



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 11, 2011

Thirty Percent of Americans Think Bible is Actual Word of God

Thirty percent of Americans believe that the Bible is the actual word of God, according to a recent Gallup survey. While nearly 50 percent agree that Scripture is “inspired” by God, only three in ten say that it should be interpreted literally. Another 17 percent say the Bible is merely an ancient book of stories recorded by man.



According to Gallup, the view that the Bible is divinely inspired, but should not be taken literally, has been the most common opinion over the 40 years that the pollster has been querying Americans on the issue. Gallup noted that the “high point” in the number of Americans believing in the literal interpretation of Scripture was 40 percent in 1980 and 1984, with the low coming in 2001, when only 27 percent said they thought the Bible was the actual, literal word of God.

With an increase in a respondent’s education, and with a decrease in one’s church attendance, a literal interpretation of the Bible goes down, found the Gallup pollsters. “A majority, 54%, of those who attend religious services on a weekly basis believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible,” noted Gallup, “more than twice the percentage of those who attend church less often.”

Similarly, 46 percent of Americans with a high school education or less take the Bible literally, while only 22 percent of those with at least some college education hold that view. However, a majority of Americans who have been to college believe the Bible to be the inspired word of God, with a surprising 64 percent of college graduates, and 55 percent of those with post graduate education, saying they believe that the Bible is divinely inspired.

Significantly, Gallup found a high correlation between belief about Scripture and weekly church attendance, with 54 percent who attend worship services weekly saying they believe the Bible is the actual word of God, while only 16 percent of those who seldom or never attend hold that belief. Similarly, 66 percent of those who attend church at least monthly held the view that Scripture is “inspired” by God.

Among specific religious groups, Gallup found that Protestant were the most hard-core in their convictions about the Bible, with 41 percent believing in a literal interpretation of Scripture and 46 percent saying it is inspired by God. By contrast, 21 percent of Catholics believe the Bible is the actual word of God, while the percentage goes up to 65 percent for Catholics who believe it is the inspired word of God. As for respondents claiming no religious persuasion, only five percent thought the Bible is



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the actual word of God while, predictably, 63 percent thought it was nothing more than a book of legends and fables.

With the strong connection between Christian values and conservative political views, it is little surprise that Gallup found a correlation between views on Scripture and identification with a political ideology or party. Among respondents, 42 percent who identified themselves as Republicans said they believe the Bible is literally true, compared to 27 percent of those who said they were Democrats.

When queried only on political ideology, the difference was more pronounced, with 46 percent of those identifying themselves as “conservative” saying they believed the Bible to be the literal word of God, as opposed to only 14 percent of self-identified “liberals” who believed so. For those holding to the “inspired” rather than “literal” interpretation of Scripture, the numbers evened out, with 45 percent of “conservatives” and 48 percent of “liberals” agreeing that the Bible is the “inspired” word of God.

Overall, noted Gallup, while the numbers of Americans taking a strictly literal view of the Bible has declined over the years from an average of 38 percent between 1976-84 to 31 percent today, “highly religious Americans—particularly those of Protestant faiths—still commonly believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible.”

The pollster concluded that the dominant view among Americans remains “that the Bible is the word of God, be it inspired or actual, as opposed to a collection of stories recorded by man”—a view that is “consistent with the findings that the United States is a predominantly Christian nation and that Americans overwhelmingly believe in God.”



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