churches, and barely half (55%) among adults who typically attend a charismatic or Pentecostal church.

The research underscored one of the barriers to Christian evangelism. Among adults who are not associated with the Christian faith—a majority of whom are in the atheist/agnostic camp—only about one-third (36%) believe they are a sinner. Within that non-Christian population, individuals who are aligned with a religion other than Christianity are less likely than those who could be categorized as atheists or agnostics to embrace the “sinner” label (27% versus 38%, respectively).

It appears that atheists and agnostics are unfazed by the notion of sin. But people aligned with a religion other than Christianity are less likely to believe sin exists and are less persuaded that they are “sinners.”

Significant differences also arise within the Christian community regarding who recognizes their personal sinfulness. Not surprisingly, nine out of 10 adults with a biblical worldview accept the “sinner” label.

But the proportion drops dramatically after that. Among theologically-identified born again Christians—people who supposedly have asked Jesus Christ to forgive them of their sins, which presupposes the existence and personal admission of sin—one-quarter do not recognize themselves as sinners.

Intriguingly, there was not a one-to-one correspondence between those who said all people sin and those who said they *personally* are sinners. Overall, one-third of adults (33%) argue that while everyone else is guilty of sin, they are not.

The Goodness of Humanity

A significant reason for the widespread rejection of the sinfulness of humanity is likely the belief held by 70% of adults that while sin may be a reality, people are “basically good at heart,” and therefore, should not be pejoratively characterized as sinners.

That mindset is somewhat more common among self-identified Christians (72%) than among non-Christians (65%). Unexpectedly—and unbiblically—seven out of 10 theologically-identified born-again adults (70%) contend that people are basically good at heart. That view is also considerably more prevalent among Catholics (82%) than Protestants (66%).

Perceptions of people’s goodness were distributed differently than one might expect. For instance, the younger a person’s generation, the *less likely* they were to defend human goodness. Another group defying expectations were residents of the Western states, who emerged as the geographic group least likely to describe people as good at heart.

Perhaps the biggest head-scratcher of all, though, are adults who are in the Emergent Follower category related to possession of a biblical worldview.

Emergent Followers are people who are in between Integrated Disciples (i.e. people who possess a biblical worldview) and World Citizens (i.e. those who have rejected most biblical beliefs and behaviors as valid and personally operative). Emergent Followers possess an above-average number of biblical beliefs and behaviors, but not enough to be driven by that philosophy of life.

The research found that the Emergent Follower segment was twice as likely as Integrated Disciples and 50% more likely than World Citizens to believe that people are good at heart.

Biblical Clarity and Lifestyle Consistency

Currently, about two-thirds of adults in America describe themselves as Christians. To be a Christian presumes the acceptance of biblical teachings, which define the foundations of the Christian faith. Among the fundamental teachings of Christianity—and central to the primary narrative of the Christian faith—are the following beliefs: Sin is real; every person who has ever or will ever live is a sinner; that every Christian is a sinner from conception; the only solution to the eternal consequences of sin is the forgiveness for those sins extended through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and that people are not good at heart but are corrupt by nature, which causes their sinful behavior against God’s will and standards.

The Bible, held by Christians to be the true, authoritative, instructive, and practical message from God to humanity for the purpose of shaping people's beliefs and behavior, is abundantly clear on the matter of sin. Among the perspectives it teaches are:

- No human being is morally and spiritually perfect; we all sin and therefore fall short of the perfection and expectations of God. (Psalm 51:5; Proverbs 20:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23, 7:14-21; James 3:2; 1 John 1:8)
- The heart of every human being is wicked, deceitful, proud, and corrupt. (Genesis 6:5; Psalm 14:1-3; Proverbs 28:26; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21-22; Romans 1:21)
- Sin has consequences, the most serious of which is the disruption of our relationship with God. (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23; Galatians 6:7; James 1:15)
- Humans are incapable of erasing their sin and its consequences. (Isaiah 64:6; Jeremiah 2:22; Ephesians 2:8-9)
- God loved the pinnacle of His creation—human beings—so much that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to Earth to die a painful and unjust death on behalf of every human who acknowledges their sinfulness, asks for God's forgiveness, changes their sinful behavior, and embraces Jesus Christ as their eternal Savior. (Isaiah 53:5-6; John 3:16; Acts 3:19; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:22; 1 Peter 3:18)
- Anyone who sins (i.e. everyone) and refuses to confess, repent, and accept Jesus as their Savior, will spend eternity isolated from God and the glorious afterlife He has prepared for those whose sins were forgiven by Christ. (Matthew 25:41; John 3:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Jude 1:7; Revelation 20:15)

The unmistakable message of the Bible regarding sin and its impact on every human life makes the ignorance of American Christians on the topic shocking. Yet, the key research finding shows that a mere 14% of all self-described Christians have a biblically-consistent theology related to these four basic but essential beliefs about sin (i.e. that sin is real, every person commits sins, the survey respondent is a sinner, and no human being is good at heart).

The Church Derailed – And Hope for Restoration

The situation described by the research is serious but not hopeless, according to George Barna, who directed the research for ACU's Cultural Research Center.

“The job of the local church is to educate God's people about God's ways,” the ACU professor explained. “Yet, a [2019 Pew Research study](#) that analyzed sermon content across the nation,

determined that just 3% of all sermons preached even mentioned sin. That's a devastating body-blow to the Church world."

Barna continued, "Students will remain ignorant when their teachers fail to inform them of critical information and consequences. For an overwhelming majority of Christian churches to suppress the reality of sin, its consequences, and its solutions from the people those churches serve is a travesty."

He noted that the small percentage of people with a biblical outlook on sin coincides with the downward trends of alignment with Christianity, trust in Christ for salvation, and incidence of biblical discipleship. It also helps explain the increasing numbers of Americans rejecting absolute moral truth or relying upon the Bible for moral and lifestyle guidance.

In that context, Barna said it is not surprising to see a steady rise in the numbers of self-identified Christians who accept abortion, homosexuality, lying, divorce, and tax cheating as moral behaviors.

"Describing all people as 'basically good at heart' is the culturally-comfortable dismissal of sin that millions of people use to ignore the possibility that their love affair with disobedience to God is a life-threatening spiritual disease with eternal consequences," the researcher commented.

"Taking refuge in the idea that other people have a sin problem, but they personally do not, or that sin is an outdated concept, are harmful strategies," Barna explained. "Parents, pastors, and religious influencers have a vital responsibility to keep basic biblical truths before the Christian body, including the reality of sin and its repercussions."

"Allowing Americans to skirt around the personal implications of sinful living is a major disservice to the people they influence, and facilitates the continuing demise of American society," he said.

Nevertheless, Barna expressed hope that the Church can get back on track.

"Sin is not a difficult concept to understand or identify," the bestselling author continued. "Hopefully, our avoidance of teaching and accountability regarding sin can be quickly and easily rectified by those who seek to add value to the spiritual journey of the people they influence. Inserting sin back into the national consciousness would be an invaluable investment into who we are as a nation and as the Church."

About the *American Worldview Inventory*

The data in this report are part of the *American Worldview Inventory (AWVI)*, an annual nationwide survey that examines a wide variety of aspects of the worldview of U.S. adults. The current worldview research was generated in two waves of surveys fielded during the first half of 2025. The *American Worldview Inventory 2025* is the sixth year of the annual surveys.

The data reported in this report were collected in the second of those two waves, conducted in May 2025, among a national, demographically-representative sample of 2,000 adults (age 18 or older). The survey contained 97 questions and the average duration of the survey experience for respondents was 20 minutes. The sample was constructed from among the members of a national research panel managed by Braun Research and Fulcrum as part of the Lucid national panel of survey respondents. A probability sample of this size would have 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 *American Worldview Inventory 2025: A National Study for Strengthening the Worldview of Americans* from Dr. George Barna is designed to examine trends in American beliefs about God, truth, sin, and salvation. It seeks to understand key aspects of American faith and to provide practical insights for building a stronger biblical worldview in our nation. This major research from the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University is intended to describe and understand the nation's current worldview landscape and to guide improvements. In total, there will be 12 reports released from the *American Worldview Inventory 2025*.

Begun as an annual tracking study in 2020, the *American Worldview Inventory (AWVI)* is based on several dozen worldview-related questions that fall within eight categories of worldview application, measuring both beliefs and behavior. The same questions are asked in each of the worldview incidence studies conducted by the Cultural Research Center (CRC), facilitating reliable tracking data from year to year. Additional worldview-related research is part of the *AWVI* project, allowing researchers at CRC to look beyond incidence data, digging deeper into an array of worldview components toward understanding the genesis of existing worldview and how to more effectively move people toward a biblical worldview.

The *American Worldview Inventory* is the first-ever national survey conducted in the United States measuring the incidence of both biblical and competing worldviews. Each year's reports, released to the public at no cost via CRC's website (www.CulturalResearchCenter.com), are also compiled in book form and produced at the beginning of each subsequent year, published by Arizona Christian University Press. Those books are available at CRC's [Publications page](#) or on Amazon.

About the ACU Worldview Assessment

The [ACU Worldview Assessment](#) is a powerful online tool designed to measure and strengthen a person's worldview. Developed by Dr. George Barna and based on 40+ years of research, this 15-minute assessment reveals how a person's beliefs and behaviors align with biblical truth—and how to grow spiritually.

The ACU Worldview Assessment measures worldview beliefs and behaviors in five basic categories (Bible, Truth, and Morals; God, Creation, and History; Faith Practices; Sin, Salvation, and God Relationship; and Lifestyle, Behavior, and Relationships). It also evaluates the "Seven Cornerstones" of the Biblical Worldview. Dr. Barna's exhaustive worldview research shows that

if these seven basic worldview concepts—or cornerstones—are in place, a person is far more likely to possess or develop a biblical worldview. Only the ACU Worldview Assessment identifies and measures these worldview-building basics.

The ACU Worldview Assessment is a *practical tool* for evaluating and improving worldview. And there's a specifically tailored version of the ACU Worldview Assessment for every need:

- **The ACU Worldview Assessment for Individuals** -Designed specifically for adults to identify their worldview and discover areas for spiritual growth and personal worldview development.
- **The ACU Worldview Assessment for Students** – Created by Dr. Barna in collaboration with ACU professors and other educational experts, to measure the worldview of students in grades 4, 8, and 12, using a pre- and post-test format. The student assessments are specifically designed for each grade level, making the questions age-appropriate and easier to understand, while maintaining the integrity of the results.

Dr. Barna's extensive research into childhood worldview development shows that an individual's worldview is essentially formed by age 13. This highlights the importance of strategic worldview training, especially in Christian schools, using the ACU Worldview Assessment to measure worldview development along the way.

- **The ACU Worldview Assessment for Churches, Ministries, and Groups** – This version of the assessment is designed for use by churches, ministries, and other groups of adults.
- **The ACU Worldview Assessment for Colleges and Universities** – Designed in a pre- and post-test format tailored for Christian colleges and universities to use each academic year to assess the worldview of their students, and understand the effect of their university's teaching and community on their student's worldview development.

Visit www.ACUWorldview.com to experience the ACU Worldview Assessment.

And learn more about the new assessment in our full report, [“Arizona Christian University Unveils Groundbreaking Worldview Assessment from Dr. George Barna and the Cultural Research Center.”](#)

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. Further information about Arizona Christian University is available at www.ArizonaChristian.edu.