

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN BELIEFS AND VALUES

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Everyone has a worldview, yet millions of people wonder about the practical relevance of the concept of worldview. Few Americans doubt that everyone possesses a range of religious, moral, and philosophical beliefs, but many struggle to understand how such beliefs make a difference in their lives.

Yet whether we recognize it or not, research shows there is a powerful relationship between what we believe and how we decide what is important in our lives. In other words, our worldview—how we experience, interpret, and respond to the world around us—deeply influences our values.

This is one of the most common and inescapable applications of worldview beliefs. In many significant ways a person's worldview determines their core values. A value is something we consider to be worthwhile or "of value" to us. We assign these factors priority and importance, and we act with those values in mind. And because we do what we believe, it follows that certain core beliefs shape what we view as valuable. Inevitably, we rely on those values to guide our behavior. This interplay between our beliefs and our values demonstrates the relevance of worldview in our lives.

A new research report from the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University examines the relationship between worldview and values of Americans. This new analysis integrates data and insights from two of the Center's most substantial projects: the American Worldview Inventory (conducted annually since 2020) and the America's Values Study (2022).

The report provides a unique look at the values of American adults using three segments defined by worldview and identified in the AWVI research. Barna has identified these groups as: Integrated Disciples, defined as those who possess a biblical worldview; Emergent Followers, who lean toward a biblical worldview but do not have a fully defined biblical worldview in place; and World Citizens, adults who lack all or most of the elements that typically define a biblical worldview. Three out of four American adults fall into the category of World Citizens.

The report's foundation for analyzing the relationship between worldview and values comes from the AWVI, an annual national survey of the worldview of American adults conducted by the Cultural Research Center. That annual survey shows that just 6% of adults are Integrated Disciples, 19% are Emergent Followers, and 75% are World Citizens.

While there are more than a dozen comprehensive worldviews that Americans could choose from as their dominant philosophy of life, the AWVI shows that they instead take numerous elements from these many competing worldviews and cobble them together into a highly personalized life philosophy. This produces a worldview known as Syncretism, and it is the dominant worldview of 88% of adults. Interestingly, Syncretism is not a typical worldview, characterized by a comprehensive set of ideas and related behaviors. Instead, it is a customized blend of ideas and associated lifestyle choices drawn from multiple worldview options.

The analysis combines data from the AWVI with that of a second national survey from Barna, the America's Values Study. In that study, a national sample of more than 3,700 adults were asked to respond and rank 48 different values, providing an exhaustive understanding of the core values of American adults. The survey defined "core values" as those people said they were willing to die to defend, fight to protect, or sacrifice precious resources to retain.

The data collected from those two major surveys provide the basis for this report's examination of the intersection between worldview and values.

Here is a summary of five practical insights derived from that research.

Insight #1: Most of the people who lack a biblical worldview typically have only a handful of values that they care deeply about.

When it comes to worldview, the overwhelming majority (75%) of American adults are "World Citizens." Because of the size of this worldview segment in our society, one would assume that as the World Citizens go, so goes the United States. But research shows that despite their smaller size, the other two worldview segments, especially the group known as Integrated Disciples, continue to possess outsized influence on the contours and direction of the culture.

Given their syncretistic worldview, it is not surprising that World Citizens are neither shaped nor driven by an extensive and encompassing set of deeply held values. Instead, a solid majority of World Citizens—60% or more—claim just three core values—family, personal independence, and justice.

In comparison, Emergent Followers have 28 core values and Integrated Disciples have 30. This disparity suggests that Integrated Disciples, in particular, have a well-defined and deeply shared sense of the values that are determined by their biblical worldview.

The trio of core values adopted by a solid majority of World Citizens is: family (a core value to 63% of World Citizens); personal independence (64%); and justice (63%). But holding fast to those values hardly sets them apart from the rest of the nation's adult. All three of these values are also included among the values that at least 80% of Integrated Disciples and Emergent Followers embrace.

Nation's Consensus Values, Across Worldview Segments				
Core Value	Integrated Disciples	Emergent Followers	World Citizens	U.S. Average
Family	99%	95%	63%	80%
Personal independence	89	80	64	69
Justice	90	81	63	68

Source: *American Worldview Inventory*, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University; *America's Values Study*, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University and AmericasOne, based on a sample of 3,793 American adults, conducted in 2022.

This common acceptance by all worldview segments suggests that those three values reflect the nation's consensus values—things that all Americans no matter their worldview consider to be invaluable to our lives and identity. Of course, in our highly divided culture, it is important to remember that while certain values are conceptually shared, defining those values raises serious conflicts of opinion. For example, definitions of family and justice differ quite substantially between Integrated Disciples and World Citizens.

Insight #2: World Citizens are substantially more likely than the other worldview segments to cultivate 10 particular values.

While Integrated Disciples and Emergent Followers are more likely to embrace many of the 48 values tested, 10 particular values stand out as widely embraced by a larger share of World Citizens than the more biblically inclined worldview segments of Integrated Disciples or Emergent Followers.

When comparing values choices among worldview groups, there are 10 specific values that World Citizens are far more likely to select than do Integrated Disciples. The chart below identifies those 10 values, as well as the gap between World Citizens and Integrated Disciples when it comes to selecting that factor as a core value:

Gap Between World Citizens and Integrated Disciples on 10 Key Values	
Core Value	Difference
Economic equality	32 percentage points
Cultural diversity	32
Unrestrained choice	28
Uncensored entertainment	26
Unconstrained sex	26
Universal empowerment	25
Tolerance	15
Eliminating hierarchies	15
Belonging	14
Winning	12

Source: *American Worldview Inventory*, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University; *America's Values Study*, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University and AmericasOne, based on a sample of 3,793 American adults, conducted in 2022.

A closer look at those 10 values shows them to be the kinds of preferences that are most popular among political “progressives” in the United States. On the whole, those values reflect a preference for life without limitations or boundaries. This distinctive group of values makes sense, given that the worldview of World Citizens is typically a mash-up of ideals drawn from a smorgasbord of life philosophies that place human beings, rather than God, at the center of reality; represent ways of life that reject absolute moral truths and traditional boundaries; and elevate the importance of personal freedom and happiness. The list also illustrates how far removed millions of American adults are from possessing a biblical worldview, since those 10 values do not reflect orthodox biblical standards.

Another approach to understanding the difference between values championed by Integrated Disciples and World Citizens is to examine which values each group claims they would be willing to die, fight, or sacrifice to defend (what the study defines as “core values”). This analysis identifies an enormous disparity between those two worldview segments when it comes to their core values. For example, one particular value related to the Christian faith generated a 73-point difference between the two groups, and five others produced at least a 50-point gap.

One of the fascinating observations about these massive differences is that in every single instance, Integrated Disciples are far more likely to embrace the core value in question.

Here are the biggest gaps between the two worldview segments:

Gap Between World Citizens and Integrated Disciples in Core Values	
Core Value	Difference
Christian faith	73 percentage points
Biblical morality	52
Character	52
Civic duty	51
Humility	51
Property ownership	50
Hard work	49
Religious freedom	49
Simple lifestyle	45
Financial thrift/caution	45
Opportunity	41
Individual growth	41
Control	41
Happiness	38
<i>Source: American Worldview Inventory, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University; America's Values Study, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University and AmericasOne, based on a sample of 3,793 American adults, conducted in 2022.</i>	

Once again, the dramatic differences in what matters to Integrated Disciples compared to World Citizens clarifies how deeply divided our nation has become. To an Integrated Disciple, it is virtually inconceivable that every American would not assign great value to personal character, civic duty, humility, hard work, individual growth, and happiness—and yet, the analysis shows this is clearly the case.

Historically, the core values have defined what it means to be an American, regardless of one’s religious faith, social class, generation, or ethnic heritage. One could easily conclude that tens of millions of the nation’s World Citizens are redefining not just the American Dream, but even what it means to be an American citizen.

Insight #3: Integrated Disciples and Emergent Followers are differentiated by their commitment to traditional aspects of personal goodness.

Emergent Followers tend to be self-identified Christians who are adherents to the Christian faith, but are not as committed to its biblical principles and applications as are Integrated Disciples. Many of them aspire to be more devoted to the faith, but lack the passion or motivation to make the necessary sacrifices and transformations.

Given that distinction, one might expect to see the lesser spiritual commitment and lower levels of commitment to key values among Emergent Followers to greatly affect how they live their lives. And that is the case when looking at the 17 largest statistical differences between the values of Emergent Followers and of Integrated Disciples. Emergent Followers are comparatively less committed to values that cluster around good character (e.g., kindness, character, humility); faith-centeredness (e.g., Christian faith, religious freedom); good citizenship (e.g., civic duty, patriotism); industriousness (e.g., hard work, financial thrift, economic equality); and personal boundaries (e.g., moderation, unrestrained choice, absolute moral truth, simple lifestyle).

Critical Distinctions in the Core Values of Integrated Disciples and Emergent Followers			
Core Value	Integrated Disciples	Emergent Followers	Percentage Point Difference
Cultural diversity	16%	40%	24 points
Christian faith	97	75	22
Economic equality	18	38	20
Civic duty	82	64	18
Humility	85	68	17
Universal empowerment	14	31	17
Unrestrained choice	15	32	17
Patriotism	84	68	16
Moderation	76	61	15
Simple lifestyle	81	67	14
Character	96	83	13
Hard work	90	77	13
Financial thrift/cautiousness	82	69	13
Religious freedom	96	83	13
Purpose/meaning in life	91	78	13
Absolute moral truth	77	65	12
Kindness	90	78	12

Source: American Worldview Inventory, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University; America's Values Study, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University and AmericasOne, based on a sample of 3,793 American adults, conducted in 2022.

Insight #4: Some key values fail to rise to “core value” status among even half of any of the three worldview groups examined.

Surprisingly, what might be considered as longstanding important American values are far less appealing to most Americans. In fact, a number of expected key values to the different worldview segments failed to appeal to at least half of the adults in any of the three groups studied.

For instance, the Bible emphasizes the importance of experiencing and living biblical principles in the presence and with the support of other Christians. Why, then, do most of the people who possess a biblical worldview (Integrated Disciples) fail to rate values such as “belonging” and “community” as core values?

Another curiosity is the low value associated with private enterprise. In a nation where a majority of adults say they prefer capitalism to socialism—only about one-third claim that they would prefer socialism—why do so few adults list private enterprise as a core value? Similarly, people who do not value private enterprise might be expected to value a strong government system, assuming that it will provide for their economic and commercial needs. Yet, “strong government” fared even worse as a core value among all segments.

Perhaps the low ranking of values such as belonging, community, and cultural diversity reflects in part the increased isolation through technology, diminishing the perceived value of durable relationships and consistent human interaction.

Distinctions in Core Values by Worldview Category			
Core Value	Integrated Disciples	Emergent Followers	World Citizens
Belonging	32%	38%	46%
Community	41	39	44
Cultural diversity	16	40	48
Eliminating hierarchies	25	34	40
Limited government	49	41	40
Private enterprise	42	35	39
Public recognition	45	44	19
Strong government	30	34	37
Uncensored entertainment	11	19	37
Unconstrained sex	5	15	31
Universal empowerment	14	31	39
Unrestrained choice	15	32	43
Winning	27	32	39

Source: American Worldview Inventory, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University; America's Values Study, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University and AmericasOne, based on a sample of 3,793 American adults, conducted in 2022.

Maybe the low value assigned to both “limited” and “strong” government is a sign of the ideological division challenging the nation regarding its desired role for government.

Insight #5: The relative appeal—or lack of appeal—of certain values identifies elements of weakness within the Christian Church in America.

A number of unexpected outcomes emerge within the values profile of Integrated Disciples. Despite having a biblical worldview, Integrated Disciples give lower-than-expected scores to six values typically

associated with a biblical perspective:

- **Absolute moral truth.** While 77% embracing the existence of absolute moral truth is a strong showing among Integrated Disciples—far better than the two-thirds among Emergent Followers, and half of World Citizens—this is one of the theological cornerstones of a biblical worldview and a foundation for all other theological truths and spiritual experiences. There were more than a dozen other values that 90% or more of Integrated Disciples embraced. Commitment to absolute moral truth should be among those.
- **Belonging and Community.** Roughly one-third of adults with a biblical worldview attach great value to belonging to a group. The American emphasis upon hyper-individualism might account for this seeming disinterest of committed Christians in community. But that is not a viable excuse. Jesus calls His followers to be the Church, not simply to attend a church. How could deeply devoted followers of Christ abandon the idea, much less the practice, of bonding with others who share a similar worldview and eternal destiny?

Failing to understand and accept the value of being part of a group of like-minded followers of Christ may also reflect concerns about health and functionality of local churches. According to the analysis, Integrated Disciples are not opposed to all forms of belonging and community, as demonstrated by the almost universal support they pledge to family. But developing other meaningful, faith-based relationships is clearly not as compelling for them. The vitality of the Church at-large is undermined if disciples do not pursue significant relationships with other believers in the quest to be the body of Christ on Earth.

- **Private enterprise.** The biblical economic framework clearly emphasizes people working hard, producing high-quality goods of value, and reaping the fruits of their labor. In recent years, however, the barrage of anti-capitalist campaigns and leaders espousing socialist ideology has taken a toll on the economic understanding of believers. Few churches advocate for capitalism or even personal industriousness. Perhaps more attention needs to be given to biblical teaching about economics and finances.
- **Rule of law.** Barely more than half of all Integrated Disciples embrace the rule of law as a critical value. Although the scriptures make it clear that God is a ruler who establishes laws, institutes order through them, and models consistency in His application of justice, a large share of His most devoted followers are either confused or unpersuaded about the importance of the consistent administration of fair laws. Tellingly, there is broader support among Integrated Disciples for personal independence, comfort, control, and convenience than for the rule of law. That parallels the trend in recent years of Americans diminishing the authority and grandeur of God in favor of the wisdom and reliability of humankind.
- **Humility.** Nearly half of all Integrated Disciples highly value public recognition. We live in a society in which technology encourages us to gain the attention and approval of the world. In contrast, the Bible encourages us to be humble and to not seek the applause of the world for doing what is right. Our approval and esteem is to come from God, not the fickle notions of mankind.

Values as a Growth Tool

According to George Barna, who directed the research for the Cultural Research Center and AmericasOne, the research suggests that understanding and discussing the role of values in our lives could spawn an era of spiritual growth.

“World Citizens constitute three out of every four adults in this country,” Barna noted. “They also represent more than three-quarters of all people who have not accepted Jesus Christ as their savior. Most non-Christians in America tell us they are unimpressed with the arguments about Christianity they have heard from believers.”

“Perhaps if Christian leaders were less focused on transmitting information about their faith than building relationships with outsiders, non-believers would be more interested in Christianity. Focusing on building relationships would enable them to demonstrate biblical truths and share their core values rooted in those truths. Dialogue regarding core values could become a pathway to a deeper spiritual conversation about the source of our values and their influence on our behavior,” Barna explained.

Barna noted that the differences in values between Integrated Disciples and World Citizens reflect the nature of the culture war gripping America. He believes that if Integrated Disciples understand the differences in people’s values, they will have a better opportunity to articulate why and how biblical values produce positive and satisfying life outcomes.

The research also motivated Barna to address how Integrated Disciples can assist Emergent Followers in becoming more deeply committed to biblical faith.

“People grow spiritually under specific conditions and in response to specific stimuli. The more we can facilitate genuine relationships between Integrated Disciples and Emergent Followers, the better the chance of enabling spiritual growth among the latter,” Barna said. “That growth would be based upon frequent time spent together, honest dialogue, mutual accountability, and consistent behavioral modeling by Integrated Disciples. Observations and discussion about our values are terrific tools to include in that process.”

About the Research:

The data referred to in this report are taken from the American Worldview Inventory (AWVI), an annual survey that evaluates the worldview of the U.S. adult population (age 18 and over). Begun as an annual tracking study in 2020, the assessment is based on several dozen worldview-related questions that fall within eight categories of worldview application, measuring both beliefs and behavior.

The American Worldview Inventory 2021 is the first-ever national survey conducted in the United States measuring the incidence of both biblical and competing worldviews. It was undertaken in February 2021 among a nationally representative sample of 2,000 adults, providing an estimated maximum sampling error of approximately plus or minus 2 percentage points, based on the 95% confidence interval. Additional levels of indeterminable error may occur in surveys based upon non-sampling activity.

About the Cultural Research Center:

The Cultural Research Center (CRC) at Arizona Christian University is located on the school's campus in Glendale, Arizona, in the Phoenix metropolitan area. In addition to conducting the annual American Worldview Inventory, CRC also introduced the ACU Student Worldview Inventory (SWVI) in 2020. That survey is administered to every ACU student at the start of each academic year, and a final administration is undertaken among students just prior to their graduation. The ACU SWVI enables the University to track the worldview development of its student body and to make changes to that process as recommended by the research. The Cultural Research Center also conducts nationwide research studies to understand the intersection of faith and culture and shares that information with organizations dedicated to facilitating the positive transformation of American culture with biblical truth.

CRC is guided by George Barna, Director of Research, and Tracy Munsil, Executive Director. Like ACU, CRC embraces biblical Christianity. The Center works in cooperation with a variety of Bible-centric, theologically conservative Christian ministries and remains politically non-partisan. Access to the results from past surveys conducted by CRC, as well as additional information about the Cultural Research Center, is accessible at www.culturalresearchcenter.com. Further information about Arizona Christian University is available at www.arizonachristian.edu.

About AmericasOne

AmericasOne is a community of values-driven individuals who are seeking to grow their families and businesses and would like to share their ideas and challenges in a supportive and trusted environment. AmericasOne is committed to equipping and engaging individuals and families who want meaningful, thoughtful reform that puts principles, not politicians, first. Members get the resources needed to advance the cause of freedom, free economic choice, and the core values that make America exceptional.

AmericasOne was founded by Marc Nuttle, a lawyer, author, consultant, and businessman. Nuttle has represented and advised presidents of the United States, leaders of foreign countries, state officials, and corporations. He has worked on government policy and is an expert at understanding, analyzing, and predicting economic and cultural trends. For more information on AmericasOne and the America's Values research project, visit www.AmericasOne.com or visit the [AmericasOne Facebook](#) page.