

What has Christianity Come To?
<https://thestateoftheology.com/>

Michelle: Welcome to A Word Fitly Spoken, a podcast about Jesus, His Word, and our joy in following Him. I'm Michelle Lesley.

Amy: And I'm Amy Spreeman. Thanks for joining us! Tonight we are asking the question, "What has Christianity come to?" There is an interesting study called The State of Theology survey that's done every two years by Ligonier Ministries, and it has just released its latest findings about what Christians believe about God, salvation, ethics, and the Bible. And it seems like professing Christians have "shifted" their beliefs - and not for the better - since the pandemic.

Michelle: For instance, did you know that half of evangelicals surveyed believe that God changes. You know, the God who is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Wow.

Amy: you know, Michelle, I had to stop using that label, Evangelical, a few years ago. I think it was the result of one of these surveys - when you see how far off the evangelical realm is from the truth about God, it's hard to identify with that big EVA umbrella.
(Chit Chat a bit)

Michelle: We're going to slice and dice those results from Ligonier's survey in a minute, but first we want to give you an update from a question one of our listeners had about our podcasts. We shared this with you last week. She wrote,

"How do I listen to your podcasts from when you started in 2019, when iTunes only goes back to episode 116.? Where can I listen from episode 1?"

Well, we fixed that for you. You can now go to our website, A Word Fitly Spoken . Life and scroll over the Podcasts tab on our menu, and there's now a dropdown menu where you can choose from Recent Episodes, or Play from the Beginning. So go enjoy those early days!

Now, on with tonight's episode. We're all the way to number 138!

Amy: It only took us 4 years! Okay before we talk about the Ligonier Survey - a little disclaimer. Ligonier is a great resource for Christians and we highly recommend it. They sponsored the survey, and the research firm that conducted the study is

Lifeway Research, which is an organization connected under the Lifeway Resources site - we don't recommend you get your resources from Lifeway Resources, we are saying right now that we are NOT recommending them or even platforming them. - so for tonight we are JUST talking about the survey results put together by Lifeway Research - which appears to be its own separate organization, because those results are pretty shocking.

(Chit Chat about Lifeway?)

M: In fact, I would say Lifeway helped contribute to some of the results we're going to talk about... (false doctrine, LWW, etc.)

... but even non-Christians can conduct fairly accurate polls and surveys ...

... the problem with conducting polls and surveys of Christians is that you have to rely on self assessment and self reporting. Like, if you want to conduct a poll of firemen, you can verify through employment records that each person you survey is, in fact, a fireman.

But if you want to survey Christians, you have to ask if they're Christians and then trust them when they say yes. And, as we know, there are a whole lot of people out there who say they're Christians, but have never truly been born again. So that's something we always have to keep in mind with surveys of Christians. There are probably a certain portion of respondents who aren't saved.

Michelle: So let's get into some of the details about this survey. And we will put the link in the show notes for you so you can read the whole thing if you want.

More than 3,000 American evangelicals were asked several questions for this study. That's a pretty sizable group. Evangelicals were defined by LifeWay Research as people who strongly agreed with the following four statements:

- 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.

So these are good “rule out” questions. The people administering the survey are doing their best to weed out non-Christians, but remember, this isn't a fail safe.

So the respondents agreed with these statements, but wait until you hear how they answered the survey!

Here's how they responded to this statement: **God learns and adapts to different circumstances.**

51% agree with that statement, 32 % disagree, and the rest weren't sure. Amy, what do you make of that?

Amy: Well, it sounds like the not sures and the Yes Sirs don't really know the steadfast God of the Bible. Here's what He says about Himself through His breathed-out perfect Word:

Malachi 3:6 “For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. **Psalms 102:27** ...but you are the same, and your years have no end.

Numbers 23:19 God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? **Lamentations 3:22** The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;

Michelle: There are so many verses like that Amy, like **James 1:17**: Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

According to Ligonier, the fact that more than half think God does change may indicate that there is a strong influence of open theism, which denies God's complete knowledge of future events) or just a lack of clear, biblical teaching on the character of God in evangelical churches. And no doubt our shifting culture plays a role too.

Amy: Next, the respondents were given this statement: **Everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God.**

What do you think they said, Michelle, any guesses?

The survey found that a whopping 65 percent agreed with that statement. This means that most U.S. adults believe that humans are born innocent. And there is a growing influence of humanistic philosophies and worldviews that teach that we are all basically good. The Bible says just the opposite.

Michelle: Yeah, the biblical teaching of original sin is not embraced by most evangelicals.

God's Word, however, makes clear that all humans are "by nature children of wrath. You'll find that in Ephesians 2:3. **Psalm 51:5** Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

Without this foundational truth, we cannot have an accurate understanding of the gospel and of our absolute need for the grace of God in salvation.

This next one is near and dear to our hearts, **Every Christian has an obligation to join a local church**. Only 68 percent agreed with this statement, But ladies, church is not optional. And no, you can't say "Don't go to church - Be the church --"

Amy: I actually had that Tee-shirt I got from a Christian music festival, Michelle, not one of my prouder moments - but I didn't know any better!

Michelle: We can't BE the church if we aren't part of the Church. The church is not a building that you go to every Sunday to hear a Ted Talk. The church is every born-again person in whom the Holy Spirit --the God of the Universe - lives. And gathering with the saints is not an option. But since the pandemic, more people are finding that it's just easier to hang out at home and watch church in your jammies. That ain't church.

God commands us to gather with the saints for worship. Hebrews 10:24-25 says:

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Amy: Michelle, during the pandemic we did quite a few podcast episodes about this very issue, including one titled, [**Church was never meant to be remote: Reuniting after COVID-19**](#). We'll link that up in the show notes.

Let's talk about the Bible. The survey asked people to respond to this statement: **The Bible, like all sacred writings, contains helpful accounts of ancient myths but is not literally true.**

Ligonier has been sponsoring this survey since 2014, and guess which way the trend is heading?

In 2014: 41% agreed that the Bible isn't actually true, and this has increased every year by at least 2 or three percentage points, but two years ago something happened and that percentage spiked up 5 percent from 2020, and this year 53 percent - more than half of evangelicallyfishes, say the Bible is not literally true. I've worn a deep path over to this verse - **2 Timothy 3: 16-17**: All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God² may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Michelle: Not to be nit-picky, here, but when people ask me if I believe the Bible is **literally** true, I have to answer no as well, but it's because of that word literal. It's not an accurate question.

The Bible is absolutely true from cover to cover, but it is not **literally** true as a whole. The **literal** parts of the Bible are literally true: Noah literally built a boat. Jesus literally died on the cross. Paul was literally shipwrecked. We are to literally obey all of the Bible's literal commandments.

But the Bible also contains figurative language: metaphors, similes, parables, illustrations, poetry, exaggeration, and so on. Those parts of the Bible are figuratively true, but not literally true. When Song of Songs says that the woman's eyes are doves, her eyes are not actually white birds. It just means her eyes are beautiful. When Jesus says I am the door, it doesn't mean He's a plank of wood with hinges and a knob. He's using a metaphor to make His point.

But, Amy, realizing that I'm a weirdo grammar nerd and probably none of the people who were surveyed answered that the Bible is not true literally for that reason, it's not surprising that with the pervasiveness of leftist ideology in the so-called progressive churches that so many believe the Bible isn't true.

Ligonier says this upward trend is the clearest and most consistent trend revealed by the State of Theology survey since it began in 2014. Let's do a few more, and we want to send you over to Ligonier to do a deeper dive into the results if you are interested, as we won't have time to give you all of the stats.

So here are a few more upward trends since 2014:

Gender identity is a matter of choice. This one is up from 38 percent to 42 percent of professing Christians who agree. All those Woke messages must be getting through.

The Bible's condemnation of homosexual behavior doesn't apply today. 46 percent now agree, up from 42 percent a few years ago.

Some upward trends were positive: Evangelicals still mostly believe that sex outside of marriage is a sin - that's 94 percent, up from 91 percent a few years ago, -- and that abortion is a sin: 91 percent, up from 87 percent. That's surprising to me, but a pleasant surprise.

Amy: BUT...this next one is a head scratcher, given that evangelicals believed strongly in those four Christian statements you read earlier, Michelle: : **God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.**

56 percent agreed with that statement this year, Michelle. There is only One way to God, and that is through His son, Jesus Christ. When God opens our eyes to who He really is, and we believe in Him for the forgiveness of our sins and we are regenerated, given a new heart, we are His. Buddha didn't die as a propitiation for our sins. Neither did Joseph Smith, or Mohammed. And none of them were resurrected from the dead in front of witnesses, in victory over death. In those figures we have absolutely no Hope whatsoever. We do have Hope and redemption in Jesus.

Michelle: There were quite a few more statements that the participants responded to, and we encourage you to check those out. Amy and I want to read the conclusion from Ligonier. I'll read the first part and Amy can take the second part - we think you'll find this summary spot on.

Quote: The 2022 State of Theology survey reveals that Americans increasingly reject the divine origin and complete accuracy of the Bible. With no enduring plumb line of absolute truth to conform to, U.S. adults are also increasingly holding to unbiblical worldviews related to human sexuality.

In the evangelical sphere, doctrines including the deity and exclusivity of Jesus Christ, as well as the inspiration and authority of the Bible, are increasingly being rejected.

While positive trends are present, including evangelicals' views on abortion and sex outside of marriage, an inconsistent biblical ethic is also evident, with more

evangelicals embracing a secular worldview in the areas of homosexuality and gender identity.

Amy: Still quoting Ligonier here: These results convey the ongoing need for the church to be engaged in apologetics, helping unbelievers by providing a well-reasoned defense of the Christian faith, and helping believers by strengthening their clarity and conviction regarding why they believe what they do. Additionally, the people of God must continue to obey the Great Commission by communicating the whole counsel of God in biblical evangelism and discipleship. The need is great, but the power and promises of God can equip the church to bring truth and light to a deceived and dark world.

Amen! (Chit chat)

Michelle: We hope you enjoyed this episode. If you want to learn more about any of the topics we talk about, head on over to our website, [A Word Fitly Spoken.Life](http://AWordFitlySpoken.Life). Check out all our episodes including the very first fledgeling discussions! And don't forget to subscribe wherever you download your audio.

And before we close out, we also want to say a big thank you to a new patron - Eileen. Thank you so much for your generosity, Eileen. And if you'd like to help us defray podcasting expenses via Patreon, like Eileen, or via PayPal, just click on the "support" tab at our website, AWFS.life.

Amy: And until next time, keep looking to Christ in Scripture for your hope, and walk worthy.