



# THE STATE *of* THEOLOGY

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*Equipping Leaders to Engage  
Today's Spiritual Landscape*

**Lifeway** research  
Insights Report

What people believe matters—and understanding those beliefs is the first step to meaningful ministry. At Lifeway Research, our mission is to help church leaders, pastors, and ministry teams understand the beliefs and attitudes shaping faith in America.

The State of Theology is a biennial study from Lifeway Research sponsored by Ligonier Ministries, tracking Americans' beliefs about God's nature, sin, the Bible, and more. The 2025 study surveyed more than 3,000 U.S. adults and follows previous studies in 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022.

The findings are both encouraging and challenging. While many affirm foundational doctrines of Christianity, the State of Theology research reveals persistent misunderstandings and areas where biblical teaching is often overlooked. But this research is more than a collection of statistics. It's a window into the hearts and minds of both those we serve and those we want to reach.

What people believe shapes how they live, worship, and respond to the gospel. We've found that while many Americans hold to some core Christian truths, there are plenty of places where confusion and mixed messages sneak in. For pastors and church leaders, understanding these beliefs isn't just interesting—it's essential for teaching, preaching, and connecting with people right where they are and helping them grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Inside this report, you'll find key stats and trends and practical takeaways. We cover everything from beliefs about God and the Trinity to views on the Bible, sin, and the church. Plus, we've included practical insights to help you address tough topics like pluralism, evangelism, and the Bible's authority in your ministry.

My hope is that this report sparks new conversations in your church and helps you see the opportunities and challenges ahead. Use it to ask good questions, encourage honest dialogue, and share the hope of Jesus with clarity and compassion. Thank you for your commitment to ministry and for your desire to understand the spiritual landscape of our nation.

**Scott McConnell,**  
Executive Director of Lifeway Research

# Key Findings

- » **Many Americans are confused about the Trinity.**  
Most Americans (71%) affirm belief in one true God in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—but many struggle with the implications of the Trinity and the deity of Christ.
- » **Religious pluralism is common in America.**  
Most Americans (65%) say God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.
- » **Americans believe humans are good.**  
Two in 3 Americans (66%) believe everyone sins a little but most people are good by nature, and 3 in 4 (74%) agree everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God.
- » **Most Americans believe judgment is coming and hell is real.**  
Most Americans (62%) believe there will be a time when Jesus Christ returns to judge all people, and 57% say hell is a real place where certain people will be punished forever.
- » **Americans' perspectives on the Bible are divided.**  
Half of Americans (49%) believe the Bible is 100% accurate in all it teaches, while 48% say it contains helpful ancient myths but isn't literally true.
- » **Fewer Americans believe abortion is a sin.**  
Half (49%) believe abortion is a sin, down from 53% in 2022. Regular churchgoers (72%) and those with evangelical beliefs (88%) are much more likely to agree abortion is a sin.
- » **Many Americans believe a sanctuary substitute is acceptable.**  
Nearly 2 in 3 U.S. adults (63%) agree personal or family worship is a valid replacement for attending church, a drop from 2022 (66%) but still above pre-pandemic levels of agreement.
- » **Americans don't believe church membership is necessary for Christians.**  
Only 1 in 3 (33%) Americans say every Christian has an obligation to join a local church, while 59% disagree, including 37% who strongly disagree.

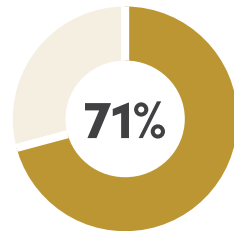
# Beliefs About God

*“Without the Trinity as the core of our beliefs, every other doctrine of our faith starts to come unglued and unhinged. You cannot have the Christian faith without a triune God.”*

—Tara-Leigh Cobble, *The Joy of the Trinity*

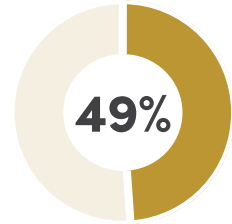
When it comes to their beliefs about God, many Americans are a mixed bag, affirming some truths about God while also revealing misunderstandings they have about Him. Of all the questions asked in the State of Theology survey, Americans are most likely to agree with the statement: “God loves all people in the same way” (83%).

Throughout the history of the State of Theology study, a consistent 7 in 10 Americans have expressed their belief in one true God in three Persons. The 2025 study found **71% of Americans agree there is one true God in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit**. Americans with evangelical beliefs are more likely than those without evangelical beliefs to agree there is one true God in three Persons (97% v. 64%). At least 2 in 3 Americans (68%) say God is unchanging and that God is a perfect being who cannot make mistakes (66%).

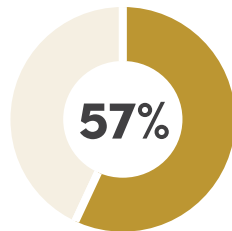


But Americans aren't always consistent in their theological perspectives. Alongside these right beliefs about God, many Americans also agree with anti-biblical statements about God. In particular, many Americans struggle with the logical conclusions of their belief in one God in three Persons.

About half of Americans deny the deity of Christ. **While the percentage who believe Jesus was a great teacher but not God has dropped slightly from the 53% who said so in 2022, half (49%) still agree that is the case**, while 40% disagree. Evangelicals by religious tradition (62%) and evangelicals by belief (68%) are more likely than most to disagree.

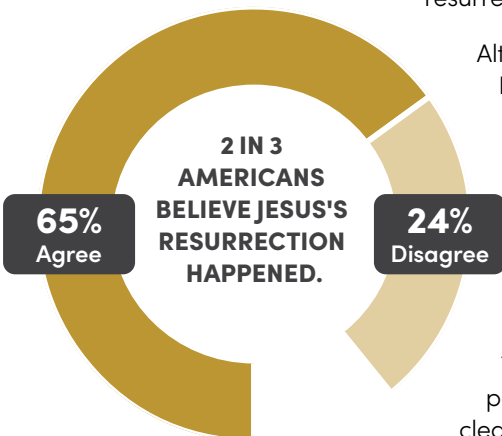


**More than half of Americans categorize the Holy Spirit as a force rather than a personal being (57%).** A quarter (26%) disagree. Again, evangelicals by religious tradition (38%) and evangelicals by belief (41%) are among those most likely to disagree. While down from 22% in 2022, 16% of Americans still believe the Holy Spirit can tell them to do something that's forbidden in the Bible.



U.S. adults may feel that complicated or even contradictory beliefs about God are OK because many don't see religion as an area of clear right and wrong. Almost half of Americans (46%) agree religious belief is not about objective truth, and around 2 in 3 (65%) say God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

Whatever else they may believe about God, 2 in 3 Americans (65%) agree that the biblical accounts of the physical or bodily resurrection of Jesus are completely accurate. They say this event actually occurred. Around a quarter (24%) disagree. Acceptance of Jesus's resurrection has remained stable since 2016.



Although 97% of evangelicals affirm one true God in three Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—many who hold evangelical beliefs are still confused about what this means about God's nature. More than half of evangelicals (53%) believe the Holy Spirit is a force but not a personal being, and 28% agree Jesus was a great teacher but He was not God. While most evangelicals affirm Trinitarian language, many misunderstand what it means.

This disconnect reveals churches need more than passionate preaching or engaging programs. They need clear, repeated, and practical theological instruction woven into the life of the church.

# 3 PLACES WE GO WRONG IN TEACHING ABOUT THE TRINITY

## 1. WE OFFER SIMPLIFIED EXPLANATIONS.

Every analogy of the Trinity breaks down at some level, simply because there's nothing else in existence quite like God. Some analogies are better than others, but even those require caveats. Other analogies are downright heretical—which is to say, they tell more of a lie about God than a truth—and they're more harmful than helpful in giving us a right view of God. He isn't dependent on anything else to be who He is, so when we compare Him to something that is inherently dependent on something else, it will always lead us down the wrong path.

We crave analogies because they seem to help simplify God. And we prefer to simplify Him because it's easier than studying His complexity. But is that how you want to be known? Is that how you aim to build a relationship with anyone you love? Simplified explanations fall short of being enlightening or fulfilling in our relationship with God.

## 2. WE FEED SELFISHNESS.

Our selfishness can be one of the biggest hurdles that keeps us from digging into the Trinity. We prefer to focus on God's promises to us and all the things He could do to benefit us and are content to stop short of looking for who He is.

But the Trinity isn't just a theological concept; fundamentally, it's a relationship. To have a healthy, functioning relationship, you have to look beyond yourself and get to know the other person involved.

## 3. WE LOOK FOR THE WORD TRINITY IN THE BIBLE.

The fact that the Bible never uses the word Trinity doesn't mean the triune God isn't addressed in Scripture. The idea of the Trinity is found throughout the Bible, starting in Genesis 1:1. Jesus talked about it in the Gospels, and the apostles affirmed it throughout their New Testament letters. Still, the early church struggled to summarize it until a theologian named Tertullian, who lived about a century after Jesus's resurrection, created the word "Trinity" to succinctly reference Scripture's teaching about God.

These problems can be overcome if we look at the examples of Jesus and the early church. They neither avoided nor simplified the Trinity. Instead, they sought to give a robust understanding of it and pointed to its value. Not only would a robust understanding of the Trinity benefit churchgoers in their individual relationships with God, but it would serve to benefit the whole, engaging the entire congregation at a deeper level.

# 4 WAYS TO CONFRONT PLURALISM

## 1. ADDRESS PLURALISM.

Without diving too deeply into the philosophical weeds, teach your church about German philosopher Immanuel Kant's separation of faith from knowledge, which leads to a pluralistic view of God. Kant taught that God is inherently unknowable, thereby creating space for everyone to believe whatever they want about him, or her, or it, or them. Explain that pluralists are not high-minded idealists rising above the religious fray. Their religious view is not bigger than all the rest but is in fact one of them.

Also preach why salvation comes only through faith in Jesus and why accepting other religions must inevitably push Jesus to the margins (Acts 4:12; Romans 10:13-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:16).

## 2. ENRICH GOSPEL SOIL.

We may not have space in our sermons to explicitly address pluralism each week. But we can enrich our church's gospel soil so the weeds of pluralism don't take root. If we faithfully and passionately present the good news of Jesus, religious pluralism will strike our people as obviously implausible.

We nourish our soil in two ways—by emphasizing what we're saved from and who we're saved to. The mantra of religious pluralism, "Any religion can save you as long as you are sincere," seems plausible to those who have forgotten what we are saved from. If the core problem we present is anything less than sin, death, and hell, we are giving our congregations permission to become pluralists.

## 3. PREACH THE TRUTH.

How often do you mention hell in your sermons? No one in the Bible talked about hell more than Jesus. He described hell as a place of unimaginable torment and said it was worth mutilating your body to avoid going there (Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 5:29-30). Talk about hell because Jesus is the only solution to sin, death, and hell. Why settle for small talk when we have the only answer to life's large and insurmountable problems?

## 4. CELEBRATE JESUS.

The gospel isn't a general practice or principle. The gospel is a Person. The gospel is Jesus. If our preaching boasts in Jesus, glories in Jesus, and urges all to rest in Jesus then, and only then, will pluralism seem laughably absurd.

# Beliefs About Sin and Punishment

*“When we consider the hopeless plight of the countless millions who live without a relationship with God, we cannot be content.”*

—D. Scott Hildreth, *A Short Guide to Evangelism and Missions*

Another consistency throughout the history of the State of Theology study is the percentage of Americans who believe people are good by nature. Americans feel good about their own goodness and innocence. Two in 3 (66%) believe everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature. Also, 3 in 4 (74%) agree that everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God.

However, less than a quarter (23%) agree that even the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation, while 71% disagree, including 60% who disagree strongly. That belief is not broadly popular among Christians, as a minority of evangelical Protestants (38%), Black Protestants (34%), mainline Protestants (19%), and Catholics (19%) agree.

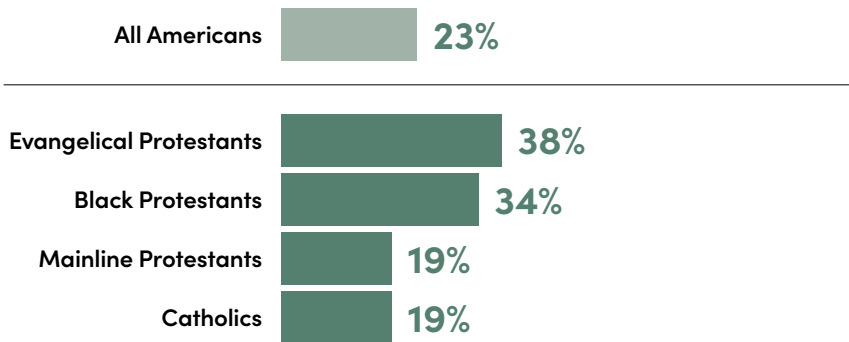
Most Americans have no issues with the existence of hell and the return of Jesus to judge, but they might assume those don't apply to most people.

More than 3 in 5 Americans (62%) believe there will be a time when Jesus Christ returns to judge all the people who have lived.

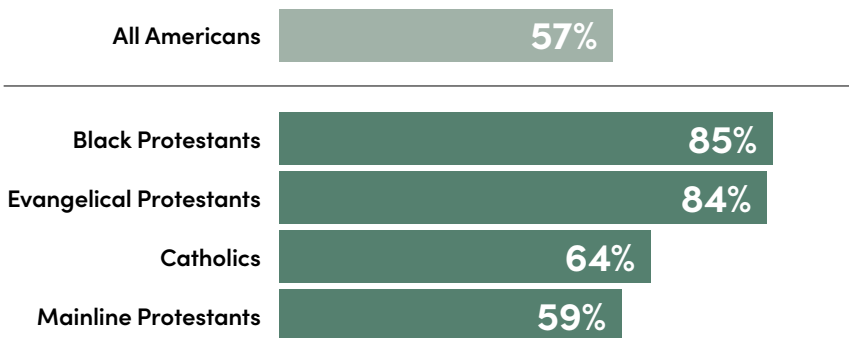
Almost 3 in 5 U.S. adults (57%) say hell is a real place where certain people will be punished forever. Black Protestants (85%) and evangelical Protestants (84%) are more likely than Catholics (64%) and mainline Protestants (59%) to agree.

## PERMANENT PUNISHMENT

**“Even the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation.”**



**“Hell is a real place where certain people will be punished forever.”**



# 3 WAYS YOUR CHURCH MIGHT BE BURYING THE GOSPEL

## 1. THE GOSPEL GETS BURIED WHEN WE GET BUSY.

Keeping the machine of the church going can be a full-time job for most church staff and/or volunteers. There's so much that has to be done. Before long, the gospel is buried under kids' activities, budget meetings, committees, and other responsibilities.

There's nothing wrong with any of these things. All of them are good and have their place in a healthy church. The problem comes when we let the gospel get buried in order to stay busy doing other things.

## 2. THE GOSPEL GETS BURIED WHEN WE DON'T SHARE IT.

A church that doesn't evangelize is a church that doesn't believe in the value of the gospel, no matter what they say. We can sign pledges, pray for people, and share verses on Facebook, but it's no good if we don't share the gospel with people.

Paul admonishes Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5). That statement implies it takes work to share the gospel with others. It's much easier to let the gospel get buried under good intentions.

## 3. THE GOSPEL GETS BURIED THROUGH CONFRONTATION AND COMPROMISE.

These are two sides of the same coin. We might bury the gospel when we look to be confrontational to the world in everything we do. The treasure of the gospel gets buried underneath the garbage of our fighting and confrontation. When we're known more for what we're against than what we're for, we've buried the gospel.

In the same way, those who constantly seek to accommodate all views within the church bury the gospel when they compromise it. We can worry so much about wanting to make sure we don't offend people that we soften the hard edges of the cross. The gospel is welcoming to all, but when we take out all that the gospel requires of us, we bury the gospel.

# 6 WAYS TO CREATE A CULTURE OF EVANGELISM

## 1. REDEFINE SUCCESS FOR THOSE YOU LEAD.

Most people think that their gospel conversation isn't successful unless they lead a person to faith in Christ. The truth is success is not seeing someone saved; success is simply sharing the gospel. God never leaves the results of gospel conversations up to us. He simply asks us to plant and water seeds by sharing, and anytime we do is a success.

## 2. REALIZE SHARING THE GOSPEL ISN'T ABOUT US.

When someone rejects the gospel, it's not personal toward us. It's personal toward God. If we get to lead someone to faith in Jesus, it's still not about us. It's about the power of God working through us. Knowing that sharing the gospel isn't about us takes the pressure off. We can share with courage and confidence knowing it's all about Jesus and all for Jesus.

## 3. HELP PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THEIR PURPOSE.

We exist to know Jesus and to make Jesus known. We get to do a lot of things in a day, but what if knowing Jesus and making Him known set the agenda for everything we do? Everyday tasks would become more than just a checklist of things to get done but a means to something greater. Evangelism will become a part of everything we do when knowing Jesus and making Him known becomes our why.

## 4. PRAY TOGETHER FOR OPPORTUNITIES.

When we pray for opportunities to tell someone about Jesus, we can wait and watch expectantly, knowing God will respond because the harvest is plentiful. There are people we cross paths with every day who need to know there is hope in Jesus.

## 5. CHOOSE A SIMPLE METHOD FOR SHARING THE GOSPEL.

Sharing the gospel is intimidating to most people. The fear of messing up or not knowing what to say can paralyze a person from even attempting to start a gospel conversation. Choosing a simple method and teaching it repeatedly in church services, small group settings, or any other gathering can help others learn to share the gospel. Repetition leads to memorization.

## 6. SHARE YOUR STORIES.

Regularly share stories of gospel conversations you've had or attempted to have in the past couple of weeks. Stories are inspirational. They show how God is at work in and through the lives of His people, and they ignite a passion for others to want to be a part of it.

# Beliefs About the Bible and Its Authority

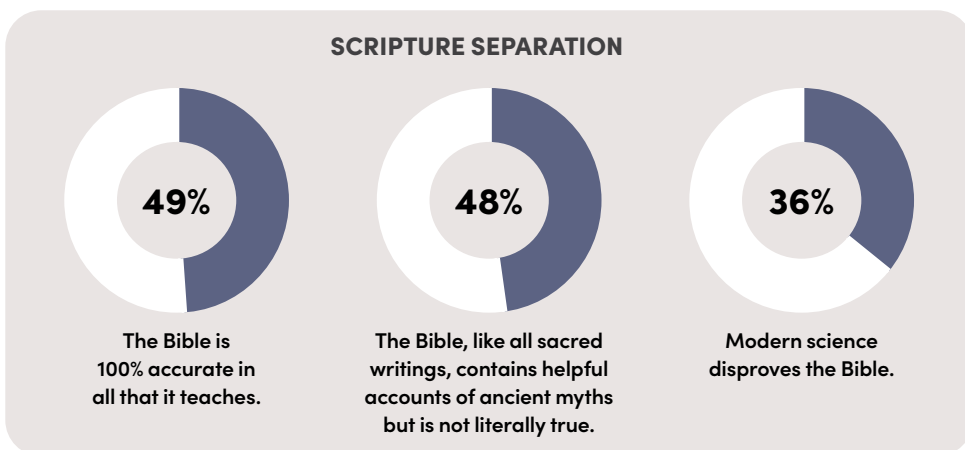
*“What’s amazing about the Bible is that every time you read it, regardless of where you read it, it’s going to be relevant because the God who gave us this book is still alive. He knew exactly what we needed to hear when He gave us this book.”*

—Dwayne Milioni, editor of the *Jesus Daily Bible*

Americans’ perspectives on the Bible are divided. Around half (49%) believe the Bible is 100% accurate in all that it teaches. But almost the same number (48%) say the Bible, like all sacred writings, contains helpful accounts of ancient myths but is not literally true. This percentage declined from the 53% who agreed in 2022 but is still higher than 2016 and prior.

Americans who are regular churchgoers, attending at least once or twice a month, are more than twice as likely as those who don’t attend as often to agree the Bible is 100% accurate in all it teaches (76% v. 30%) and to disagree that the Bible contains helpful accounts but is not literally true (62% v. 30%). And Americans with evangelical beliefs are more likely than those without such beliefs to disagree that the Bible contains helpful accounts but isn’t literally true (79% v. 35%) and that modern science disproves the Bible (73% v. 45%). American evangelicals by belief are also more likely than those who do not have such beliefs to agree the Bible is 100% accurate in all it teaches (95% v. 38%).

Today, more than a third of Americans (36%) believe modern science disproves the Bible, down from 40% in the last State of Theology survey.



Half (50%) of Americans believe the Bible has the authority to tell us what we must do, while 45% disagree. Americans are similarly split on whether the basis for religious belief is objective truth or not, with half of Americans (46%) agreeing religious belief is not about objective truth and a third (32%) disagreeing. Additionally, nearly 1 in 3 (30%) agree God is unconcerned with their day-to-day decisions.

So how do Americans' understanding of Scripture's authority impact their positions on cultural issues of the day?

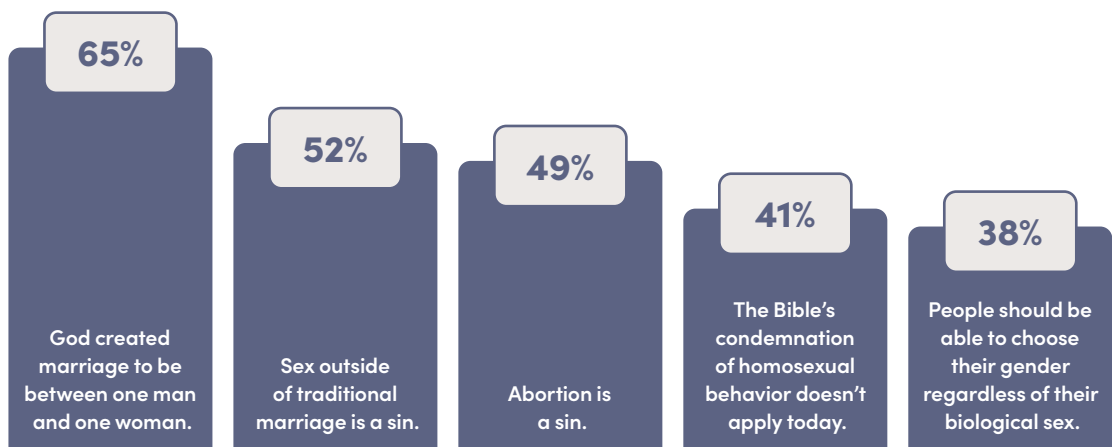
Half of U.S. adults (52%) say sex outside of traditional marriage is a sin. Even more (65%) believe God created marriage to be between one man and one woman. Almost 9 in 10 evangelical Protestants (89%) and Black Protestants (87%) agree that is the divine design of marriage, compared to 72% of mainline Protestants and 71% of Catholics. Almost all evangelicals by belief (98%) believe God created marriage to be that way.

Two in 5 Americans (41%) say the Bible's condemnation of homosexual behavior doesn't apply today, down from 46% in 2022. Today, 46% disagree.

On social issues, half of Americans (49%) believe abortion is a sin, down from 53% in 2022. Americans who attend church services at least once or twice a month are more than twice as likely as those who attend less often to agree abortion is a sin (72% v. 32%) as are those with evangelical beliefs compared to those without these beliefs (88% v. 39%).

Fewer than 2 in 5 Americans (38%) say people should be able to choose their gender identity regardless of their biological sex. Most (54%) disagree, including 42% who strongly disagree. U.S. adults younger than 35 (54%), those living in the West (50%), and those in large cities (46%) are among those most likely to agree that gender identity can be chosen. Catholics (38%) are the Christian group most likely to agree. Regular churchgoers (68%) and evangelicals by belief (82%) are among the most likely to disagree that people should be able to choose their gender identity.

## CULTURAL CONVICTIONS



# WHY YOU CAN TRUST THE BIBLE AS THE AUTHORITATIVE WORD OF GOD

## 1. THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

One of the most fundamental reasons we can trust the Bible as the authoritative Word of God is because of its divine inspiration. The doctrine of inspiration teaches that the Bible is “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16). This means that while human authors wrote the individual books of the Bible, they were guided by the Holy Spirit to record God’s Word without error. Scripture is not the product of human imagination or effort but the direct result of God’s communication through the Holy Spirit.

## 2. THE INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE

Inerrancy means that the Bible, in its original manuscripts, is without error in all that it affirms, whether in matters of faith, history, or morality. If the Bible is truly God’s Word, then it must be free from error because God Himself is perfect and incapable of lying (Titus 1:2). If the Bible contained errors, it would cast doubt on its claim to be the authoritative Word of God. However, the consistent testimony of Scripture is that it is trustworthy in all it teaches.

## 3. THE HISTORICAL RELIABILITY OF SCRIPTURE

The Bible’s trustworthiness is also based on its historical reliability. The Bible records real historical events and people, many of which have been confirmed by archaeological discoveries and external historical sources. The historical accuracy of the Bible lends credibility to its claims of divine origin.

## 4. THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF SCRIPTURE

Finally, the Bible’s authority is confirmed by its transformative power. The Bible is not just a collection of ancient writings; it’s the living Word of God that changes lives. Through the Bible, God speaks directly to His people, convicting them of sin, comforting them in suffering, and guiding them in truth.

## 3 REASONS ABORTION IS A GOSPEL ISSUE

### 1. ABORTION IS THE REJECTION OF GOD AS SOVEREIGN CREATOR.

When we dress abortion with appealing language such as “rights,” “autonomy,” or “empowerment,” we shake our fists at a sovereign Creator and proclaim that we, not God, deserve the power over life and death.

### 2. ABORTION IS THE REJECTION OF GOD AS ULTIMATE REDEEMER.

There’s a reason Scripture refers to God as the author of life—He is the master storyteller. And since the beginning of time, He has been weaving a narrative for the one purpose of bringing Himself glory. The conception, development, and birth of a child all point to a greater reality.

### 3. ABORTION IS THE REJECTION OF GOD AS PURPOSEFUL DESIGNER.

God has purposefully and beautifully designed image bearers to pass His name and renown from one generation to the next. When we remain passive about abortion, we shrug our shoulders at God’s design for the future and choose ourselves rather than the next generation.

# 6 WAYS TO HELP STUDENTS GROUND THEIR IDENTITY IN THE GOSPEL

## 1. CREATE SAFE, HONEST SPACES.

Students need places where they can ask hard questions and share their stories without fear of being judged. That means training leaders to listen well, respond with grace, and avoid quick fixes or clichés.

## 2. LEAD WITH BELONGING.

Belonging is the soil in which belief can grow. When students feel accepted and valued, they're more likely to engage in meaningful conversations about faith and identity.

## 3. TEACH IDENTITY IN CHRIST CLEARLY AND OFTEN.

In a culture where identity is often tied to sexuality, gender, or performance, we need to consistently point students to the truth that their deepest identity is found in Christ. They are loved, chosen, and made in God's image.

## 4. SUPPORT PARENTS.

Many parents are navigating these conversations for the first time. They need encouragement, wisdom, and a reminder that they're not alone. When student ministries partner with parents, everyone wins.

## 5. ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH AND COMPARISON.

Students need to know their emotional and mental well-being matters to God—and to us. They need leaders who are equipped to recognize signs of distress and respond with care.

## 6. MODEL THE LOVE OF JESUS.

Jesus didn't lead with lectures; He led with love. He saw people, listened to them, and invited them into something better. That's our model.

# Beliefs About the Church

*“There is more to being a Christian than going to church, but there is certainly not less.”*

— Dean Inerra, *A Short Guide to Church*

One of the few areas of change in the State of Theology surrounds joining and attending a local church. In 2022, following the pandemic, 66% of Americans said worshipping alone or with one’s family was a valid replacement for regularly attending church. The 2 in 3 who agreed marked a significant increase from 58% in 2020. In the latest State of Theology survey, the percentage dropped but remained above pre-pandemic levels.

In 2025, **63% of U.S. adults say their personal or family worship is a good church attendance substitute**, while 26% disagree. Among self-identified Christians, mainline Protestants (71%) and Catholics (67%) are more likely than Black Protestants (57%) and evangelical Protestants (52%) to agree.

Americans who are regular churchgoers, attending at least once or twice a month, are far more likely to disagree than those who don’t attend church services as often (42% v. 15%). Evangelicals-by-belief are also more likely to disagree than U.S. adults without such beliefs (49% v. 21%).

Not only do most Americans say personal or family worship is a valid replacement for church attendance, but most also don’t believe Christians must become church members. **Only a third of U.S. adults (33%) say every Christian has an obligation to join a local church**, down slightly from 36% who agreed in 2022. Three in 5 (59%) disagree, including 37% who strongly disagree.

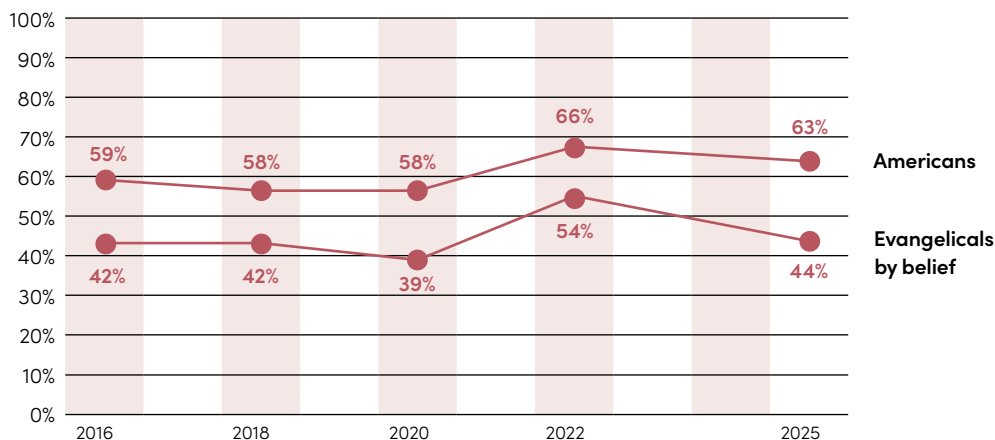
Regular churchgoers are more likely than those who attend less frequently to say Christians have that obligation (57% v. 15%). A 2024 Lifeway Research study found 82% of those who attend church at least once a month are also members of that congregation.

Mainline Protestants (62%) and Catholics (54%) are more likely than evangelical Protestants (45%) and Black Protestants (35%) to reject the idea that every Christian has the obligation to join a local church. And Americans with evangelical beliefs are more likely to agree than those without these beliefs (61% v. 26%).

**An alarming percentage of evangelicals still fail to recognize God’s call to believers to be active members of a local church**, with only 3 in 5 agreeing every Christian has an obligation to join a local church. And 44% of evangelicals say worshipping alone or with one’s family is a valid replacement for attending church. These findings remind pastors to reinforce the importance of believers gathering with the saints and contributing to the body of Christ.

## SANCTUARY SUBSTITUTE

*“Worshipping alone or with one’s family is a valid replacement for regularly attending church.”*



## 3 WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHURCH VALUE MEMBERSHIP

### 1. ANSWER THE WHY.

By their own polity, principles, and vision, church leadership must be able to answer the question: If we join the church tonight, what changes tomorrow? Otherwise, it’s simply a formality or tradition that might not be worth someone’s time to go through the process. Scripturally and practically, the “why” should lead to a “why not?”

### 2. HAVE AN ACCESSIBLE AND CLEAR PROCESS.

It shouldn’t require a doctorate to figure out how to join the church. And it should be clear what you’re asking people to commit to and join. Do you have a membership process? It’s hard to make membership meaningful and appealing if you fail to have a process and a plan.

### 3. TALK ABOUT OWNERSHIP.

We’ve called it membership simply because that’s a familiar word for churches. But what we’re asking people to do is become owners. Members have demands and basic rights; owners have responsibilities. There’s something powerful and captivating about people seeing their church not just as something they consume but as something they contribute to with their time, treasure, talent, and testimony.

# 3 REMINDERS FOR ASSESSING REGULAR CHURCH ATTENDANCE

## 1. PHYSICAL PRESENCE CAN'T BE THE ONLY MARKER OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLESHIP.

Primarily, the definition of regular attendance isn't a physical question but a spiritual one because attendance isn't the goal. The real goal for every Christian, as it pertains to life in the church, is involvement. Involvement requires immersion in the life of the church. By God's design, this is where the benefits and blessings of Christian community exist. While there are certain blessings to simple attendance, those blessings are not enough for the Christian to thrive and flourish in the faith.

## 2. GOD DESIRES COMMUNITY IN THE CHURCH.

The Bible assumes God's people will make it a priority to meet together to worship. The emphasis in the Scriptures is for God's people to live in community with one another. Over and over, the Bible exhorts us to this Christ-saturated, community-oriented involvement.

## 3. USE A BETTER METRIC.

Attendance is good, but it isn't the standard we should examine Christian health by. We should examine health by how deeply involved people are with the rest of the body of Christ. Lead your people to more than simple attendance so they can discover the joy of God's plan in Christian community. While attendance is always required, it is never the end goal.

# The Bottom Line of the State of Theology

As you reach the end of this State of Theology report, we invite you to pause and consider what these findings mean for your ministry and the community you serve. The research paints a vivid picture of the beliefs, doubts, and spiritual questions present in American culture today. Across every section—beliefs about God, sin, the Bible, and the church—there are both encouraging signs and areas of concern. Many hold to foundational truths, yet misunderstandings and cultural influences continue to shape how faith is lived out—even among those in our churches.

For pastors and ministry leaders, these insights are more than statistics. They're a call to engage thoughtfully and compassionately with your congregation and community. Understanding what people believe is the first step toward meaningful discipleship. When you know where confusion or uncertainty exists, you can address those gaps with clarity, patience, and biblical truth. The report highlights the importance of teaching core doctrines, confronting religious pluralism, and helping people see the relevance of Scripture in everyday life.

The insights provided throughout this report are designed to help you move from information to transformation. Whether it's clarifying the nature of the Trinity, cultivating a culture of evangelism, or guiding conversations about social issues, these recommendations offer practical steps for shepherding your church in today's complex environment. Use them to spark honest dialogue, encourage deeper study, and foster a community where questions are welcomed and truth is pursued.

Ultimately, our hope is that this research equips you to lead with wisdom and compassion. May it inspire you to listen well, teach faithfully, and proclaim the gospel with renewed confidence. The spiritual landscape is always changing, but the opportunity to point people to Jesus remains constant. Thank you for your commitment to ministry and for your desire to understand and serve those God has placed in your care.

 Learn more about our findings, trends, and recommendations for navigating ministry at [LifewayResearch.com/StateOfTheology](https://LifewayResearch.com/StateOfTheology).

## About the State of Theology

The study was conducted by Lifeway Research and sponsored by Ligonier Ministries (TheStateOfTheology.com). A demographically balanced online panel was used for interviewing American adults, with 3,001 surveys completed January 6–15, 2025. The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error from the online panel does not exceed plus or minus 1.9%. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups. Slight weights were used to balance gender, age, ethnicity, income, region and religion.

Evangelical beliefs are defined using the National Association of Evangelicals and Lifeway Research evangelical beliefs research definition based on respondents' beliefs. Respondents are asked their level of agreement with four separate statements using a four-point, forced-choice scale (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). Those who strongly agree with all four statements are categorized as having evangelical beliefs:

- The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe.
- It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior.
- Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin.
- Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation.

## About Lifeway Research

Lifeway Research is a Middle Tennessee-based, evangelical research firm that specializes in surveys about faith in culture and matters that affect churches. Our work has been covered by national and international media, (Religion News Service, *Christianity Today*, NPR, *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, and many others) and translated into multiple languages. Lifeway Research is the research arm of Lifeway Christian Resources.

## About Lifeway Christian Resources®

In operation since 1891, Lifeway Christian Resources is one of the leading providers of Christian resources, including Bibles, books, Bible studies, group curriculum, Christian music and movies, Vacation Bible School, and church supplies, as well as camps and events for all ages. Lifeway is the world's largest provider of Spanish Bibles. Based in Brentwood, Tennessee, Lifeway operates as a self-supporting nonprofit. For more information, visit [Lifeway.com](http://Lifeway.com).

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