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A Biblical Worldview Has a Radical Effect on a Person's Life



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(Ventura, CA) - Any objective social analyst would conclude that the United States faces its fair share of moral and spiritual problems. A new research study from the Barna Research Group suggests that a large share of the nation's moral and spiritual challenges is directly attributable to the absence of a biblical worldview among Americans.

Citing the findings from a just-completed national survey of 2033 adults that showed only 4% of adults have a biblical worldview as the basis of their decision-making, researcher George Barna described the outcome. "If Jesus Christ came to this planet as a model of how we ought to live, then our goal should be to act like Jesus. Sadly, few people consistently demonstrate the love, obedience and priorities of Jesus. The primary reason that people do not act like Jesus is because they do not think like Jesus. Behavior stems from what we think - our attitudes, beliefs, values and opinions. Although most people own a Bible and know some of its content, our research found that most Americans have little idea how to integrate core biblical principles to form a unified and meaningful response to the challenges and opportunities of life. We're often more concerned with survival amidst chaos than with experiencing truth and significance."

Not Just Any Worldview

The research indicated that everyone has a worldview, but relatively few people have a biblical worldview - even among devoutly religious people. The survey discovered that only 9% of born again Christians have such a perspective on life. The numbers were even lower among other religious classifications: Protestants (7%), adults who attend mainline Protestant churches (2%) and Catholics (less than one-half of 1%). The denominations that produced the highest proportions of adults with a biblical worldview were non-denominational Protestant churches (13%), Pentecostal churches (10%) and Baptist churches (8%).

Among the most prevalent alternative worldviews was postmodernism, which seemed to be the dominant perspective among the two youngest generations (i.e., the Busters and Mosaics).

For the purposes of the research, a biblical worldview was defined as believing that absolute moral truths exist; that such truth is defined by the Bible; and firm belief in six specific religious views. Those views were that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life; God is the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator of the universe and He stills rules it today; salvation is a gift from God and cannot be earned; Satan is real; a Christian has a responsibility to share their faith in Christ with other people; and the Bible is accurate in all of its teachings.

The Difference a Biblical Worldview Makes

One of the most striking insights from the research was the influence of such a way of thinking upon people's behavior. Adults with a biblical worldview possessed radically different views on morality, held divergent religious beliefs, and demonstrated vastly different lifestyle choices.

People's views on morally acceptable behavior are deeply impacted by their worldview. Upon comparing the perspectives of those who have a biblical worldview with those who do not, the former group were 31 times less likely to accept cohabitation (2% versus 62%, respectively); 18 times less likely to endorse drunkenness (2% versus 36%); 15 times less likely to condone gay sex (2% versus 31%); 12 times less likely to accept profanity (3% versus 37%); and 11 times less likely to describe adultery as morally acceptable (4% versus 44%). In addition, less than one-half of one percent of those with a biblical worldview said voluntary exposure to pornography was morally acceptable (compared to 39% of other adults), and a similarly miniscule proportion endorsed abortion (compared to 46% of adults who lack a biblical worldview).

Among the more intriguing lifestyle differences were the lesser propensity for those with a biblical worldview to gamble (they were eight times less likely to buy lottery tickets and 17 times less likely to place bets); to get drunk (three times less likely); and to view pornography (two times less common). They were also twice as likely to have discussed spiritual matters with other people in the past month and twice as likely to have fasted for religious reasons during the preceding month. While one out of every eight adults who lack a biblical worldview had sexual relations with someone other than their spouse during the prior month, less than one out of every 100 individuals who have such a worldview had done so.

Some Groups Are More Likely to Have a Biblical Worldview

Adults who have a biblical worldview possessed a somewhat different demographic profile than those who did not. For instance, individuals who attended college were much more likely than those who did not to have this perspective (6% versus 2%, respectively). Married adults were more than twice as likely as adults who had never been wed to hold such a worldview (5% versus 2%). Whites (5%) were slightly more likely than either blacks (3%) or Hispanics (3%) to hold this ideology. One of the largest gaps was between Republicans (10% of whom had a biblical worldview), Independents (2%) and Democrats (1%).

Residents of Texas and North Carolina were more likely than people in other states to have a biblical worldview. Among the states in which such a worldview was least common were Louisiana and the six states in New England. The nation's largest state - California - was average (i.e., 4% of its residents had a biblical worldview).

Attributes such as gender, age and household income showed no statistical relationship to the possession of a biblical worldview.

Some Churches Are Helping People

The research found that one of the most effective methods of enabling people to develop a biblical worldview is by addressing seven critical questions that consistently lead to beliefs and behaviors that are in tune with biblical teaching. Outlining that process in a new book he has written as an outgrowth of the research, entitled *Think Like Jesus*, Barna also noted that many churches are already helping their congregants to implement such a way of addressing daily challenges and opportunities.

"The emphasis of these churches is to not only teach biblical perspectives," according to Barna, "but also to help people connect the dots of the core principles taught. Rather than simply provide people with good material and hope they figure out what to do with it, these are churches whose services, programs, events and relationships are geared to weaving a limited number of foundational biblical principles into a way of responding to every life situation. The goal is to facilitate a means of interpreting and responding to every life situation that is consistent with God's expectations. These are not perfect people, but once they catch on to the critical principles found in the Bible and train their minds to incorporate those views into their thinking, their behavior varies noticeably from the norm."

Research Source and Methodology

The data described above are from telephone interviews with a nationwide random sample of 2033 adults conducted during September through November 2003. The maximum margin of sampling error associated with the aggregate sample is ± 2.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. All of the interviews were conducted from the Barna Research Group telephone interviewing facility in Ventura, CA. Adults in the 48 continental states were eligible to be interviewed and the distribution of respondents coincided with the geographic dispersion of the U.S. adult population. Multiple callbacks were used to increase the probability of including a reliable distribution of adults.

The data from the 2003 survey was compared with figures on worldview possession compiled from Barna Research Group surveys conducted in 2002 in order to assess the reliability of the new data. The 2002 surveys also showed that just 4% of the aggregate population and 9% of the born again segment had a biblical worldview. Other repeated measures were compared, producing virtually identical results to the current measures.

"Born again Christians" were defined in these surveys as people who said they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today and who also indicated they believe that when they die they will go to Heaven because they had confessed their sins and had accepted Jesus Christ as their savior. Respondents were **not** asked to describe themselves as "born again." Being "born again" is not dependent upon any church or denominational affiliation or involvement.

The Barna Research Group, Ltd. is an independent marketing research company located in southern California. Since 1984, it has been studying cultural trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. If you would like to receive regular e-mailings of a brief overview of each new bi-weekly update on the latest research findings from the Barna Research Group, you may subscribe to this free service at the Barna Research web site (www.barna.org).

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