

Balanced Belief

Am I Really A Christian?

S1:E12 (Turn to Eph 4, Col 3)

A few conversations the past few weeks with different folks

- Even if you know you're a Christian, it's good to remember and consider
- For yourself, but also to help others, and have a proper view
- **This won't be comprehensive**, but should be a good starter for thought, conversation, personal consideration

[Pray]

Stats to Start

<https://www.arizonachristian.edu/culturalresearchcenter/research/>

(thanks Pastor Byron)

Stats startling, eye opening - but also the fruit is obvious once you see the tree

Report #1

- **The worldview known as Syncretism**—the blending of elements from multiple worldviews into a customized individual philosophy of life—has dominated the worldview landscape of the United States for several decades. Its 92% incidence among American adults dwarfs the runner-up worldview, **Biblical Theism (or the biblical worldview)**, which claims only a 4% share...
- **Two out of three American adults describe themselves as Christians...**
- **Much of this worldview confusion flows from American adults redefining the nature and existence of God,**

"In the early 1990s, more than nine out of 10 American adults believed that a supernatural deity or spiritual authority existed, usually referred to as 'God.' Today, that number has dropped to just seven out of 10 Americans."

"Among those who believed that one or more gods, spiritual deities, supreme beings, higher powers, or supernatural authorities existed, three out of four identified the God of the Bible as one of those entities, ..that has plummeted from 73% to a mere 40%. Not only is that a 45 percent drop in the percentage of adults who believe in the existence of the God of the Bible, but it now represents a minority of adults living in America."

Only 60% of the people who describe themselves as Christians believe that "there is only one supreme spiritual being, He created and rules everything in existence." Although that perspective would be an indisputable belief of Bible-believing Christians, a stunningly large minority of the self-described "Christian" population (40%) believes otherwise.

A segment often considered the backbone of the Christian Church are people whose belief about their eternal destiny classifies them as born-again Christians. Barna's research labels this group "theologically defined **born-again Christians**"—**people who say they are certain that when they die they will go to Heaven for eternity, but only because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior. Yet, the research found that one out of every four of these people (23%) possess contrary views of God, seeing Him other than being the unique, singular spiritual power who created and rules everything in existence.**

Only one-half of America's self-identified Christians (53%) listed the God of the Bible as an existing and influential spiritual authority. • A large share of the self-identified Christians—nearly one-fourth (22%)—did not include Jesus Christ among the living, effectual spiritual authorities. • Although the presence and power of Satan plays an important role in Christian theology, a mere one-fifth of self-identified Christians (21%) and one-quarter of theologically-identified born-again Christians listed Satan or Lucifer as living and impactful. • Among adults who believe that Allah exists and affects lives, 60% of those are self-identified Christians. This likely relates to the prior finding that many Christians believe the names "God" and "Allah" refer to the same spiritual being.

The most disturbing outcomes, however, relate to the beliefs and worship practices of one the most crucial segments of the Christian community—**individuals who constitute the one-third of adults who qualify as theologically-defined born-again Christians.** The inconsistent and biblically untenable commitments within that segment are shocking.

- **Barely half of the born-again group (55%) says that they worship the God of the Bible.**
- Overall, even though they claim their eternal destiny has been sealed by their confession to and acceptance of Jesus Christ, **25% of the born-again segment admits to not worshipping Jesus.**
- **One out of every nine (11%) worships God but not Jesus.**
- **One-third (31%) worships Jesus but not God.**
- **Just one-third (36%) worships both God and Jesus but no other spiritual beings.**
- **One out of 12 (8%) worships not only God and/or Jesus, but also Mary and/or the prophets.**
- **One out of 14 (7%) worships God and/or Jesus in addition to one or more deities from non-Christian faiths or philosophies.**
- **All told, one out of five (21%) either worships spiritual entities other than God or Jesus, or does not worship any spiritual authorities at all**

Report #8

- **1:7 (14%) of self-described Christians view sin as the Bible does**
- **84% agree that there is such thing as sin (1 doesn't!)**
- Gen Z, Asians, LGBTQ substantially less likely to believe
- four out of every 10 reject the notion that every human being is a sinner.

- a substantial majority of those who believe in the existence of sin agree on how to define sin—nearly three-quarters of them (72%) describe it as disobedience to God. However, a majority of those who believe that sin is a reality (52%) also contend that there are no absolute sins, that is, sins that are constant, regardless of the conditions or context.
- Only half of all adults (52%) believe that everyone on Earth has sinned.

<p>Hebrews 3:13 ... the deceitfulness of sin</p> <p>Sin's very substance itself deceives you into thinking it's not sin</p> <p><i>Like eating an ice cream cone that with each lick convinces you it's not unhealthy but in fact healthy</i></p>	<p>I'm going to blame a lot of this on the American Pulpit</p> <p><i>But if the American people/church didn't have itching ears...</i></p> <p><i>2Ti 4:3-4 - For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, [because] they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn [their] ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.</i></p>
<p>As we saw, many claim to be, but really aren't "<u>Cultural Christian</u>"</p> <p>Much like many claim to be Islamic, and call the terrorists extremists - but the extremists are actually adhering to their faith</p> <p>So are you an "extremist"? In a good way?</p>	<p>On the other end of the spectrum, there are certainly believers who are worried they aren't, worried about losing their salvation. Worried they're not a Christian. That's another message.</p> <p>Just know, God wants you to be <u>secure</u> in your faith.</p>

My testimony

growing up in church, kids prayer, divorce, doing my own thing, "i'm a christian", friend's tattoo, praying but not repenting, Until Nov 13 2003

<p>First: What is salvation? Why do we need it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adam, Eve, created innocent - fallen • Kicked out of garden, no eternal life • Prevented from eternal life while in state of death 	<p>Rom 6:23 - For the wages of sin [is] death, but the gift of God [is] eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.</p> <p>Rom 3:10b - There is none righteous, no, not one;</p> <p>Works can't save us - only faith can</p>
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Jhn 3:16-21 - "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. **"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."**

1Jo 2:1b-2 -... we have an Advocate with the Father, **Jesus Christ the righteous.** And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

And how to be saved? Call on Jesus. We're the sinner. He's the righteous.

Rom 10:9-13 - that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. **For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."**

<p>Have you believed? Have you confessed?</p> <p>Confessed that you're a sinner (in general, specific perhaps), Jesus is God and alive</p>	<p>I don't even remember what I prayed</p> <p>But it was different Jesus was there Woke up not empty any more</p>
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Jhn 3:3-7 - Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless **one is born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "**Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'**

<p>So being a Christian, being saved, is truly being BORN AGAIN. <u>Have you been born again?</u></p> <p>When you were first born, you were physically born, physically alive, but spiritually dead</p> <p>You were spiritually dead, now spiritually born - <u>but it usually takes some end in your physical life to see that</u></p>	<p>How do you know a little baby is healthy? They're breathing, they're moving, they're crying, they have good color, they're eating, their diapers need changing</p> <p>So it is with a new believer Are you hungry for the word of God? Are your eyes open to a new world? Are you making noise, crying out to God? Are the old, dirty things being removed into your diaper?</p>
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*First getting saved, going to church, listening to the word, worship, didn't realize all these things
It was a new life, a new world, hear see, smell all sorts of new things
And I had been to church, grown up around church, went to a Christian school*

<p>Do you want to be baptized? Washed in your mind?</p> <p>A lot of old memories, conscience, etc. Babies and kids don't like to take baths sometimes, but they like the <u>water</u></p> <p>Eph 5:26 - that He might sanctify and cleanse her [the church/the bride] with the washing of water by the word,</p>	<p><i>Baptized at age 12...and 22 ½, it didn't come from me identifying with Jesus at age 12</i></p> <p>Baptism isn't salvation, but if you're saved you'll want to</p>
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Act 8:36-39 - Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, [here is] water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.

**Why? Because you now identify with Jesus, the God living inside of you, who saved you, and not be the old you anymore. The old you is dead.
And Thank God!**

Rom 6:4-7 - Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be [in the likeness] of [His] resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with [Him], that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.

<p>Are you a new creation?</p> <p>2Co 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone [is] in Christ, [he is] a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.</p>	<p>Do you have new, different desires? Attitudes? Goals? Dreams?</p> <p>Do you want new things? Are you still desiring the old thing? Israelites out of Egypt</p>
<p>Sanctification is a process - it's lifelong, sometimes slow, sometimes obvious, sometimes not</p> <p>Never perfect, but <u>wanting</u> to be made</p>	<p>Fruit takes time to grow (several years for an apple tree)</p> <p>Inward change out Not outward in</p>

<p>perfect in Jesus. <u>Not wanting excuses.</u></p>	
<p><i>First getting saved, pot, cursing, smoking, etc. Anger, temper, patience, etc.</i></p> <p>Instances vs. patterns What is the pattern of your life? The “practice”</p> <p>Do you still practice sin? Do you abhor it and struggle with it?</p> <p>Is it a slip up? Or regular?</p> <p>Peeling of the onion skin</p> <p>God is working on the important things, sometimes one at a time, layer by layer</p>	<p>Do you have a relationship with the Holy Spirit? He’s your guarantee</p> <p>Para, En, Epi (some believers weren’t aware in the beginning, and that’s OK, His work is evident)</p> <p>Eph 1:13-14 - In Him you also [trusted], after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.</p>
<p>We have the gift of God’s Spirit living within us. To help us. To encourage us. To enable us.</p> <p>Are you free from being a slave to sin?</p> <p>Before, we were slaves to sin. Had no choice.</p> <p><u>But with Him, we have total choice.</u></p>	<p>If we sin now, it’s because we want to. <u>Not because we have to.</u></p> <p><i>The lie of “it’s who I am”</i> <i>The lie of “it’s my heritage”</i> <i>The lie of “I’m addicted, I can’t stop”</i></p> <p>It may feel ilke that, but it’s not.</p> <p>“Just stop”</p>

1Co 10:13 - No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God [is] faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear [it].

<p>Are you changing your spiritual clothes?</p> <p>Putting off the old, putting on the new?</p> <p><i>Kids don’t realize they have stains, adults should have some level of self-aware hygiene</i></p>	<p>Turn to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ephsians 4 ● Col 3:1-17 (homework) <p>As a believer, we put forth effort to put off the old ways and put on the new ways</p> <p>Because we now actually can, from the heart, with God’s Spirit to help</p>
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<p>Are you bitter or fresh?</p> <p>Jas 3:11-12 - Does a spring send forth fresh [water] and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.</p> <p>What bubbles up out of your heart? Out of your life?</p> <p><u>You can tell what's really inside when the pressure is put on</u></p> <p>Again, instance, or pattern</p>	<p>We all fall short, we all fail, we all have times of trouble</p> <p>But what is the trajectory of your life? Is there conviction?</p> <p>And not just a guilty conscience - oh, I did wrong</p> <p>But oh, I grieved God, was a bad witness, hurt them</p> <p>And a desire for exposure and repentance Light to overcome the dark</p>
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<p>Are you seeking God's Spiritual gifts?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you want to be used by God for <u>His</u> kingdom (not your own) • To bless His church • To reach the lost 	<p>Gifts of the spirit</p> <p>Maybe you don't know what they are, study 1st Corinthians, but when you hear about them, see them in use, you'd like to do that to</p> <p><i>(and not by them like Simon the sorcerer)</i></p>
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Before you throw a party, you clean the house (and usually have to clean afterwards, too)
Similarly with the gifts of the Spirit - in order to be clearly seen, heard, used, your house needs to be cleaned up a bit, not perfect, and it happens together not just on and off one day

<p>Do you defend yourself against the Bible? Do you kick against what God and His people say?</p> <p>"Only God can judge me!" True, he is the only one who can rightfully COMDEMN you to an eternity without him - based on your acceptance or rejection of Him</p> <p>wheat and tares (Matthew 13)</p>	<p>But believers are to be fruit <u>inspectors</u> Judgment / condemnation discernment (Listen to message Matthew 7:1-6 With What Judgment)</p> <p>First with us Judgment begins at the house of God</p> <p>Paul and Corinthians, casting out man in sin - why to be saved?</p>
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But it's unloving, unchristian, to tell someone they're OK, when they're not
Tell them they're alive, when they're dead
Tell them they're going to heaven, when they're earning hell
To accept someone continuing in sin who claims they're fine with God

1Jo 1:5-10 - This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

1Jo 2:3-6, 29 - Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. ... If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

1Jo 3:7-10, 14 - Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor [is] he who does not love his brother. ... **We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.** He who does not love [his] brother abides in death.

Eph 5:11-13 - And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose [them]. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

**Not to condemn, but to rightfully separate - that they might learn to repent
And the church would learn to be holy**

**Why? Because hell is real just as much as heaven
And we don't want anyone to die and go there
And if they do, we don't want it to be on our hands
And we need to know for sure**

What got me - the slap in the face`

Lukewarmness

Jesus wants you hot or cold - he can work with either

So where are you? Are you hot for God? Let Him keep the fire burning.

Are you cold? Unaware? Now you are. Let Him turn your life around, bring light and warmth

But if you're lukewarm - let the truth slap you in the face - you're not OK.

You know the things of God, have been around them - but aren't living for God

And maybe God isn't living in you yet. If He was, there'd be evidence - his stuff would be around your house, so-to-speak

He's knocking at the door of your heart to come in...