Probe Survey 2020 Report 7: American Views on Morals, Politics and Social Justice in 2020

Steve Cable discusses Probe's survey findings on these topics. He reveals that most Born Again Protestants are not looking to the Bible for help in moral choices and do not think they should let their Christian faith impact their political positions.

Continuing our series examining the results from Probe's 2020 survey on American religious beliefs and behaviors, we will consider three topics that are important to any society:

1. What most influences your **moral choices**? Our survey shows that among adults under 40, less than half of those claiming to be Born Again Protestants{1} look to biblical teachings as their primary resource for moral choices. Even among the minority group who look to the Bible, less than half of them would apply a biblical view of monogamous behavior to their choices regarding sex outside of marriage.

2. Do you mix your **religious views with your political views**? Almost two thirds of Born Again Protestants under 40 agree that one should not let your religious faith impact your political positions. As a Christian, we are to take every thought captive in obedience to Christ{2} who is the source of real truth. Every position we take in every area of life should be informed by our faith in Christ.

3. Where do you learn how to bring about **justice across our society**? While our government and educational leaders are pushing schools to take action and teach principles of justice without even telling the parents, over two thirds of

- younger adult Americans across all religious backgrounds believe that parents should be the primary source in teaching ways to stand for justice in our society.

If you have a society where 1) moral questions are answered by popular opinion rather than the Bible, 2) religious faith has no place in informing one's political stances, and 3) social justice training is left to the state, you are in danger of becoming a totalitarian state where all thinking is controlled for the benefit of the government or some other power bloc within your society. In an alternative society where 1) moral guidance is provided by consulting biblical teaching, 2) one can bring their religion's teaching into the domain of political discourse, and 3) your thinking on social justice is informed by your religious beliefs, you are in danger of having a democracy where everyone is allowed to develop and express their opinion.

Let's examine our survey results in more detail to see where American adults stand on these topics.

Making Moral Choices

Our first question deals with where people go for guidance in making moral choices, as laid out below:

When you are faced with a personal moral choice, which one of the following statements best describes how you will most likely decide what to do?

1. Do what makes the most people happy.
2. Do what your family or friends would expect you to do.
3. Do what you believe most people would do under similar circumstances.
4. Do what biblical principles teach.
5. Do what seems right to me at the time.
6. Do what will produce the best outcome for yourself.
7. Other

For our analysis, we combined answers 1, 2 and 3 as answers where people are looking to see what other people think. Across all Americans ages 18 through 55, almost four in twenty (20%) people selected one of those three answers{3}. However, those 40 and over were less likely to select one of those three answers, at only about three in twenty (15%). Those under age 40 saw closer to five in twenty (23%) select one of those three.

Let's look more closely at respondents from ages 18 through 39. Key parts of the results are summarized in the table below.

Source of Moral Decisions	Born Again Protestant	Other Protestant	Catholic	Unaffiliated
What other people think	15%	24%	29%	20%
What seems right to me	27%	40%	40%	58%
Sum of first two sources	42%	64%	69%	78%
Biblical principles	47%	22%	12%	3%

First consider Born Again Protestants; we see that almost half (47%) look to biblical principles for guidance. That result is somewhat encouraging although possibly misleading, as we will explore below. The encouragement is tempered by the fact over half of them are not primarily looking at biblical principles for moral guidance. This includes over four out of ten (42%) who look to others or to what seems best to them.

The Unaffiliated{4} group are clearly not aligned with evangelical Christian values, with less than three out of 100 (2.7%) looking to biblical principles for guidance. Almost eight in ten (78%) look to others or to what seems best to them.

It is not surprising to most that the Unaffiliated would answer this question differently than Born Again Protestants. What about other Christians who might look to the Bible for moral guidance. As Evangelicals, we often think these other Christians are presenting Jesus as an example for moral living rather than as the one and only source for redemption through His sacrifice. But, for Other Protestants and Catholics, we find two thirds (64%/69%) of them saying they look to others or to what seems best to them for their moral compass. In contrast, Other Protestants show just over one in five (22%) looking to biblical principles, while Catholics are around one in ten (12%

Do Born Again Protestants Really Do What They Say?

Almost half of Born Again Protestants say they use biblical principles to make moral choices. With this survey, we can see if their actions match their stated approach to moral decisions. Specifically, let's look at those who claim to use biblical principles and see if they applied those to their ideas about sexuality. Let's use two questions on which the Bible provides clear moral guidance.

1. Sex among unmarried people is always a mistake: from **Agree Strongly** to Disagree Strongly

2. Living with someone in a sexual relationship before marriage:

    a. Might be helpful but should be entered into with caution.
    b. Makes sense in today's cultural environment.
    c. Will have a negative effect on the relationship.
    d. Should be avoided as not our best choice as instructed by God

The Bible clearly states that fornication (sex between people who are not married to each other) is always a mistake. Thus, they should select Agree Strongly for the first question.

Living with someone in a sexual relationship is also fornication. They should select answer d. for that question. For our discussion, we will call someone who answered these two questions as shown a **Supporter of Sexual Purity**.

Now let's look at how these two questions on sexual morality relate to the answer on moral choices in the table below.

Specific Question or Combination of Questions	Born Again Protestant	Other Protestant
1. Use Biblical Principles for Moral Choices	47%	22%
2. Supporter of Sexual Purity	25%	3.7%
3. Use Biblical Principles (1) **and** Support Sexual Purity (2)	21%	3.1%
4. % of those who Use Biblical Principles who also Support Sexual Purity (Row3/Row 1)	45%	14%
5. % of those who Support Sexual Purity who also Use Biblical Principles (Row 3/ Row 2)	85%	82%

I realize that your eyes may have glazed over when looking over this table. So, let me explain the primary result. In Row 4, we see 45% under the Born Again Protestant column. This means that less than half of the Born Again Protestants who said they used Biblical Principles in making moral choices ALSO selected the biblical position on the two questions relating to fornication. For the other Protestants it was much worse, with only one in seven (14%) selecting to Support Sexual Purity.

What do we make of this disconnect? Either those whose

supported Biblical Principles picked areas where they chose not to apply Biblical Principles OR those who supported Biblical Principles do not understand what the Bible says about sexual purity. Both of those choices are a disconcerting view of the fractured worldviews held by many Born Again Protestants.

We also note in row 5, that almost all of those who select to Support Sexual Purity also said they would use Biblical Principles in making moral choices. This figure seems to show that those who do not use Biblical Principles are much more consistent in rejecting biblical morality.

Religion and Politics

The second question deals with how we relate our religious thinking and our political thinking. The question asked was:

Just as the government should not be involved in the internal workings of churches, Christians should not let their faith impact their position on how government functions. Responses from Agree Strongly to **Disagree Strongly**.

A person's understanding of religious principles should drive their thinking on any political questions which intersect with a religious principle. We should expect not only Christians but people of every religion to disagree strongly with this statement. For a genuine Christian, their faith in Jesus Christ and the teaching of the Bible are the foundation for all of their beliefs. As Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6)." If we want to apply truth to our position on how government functions, we must look to the source of real truth, Jesus.

Christians can genuinely disagree about the best way to achieve certain objectives. For example, we know Jesus calls us to show concern for the poor and for widows and orphans. However, we may disagree on the best way to carry this out within the structure of our society. But any political

approach we choose to support should not contradict our underlying faith position related to the issue at hand.

We can see how people responded to this question in the table below.

Faith should not impact positions regarding government issues	Age Range	Born Again Protestant	Other Protestant	Catholic	Unaffiliated
Strongly Disagree	18 – 39	21%	6%	8%	5%
Disagree or Strongly Disagree	18 – 39	39%	19%	23%	14%
Disagree or Strongly Disagree	40 – 55	58%	23%	26%	20%

Looking at Born Again Protestants, this group is much more likely than other groups to strongly Disagree or Disagree with the statement.

Among those ages 18 to 39, we see that about one in five (21%) Strongly Disagree and close to four out of ten (39%) Disagree or Strongly Disagree. A significant number appear to realize that you cannot segregate your faith beliefs from your beliefs about how our government should operate. However, for this age group, the vast majority, almost two out of three (61%), either agree with the statement or don’t know. This majority buys into the lie that their religious faith should not impact their political beliefs.

Secondly, we see a significant difference in the answers based on the age of the Born Again Protestants. For those ages 40 through 55, we find almost six out of ten (58%) disagree or strongly disagree. Younger adults have been brought up in a society that constantly warns them to leave their religious beliefs at home. Do not bring them to the public square as they are not welcome or appropriate. Those over the age of 40 are much more likely to reject this popular mantra and bring

their religious beliefs into the political arena.

Of those Born Again Protestants under the age of 40 who say that **their faith has a significant impact on their daily lives**, over two thirds (70%) of them also say **they make moral choices relying on biblical principles**. This is a consistent result, for if faith has a significant impact on your daily life, one would expect it to impact your moral choices. But at the same time, less than one third (29%) of these Born Again Protestants with faith important in their daily lives said they strongly disagreed with the statement that our faith should not impact our political positions. Clearly some combination of the news media, secular education and politicians have succeeded in misguiding Americans on this topic. **Many have bought into the false model that political positions are not moral decisions**.

Finally, let's note that significantly less than one out of ten people who are not Born Again Protestants strongly disagreed with the statement. Other Protestants and Catholics are not distinctly different than the Unaffiliated this muddled thinking.

Bringing About Social Justice

Most Americans probably want a fair and just society where law abiding citizens have fair access to opportunity and can apply themselves
toward achieving their life goals. However, there are many different ideas on how to best achieve such an objective. So, we asked this question:

Matters of social injustice like racial prejudice and bullying are best remedied by (rank from 1, most important to 5, least important):

1. Government laws and penalties
2. Churches teaching on how to live with and treat others
3. Parents overtly teaching their children how to treat

others
4. Parents showing their children by example
5. School curricula focused on correct social thinking

As noted in the question, respondents were asked to rank the five responses rather than pick the best one. We did this because we felt that many people would have more than one approach they considered important.

Let’s begin by considering the options that were ranked as most important. In our evaluation, we combined the two options featuring parents as one item.

First Choice	Born Again Protestant	Other Protestant	Catholic	Unaffiliated
Parental Guidance	69%	53%	66%	73%
Church Teaching	21%	19%	19%	8%
Government Laws	9%	15%	9%	11%
School curricula	1%	14%	6%	8%

As shown, parental guidance was by far the most popular choice across all religious backgrounds averaging about two thirds of the responses. Except for the Unaffiliated, church teaching was a distant second, polling about one out of five for the other religious groupings.

Let’s consider the other extreme, the response selected as their least favorite choice by our respondents. Except for the Unaffiliated, the least popular option was school curricula focusing on correct social thinking. This option was selected last by about four out of ten respondents across all of the religious groups. Naturally, more than half of the Unaffiliated selected Church Teaching as their least favorite choice. For Born Again Protestants, government laws were selected as least favorite at almost the same level as school

curricula.

As you can see, most Americans would say that remedying social injustice required parental involvement while school curricula was the least popular option. Thus, it is very interesting that many politicians and educators want to make the school the primary place for remedying social injustice while protecting the students from the poor examples of their parents. This may well be why that at the time this is being written that some school boards are seeing a significant change in their make up as pro-parental rights candidates are being elected.

Notes

1. Born Again Protestants affiliate with a Protestant denomination, have had an experience with Jesus Christ that is still important in their lives today, and state they will go to heaven because they confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior.
2. 2 Corinthians 10:5
3. Each of the three answers accounted for about 7% of the respondents.
4. The Unaffiliated include atheists, agnostics and those who believe nothing in particular.

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Introducing Probe's New Survey: Religious Views and

Practices 2020

The results are in from Probe's newest assessment of the state of biblical beliefs in America 2020, and the news is not good.

Our 2020 survey reveals a striking decline in evangelical religious beliefs and practices over the last ten years. From a biblical worldview to doctrinal beliefs and pluralism to the application of biblical teaching to sexual mores, the number of Americans applying biblical teaching to their thinking has dropped significantly over this period. Unfortunately, the greatest level of decline is found among Born Again Protestants.

Our previous survey, the 2010 *Probe Culturally Captive Christians* survey{1}, was limited to Born Again Americans' ages 18 through 40. This survey of 817 people was focused on a obtaining a deeper understanding of the beliefs and behaviors of young adult, Born Again Christian Americans.

Our new 2020 survey looks at Americans from 18 through 55 from all religious persuasions. Although still focused on looking at religious beliefs and attitudes toward cultural behaviors, we expanded the scope, surveying 3,106 Americans ages 18 through 55. Among those responses, there are 717 who are Born Again{2}, allowing us to make meaningful comparisons with our 2010 results while also comparing the beliefs of Born Again Christians with those of other religious persuasions.

Two questions were used in both surveys to categorize people as Born Again{3}. Those questions are:

1. Have you ever made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in your life today? **Answer: YES**

2. What best describes your belief about what will happen to you after you die? **Answer:**
I will go to heaven because I confessed my sins and accepted

Jesus Christ as my savior.

In our 2020 survey, we delve into what American's believe regarding biblical worldview, basic biblical doctrine, pluralism and tolerance, religious practices, applications of religious beliefs to cultural issues, and more. In this first release, we lay the groundwork by explaining the trends in religious affiliation over time using a number of different surveys. Then we look deeper, examining how many of those of each religious faith group adhered to a biblical worldview in 2010 and now in 2020.

Laying the Groundwork: American Religious Affiliations Over Time

How have the religious affiliations of American young adults changed over the years? We have examined data over the last fifty years{4} to answer this question. From 1972 through the early 1990's, the portion of the population affiliated with each major religious group stayed fairly constant. But since then, there have been significant changes. As an example, looking at data from the General Social Survey (GSS){5} surveys of 1988, 1998, 2010, and 2018 and our 2020 Religious Views survey, we see dramatic changes as shown in Figure 1. Note that the GSS survey asks, "Have you ever had a "born again" experience?" rather than the two questions used in the Probe surveys (see above). Looking at the chart it appears that the question used in the GSS surveys is answered yes more often than the two questions used by Probe.

As shown, the most dramatic change is the increase in the percentage of those who **do not** select a Christian affiliation (i.e., Other Religion and Unaffiliated). Looking at GSS data for those age 18–29, the percentage has grown from 20% of the population in 1988 to over 45% of the population in 2018. Most of this growth is in the number of Unaffiliated (those who select Atheist, Agnostic or Nothing in Particular). In fact,

those from other religious faiths{6} grew from 7% to 10% over this time period while **the Unaffiliated almost tripled** from 13% to 35% of the population.

The Pew Research data (not shown in the graph) shows an even greater increase, growing from 27% in 1996 to 59% in 2020. The Probe data from 2020 tracks the GSS data, supporting the overall growth trend shown in the figure.

Looking at the Unaffiliated for the 30–39 age group, we see the same growth trend growing from 9% to 30%. Comparing the 18–29 data with the 30–39 data, we can determine that more people are transitioning to Unaffiliated as they mature. For example, we see that 26% of those in their twenties were Unaffiliated in 2010, growing to 30% of those in their thirties in 2018. This result means that more of the people in their twenties became Unaffiliated in their thirties. This result runs directly counter to the supposition of many that the growth in Unaffiliated will dissipate as young adults age and return to churches to raise their families.{7}

Considering the other religions shown in Figure 1, we see that the group seeing the greatest decline is Other Protestants, i.e. Protestants who did not profess to being born again. As shown, this group dropped by half (from 26% down to 13%) from 1988 to 2018. Similarly, those professing to be Catholics dropped by one quarter (from 24% to 18%) over the same time period.

In the GSS data, Born Again Protestants are remaining a relatively constant percent of the population. There has been a steady decline in those ages 18–29, but those in their thirties have not declined over this time period. This data appears to indicate that some young adults in their late twenties and early thirties are undergoing a “born again” experience.

However, while Born Again Protestants have remained stable,

those who say they are affiliated with an Evangelical church have begun to decline somewhat. Pew Research surveys{8} of at least 10,000 American adults do show a decline in young adult Evangelicals from 28% in 2007 to 25% in 2014 to 20% in 2019.

Is a Christian Biblical Worldview Common Among Young Americans?

In assessing the worldview of people, we were not able to sit down and talk to them to fully understand their worldview. So, our 2010 and 2020 surveys include specific questions which help us identify someone with a Christian biblical worldview. A set of four questions is used to assess what we call a Basic Biblical Worldview. Two additional questions are added to get to a fuller assessment first used by the Barna Group. We use the six questions together to assess what we call an Expanded Biblical Worldview. The questions are as follows:

Basic Biblical Worldview

1. Which of the following descriptions comes closest to what you personally believe to be true about God: **God is the all-powerful, all knowing, perfect creator of the universe who rules the world today.{9}**

2. The Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings: **Strongly Agree**

3. If a person is generally good enough or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in heaven: **Disagree Strongly**

4. When He lived on earth, Jesus Christ committed sins like other people: **Disagree Strongly**

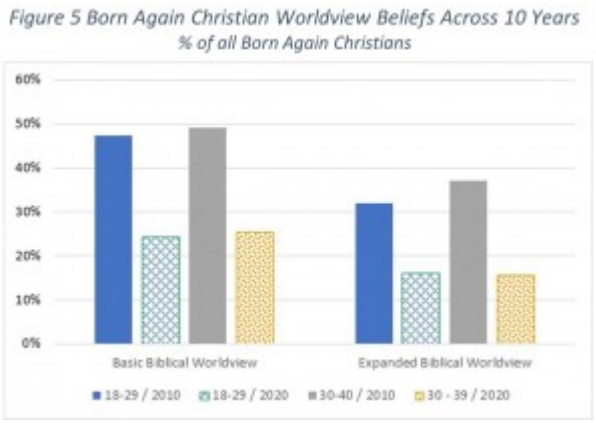
Additional Beliefs for an Expanded Biblical Worldview

5. The devil or Satan is not a real being, but is a symbol of evil: **Disagree Strongly**

6. Some people believe there are moral truths (such as murder is always wrong) that are true for everyone, everywhere and for all time. Others believe that moral truth always depends upon circumstances. Do you believe there are moral truths that are unchanging, or does moral truth always depend upon circumstances: **There are moral truths that are true for everyone, everywhere and for all time**.

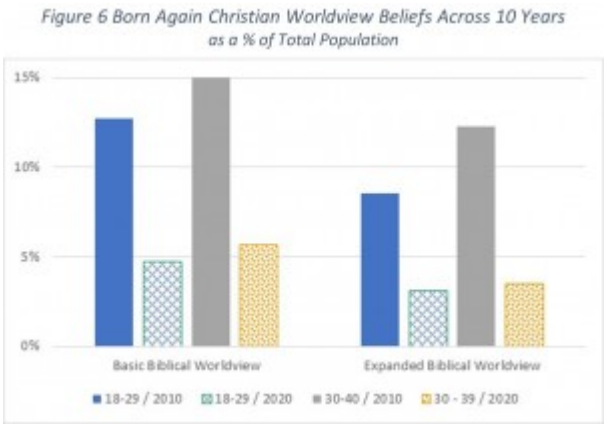
First, how do different Christian groups respond to these questions? In Figure 4, we show the percentage of each group in 2020 who have either a Basic Biblical Worldview or an Expanded Biblical Worldview. We use three groups of affiliations: Born Again Christians, Other Protestants, and Catholics.{10} On the left half of the chart, we indicate the percentage with a Basic Biblical Worldview by affiliation and age group. Those in the Born Again Christian group are at about 25% (about 1 out of 4) for those under the age of 40 and then jump up to 35% (about 1 out of 3) for those between 40 and 55. For those in the Other Protestant group, much less than 10% (1 out of 10) possess a Basic Biblical Worldview. Almost no Catholics possess a Basic Biblical Worldview. For both the Other Protestant group and the Catholics, the concept the vast majority do not agree with is that you cannot earn your way to heaven via good works. The other three questions are also much lower for Other Protestants and Catholics than for Born Again Christians.

Adding in the questions on Satan and absolutes for an Expanded Biblical Worldview, we see each group drop significantly. The Born Again Christian group runs about 15% below age 40 and 25% (or 1 in 4) from 40 to 55. The other two groups drop from almost none to barely any.



Now let's compare these 2020 results with the results from our 2010 survey. Figure 5 shows the results across this decade for Born Again Christians looking at the percent who agree with the worldview answers above. As shown, there has been a dramatic drop in both the Basic Biblical Worldview and the Expanded Biblical Worldview.

If we compare the 18–29 result from 2010 with the 30–39 result from 2020 (i.e., the same age cohort 10 years later), we see a drop from 47% to 25% for the Basic Biblical Worldview and from 32% to 16% for the Expanded Biblical Worldview. **So, the percentage of Born Again Christians with a Biblical Worldview (of either type) has been cut in half over the last decade.** This result is a startling degradation in worldview beliefs of Born Again Christians over just 10 years.



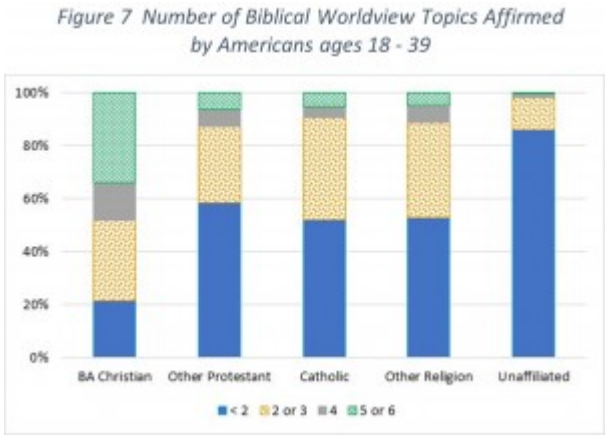
However, because the percent of the population who profess to being born again has dropped over the last ten years as well, the situation is even worse. We need to look at the percent of Americans of a particular age range who hold to a Biblical Worldview. Those results are shown in Figure 6. Once again, comparing the 18–29 age group from 2010 with the same age group ten years later now 30–39, we find an even greater drop off. For the Basic Biblical Worldview, we see a drop off from 13% of the population down to 6%. For the Expanded Biblical Worldview, the decline is from 9% down to just over 3% (a drop off of two thirds).

The drop off seen over this ten-year period is more than dramatic and extremely discouraging. In 2010, we had about 10%

of the population modeling an active biblical worldview. Although small, 10% of the population means that most people would know one of these committed Christians. At between 6% and 3%, the odds of impacting a significant number of Americans are certainly reduced.

However, we cannot forget that the percent of biblical worldview Christians in the Roman Empire in AD 60 was much less than 1% of the population. Three hundred years later virtually the entire empire was at least nominally Christian. If we will commit ourselves to "proclaiming the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light,"{11} God will bring revival to our land.

Second, how do various religious groups stack up against these questions?



Rather than look at the two biblical worldview levels discussed above, we will look at how many of the six biblical worldview questions they answered were consistent with a biblical worldview. In the chart, we look at 18- to 39-year-old individuals grouped by religious affiliation and map what portion answered less than two of the questions biblically, two or three, four, or more than four (i.e., five or six).

You can see that there are three distinct patterns. First, Born Again Christians where almost half of them answered four or more questions from a biblical perspective (the top two sections of each bar). Then, we see Other Protestants, Catholics{12}, and Other Religions{13} chart about the same, with over half answering zero or one and very few answering more than three.

Finally, we see that the Unaffiliated have over 85% who answer zero or one. This result is one of many we have identified over the years, clearly showing that the Unaffiliated are not active Christians who do not want to affiliate with a particular group. Some have suggested this possibility, but the data does not support that hopeful concept.

Third, what do they say about God and His relationship to the world?

People have many different views of God or gods in this life. In this chart, we look at how 18-to 39-year old respondents define God across the different religious affiliations used in the prior chart. Our respondents were asked: Which of the following descriptions comes closest to what you personally believe to be true about God? They were given the following answers to choose from (without the titles).

1. **God Rules**: God is the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect creator of the universe who rules the world today.

2. **Impersonal Force**: God refers to the total realization of personal human potential OR God represents a state of higher consciousness that a person may reach.

3. **Deism**: God created but is no longer involved with the world today.

4. **Many gods**: There are many gods, each with their different power and authority.

5. **No God**: There is no such thing as God.

6. **Don't Know**: Don't know

Once again, the answers fall into three groups. A vast majority of Born Again Christians (~80%) believe in a creator God who is still active in the world today. It is somewhat surprising that over 20% ascribe to a different view of God. The second group consists of Other Protestants who do not

claim to be born again, Catholics and Other Religions. These groups are remarkably similar in their responses with around 40% who believe in an active, creator God. So, the remaining 60% have a different view. The third group are the Unaffiliated with less than 10% professing belief in an active, creator God. Over 50% believe in no God or they just don't know. **Overall, only about one third of Americans 55 and under believe in an active, creator God.** We must admit that **America is not a Judeo-Christian nation** as the belief in God is central to Judeo-Christian views. From an evangelistic viewpoint, one needs to be prepared to explain why someone should believe in a creator God. The Probe Ministries website, www.probe.org, is an excellent place to explore the topic.{14}

Summary

This document begins the process of understanding the status and trends of religious beliefs and behaviors in the America of this third decade of the twenty first century. Several findings addressed above are worth highlighting in summary.

- Unaffiliated Americans continue their growth toward one half of the population which began before the turn of this century. The current number of young adults (under the age of 40) who are **unaffiliated ranges between one third and one half of our population**.

- The percentage of young adult Americans who claim to be Born Again Protestants has declined slightly among the youngest group (18–29) but has remained fairly constant during this century.

- Other Protestants and Catholics have seen marked declines during this century. The percentage of **young adult Other Protestants has dropped by one half** (from about one quarter of the population to about one eighth) since 1988.

- Born Again Christians are the only group to have a

significant number of adherents who profess to having a Basic Biblical Worldview. This worldview is measured by the answers to four very basic questions at the heart of Christian doctrine. Even among this group, **only about one in four (25%) of them hold to a Basic Biblical Worldview**.

• Over the last ten years, the number of young adult (18–39) Born Again Christians with **a Basic Biblical Worldview has dropped by two thirds** from almost 15% of the population down to about 5%. This is a remarkable and devastating drop in one decade.

• Just under one half of Born Again Christians agree with more than three of the six worldview questions. Amongst other Christian groups and the population as a whole less than one in ten do so.

• **Overall, only about one third of Americans 55 and under believe in an active, creator God.**

In our next release, we will look at how American young adults

• react to the doctrine of Jesus Christ,

• believe that Jesus is the only path to heaven, and

• have a classic view of tolerance.

In the meantime, be in prayer about what you can do in your sphere of influence to stem the trends listed above.

Notes

1. For a detailed analysis of the outcomes of our 2010 survey and other surveys from that decade, go to our book *Cultural Captives: The Beliefs and Behavior of American Young Adults*.
2. The 717 respondents equated to 747 equivalent people when weighted to adjust for differences between those surveyed and the distribution of gender, ethnicity, ages, and location as given by the United States Census Bureau.

3. Our 2010 survey was facilitated by the Barna Group and I would presume they commonly use these two questions in other surveys to identify born again Christians.
4. We have looked at religious affiliation from Pew Research, GSS, PALS, Barna Group and others.
5. General Social Survey data was downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected by the National Opinion Research Center.
6. Note that the Other Religions category includes Christian cults (e.g. Mormon, Jehovah's Witnesses), Jews, and other world religions.
7. In future releases, we will also see that the Unaffiliated are very unlikely to hold to basic Christian beliefs.
8. U.S. Religious Landscape Survey 2007, U.S. Religious Landscape Survey 2014, Religious Knowledge Survey 2019 Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (a project of The Pew Research Center). The Pew Research Center bears no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations of the data presented here. The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected by the Pew Research Center.
9. Other answers to select from: God created but is no longer involved with the world today; God refers to the total realization of personal human potential; there are many gods, each with their different power and authority; God represents a state of higher consciousness that a person may reach; there is no such thing as God; and don't know.
10. Born Again Christians include Catholics who answered the born again questions to allow comparison with the 2010 survey but in the Catholic category we include all Catholics including those who are born again.
11. 1 Peter 2:9
12. Catholics here include about 20% who profess to be born again. That subset is included in both the BA Christian column and the Catholic column in Figure 7 and Figure 8.
13. One of the reasons that Other Religions include some that answer more than three worldview questions is that Mormons and

other Christian cults are included in that category.
14. Articles on our website addressing this topic include Evidence for God's Existence, There is a God, Does God Exist: A Christian Argument from Non-biblical Sources, The Impotence of Darwinism, Darwinism: A Teetering House of Cards, and many others.

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World Values Survey: U.S. and Mexico Religious Makeup

This is the first of a series of posts reporting on our analysis of the survey data collected by the World Values Survey project. Surveys were conducted in 57 countries between 2010 and 2014. In all, over 85,000 people were interviewed for these surveys. The survey had fifteen questions directly concerning religious beliefs and practices. But it also had questions in a number of areas that related to how people applied their religious beliefs to cultural and political issues.

I will begin by considering the beliefs and practice of two neighboring countries, Mexico and the United States. The surveys taken in these two countries do not allow us to distinguish between different types of Protestants. There is also no distinction between atheists, agnostics and "nothing at alls"; they only have one choice, "None." In the table below, the data for Catholics, Protestants, and Nones is presented for each country, for all ages, for those under 30 and for those 60 and older.

Table 1: Religious Denomination

Country	Age	Catholic (%)	Protestant (%)	None (%)
Mexico	All	70	10	18
	Under 30	64	11	23
	60+	82	8	9
United States	All	22	41	34
	Under 30	20	32	43
	60+	26	50	22

As shown, Catholicism is dominant in Mexico, accounting for 70% of the population with the Nones edging out Protestants across all age groups for a weak second place. But we also see significant differences based on age. For those under 30, the percentage of Catholics drops to 64% while the percentage of Nones grows to 23%. For those over 60, we see the opposite, with Catholics garnering 82% while the Nones drop down to only 9%.

In the Unites States, Protestants make up the largest percentage of the total population with 41%. For those 60 and over, that group increases to 50% of the population. Consistent with our posts on other surveys, the under 30 group is very different, showing 32% Protestant and 43% Nones.

Over 60% of the Nones in Mexico state that “God is very important to me,” indicating that they are theistic Nones. In the United States, less than 30% of the Nones would be considered theistic.

Pluralism

One of the questions in the surveys asks if they agree with the following statement: “The only acceptable religion is my religion.” The responses among Protestants and Catholics are as shown in the table below.

Table 2: Agree or Strongly Agree: The only acceptable religion is my religion

Country	Age	Catholic (%)	Protestant (%)
Mexico	All	45	43
	Under 30	34	37
	60+	65	63
United States	All	17	29
	Under 30	22	39
	60+	11	15

A much higher percentage of Mexican Christians (but still less than 50%) as compared to American Christians believe that their religion is the only acceptable one. In Mexico, we see than older adults are much more likely to believe this than are those under 30. Also, there is almost no difference between Protestants and Catholics.

In the United States, we see a very different picture. First the percentage of people across the board professing a non-pluralistic position is much smaller than in Mexico. Protestants are significantly more likely than Catholics to take this position. Interestingly, those under the age of 30 are much more likely to take this position than those over the age of 60. If you take into account the number of people who profess Christianity across the two age groups, you find the number of individuals are about the same. But also, we can speculate that Americans under the age of 30 who choose to be affiliated with a Christian denomination rather than the Nones are more likely to do so because they believe that religion is correct. In other words, many emerging adults with a pluralistic view are choosing to identify themselves as Nones. Just over 80% of Nones under the age of 30 take a pluralistic position.

Although there are significant differences between the views in Mexico and those in the United States, they both show that an increasing percentage of the populations (particularly the emerging adult population) are choosing to identify as Nones rather than as Catholics or Protestants.

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