

# STATE OF THE BIBLE



State of the Bible Research Report

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### **The Bible in America Script**

Coming out of COVID-19, as Americans rethink their relationship to all matters of faith, there will be inevitable twists and turns in the story of the Bible in America “The state of the nation and the state of the Bible in the nation are inextricably linked.”

#### **“Where is the Bible needed most?”**

1. The Bible is needed where it is not available. Access to the Bible is a human right. Currently, though, a billion people in the world do not have access to the Bible because it has not been translated into their language. Nobody should be forced to read the Bible; neither should they be denied the opportunity to read it and believe it.
2. The Bible is needed where people are hurting. The sad truth about our world is that people everywhere endure pain. During real trauma, grief, and affliction, the Bible brings comfort to those who seek it. In the pages of the Bible, we find a God who sees us and a God who desires to be with us.
3. The Bible is needed where wisdom is in short supply. In every domain of life and society, human beings are faced with their own limitations. We all face responsibilities that call for wisdom. In the Bible, we find wisdom that has stood the test of time. We discover a perspective on our questions that transcends our own limited field of view.

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## WHAT DO AMERICANS THINK ABOUT THE BIBLE?

### THE BIBLE'S INFLUENCE IN THE U.S.

First, let's look at how Americans see both the Bible, and the Bible's impact on the nation. Over half of U.S. adults (54%) believe that America would be worse off without the Bible, which is a 5-percent increase since last year (49% in 2020).

This belief in the Bible's value to the United States aligns with a sense that the Bible upholds American values. Faith (72%), hope (71%), and love (69%) (among other qualities) are widely agreed upon as values the Bible is essential for sustaining.

*THE BIBLE AS A UNIQUE, TRUE, AND MEANINGFUL WORK* *The Bible presents a singular vision of the world's history, purpose, and future.*

*Over half of American adults (55%) hold what is known to be a "high" view of Scripture, which deems the Bible without error. The Bible is the actual word of God and should be taken literally, word for word.*

*A slight majority of Americans agree that Scripture's message is particularly helpful; 54 percent say the Bible contains everything a person needs to live a meaningful life.*

### HOW DO AMERICANS ENGAGE WITH THE BIBLE? FREQUENCY OF BIBLE USE

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Our data reveal that over 181 million Americans opened a Bible in the past year. This number is up significantly (7.1%) from 2020. In 2021, we estimate that 128 million American adults reach for the Bible with regularity.

Who are these one in two Americans (50%) who are Bible Users today? Here's a quick profile:

**Bible Users are not just Christians.** In fact, 37 percent of those who self-identify with other religions also read the Bible at least three to four times a year. This suggests that many people of other religions are interested enough to interact with the Bible, at least occasionally.

*Bible Users tend to be older. Three in ten Boomers and Elders (31%) interact with the Bible multiple times a week. Fewer than half as many members of Gen Z (14%) do the same. Less than half of Gen Z are Bible Users (43%), significantly lower than both Boomers and Elders. Bible Users are ethnically diverse.*

Seven in ten Black Americans (69%) and over half of Hispanic Americans (52%) are Bible Users. White Americans (46%) and Asian Americans (44%), by comparison, are less likely to be Bible Users.

Bible Users are more likely to live in the American South than in other regions of the country. Nearly three in five adults in the South are Bible Users (57%), compared to less than half of adults in the Northeast (46%), Midwest (45%), or West (44%) regions.

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ON-SCREEN OR ON THE PAGE On the other side of 2020—a year that, due to social distancing, increased device-dependency in nearly every aspect of life—six in ten Americans (59%) still indicate they prefer print or paper Bibles.

MOTIVATIONS, EMOTIONS, AND FRUSTRATIONS SURROUNDING BIBLE USAGE  
What motivates people to read the Bible? Mostly, Americans believe it brings them closer to God (24%) or offers comfort (16%). One-quarter of American adults prefer to use the Bible on a smartphone or tablet.

## **CONCLUSION State of the Bible 2021 respondents point us to several significant shifts.**

First, during a tumultuous period in America, people who once were Bible Disengaged are reaching for the Bible. Consequently, the Movable Middle has swollen to include 95 million American adults who are exploring Scripture, many for the first time.

Second, these new Bible explorers often find the Bible difficult to navigate and understand. As they look for a connection with God, comfort for their hurts, and answers to their questions, they will also need relational guides to help them and digital tools to improve their access to Scripture.

Third, America's youngest generations are reaching for electronic devices when they want to explore the Bible. Smartphones and computers are extremely portable and allow users to search for content they couldn't easily find in a printed Bible.

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From the online church revolution to socially distanced small groups, the landscape of Christian faith and worship in America has been deeply disrupted in the past year.

**For Families.** Talk about your frustrations with reading the Bible and how you feel when it goes well. Consider watching some of The Bible Project's amazing videos to add variety to your family Bible engagement.

**For Individuals.** Talk to a friend about your experiences with the Bible and ask them to begin reading the Bible with you. Start by searching YouVersion or The Bible Project for a topic that interests you. The Bible offers wisdom for life, even life

## **Up Next Finding The New Normal (More at [GodsManual.com](http://GodsManual.com))**

In the following chapter, we will focus our attention once more on the impact that COVID-19 has had on America's relationship with the Bible, faith, and the church. We will also set the stage for a deeper investigation of the Bible's impact on people who are struggling emotionally and looking for hope

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You Learn How To Become A Better You By  
Using the Bible as A Guide.  
The Bible is your Instruction Manual For LIFE!**

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Balance To Your Life.**

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