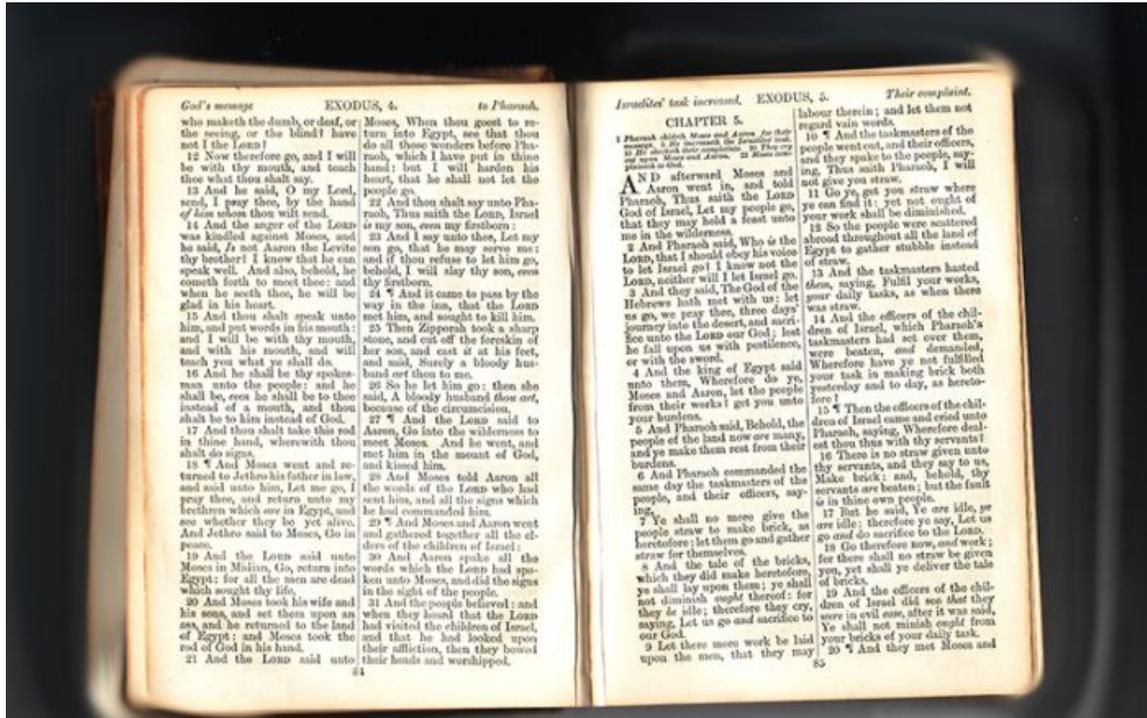


The Bible in American Life



A National Study by

The Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

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Introduction

In 2011, the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture began an interdisciplinary study of the Bible in American life. We are particularly interested in how people use the Bible in their personal daily lives and how other influences, including religious communities and the Internet, shape individuals' use of scripture. Employing both quantitative methods (the General Social Survey and the National Congregations Study) and qualitative research (historical studies for context), we hope to provide an unprecedented perspective on the Bible's role outside of worship, in the lived religion of a broad cross-section of Americans. Such data will help scholars seeking to understand changes in American Christianity. The study will also be invaluable to clergy and seminary professors seeking more effective ways to preach and teach about the Bible in an age saturated with information and technology.

Purpose of the Study

There is a paradox in American Christianity. According to the General Social Survey, nearly eight in ten Americans regard the Bible as either the literal word of God or as inspired by God. At the same time, other surveys have revealed—and recent books have analyzed—surprising gaps in Americans' biblical literacy. These discrepancies reveal American Christians' complex relationship to their scripture, a subject that is widely acknowledged but rarely investigated.

This lack of understanding of how, where, when, and why Americans use the Bible is frustrating for a variety of people. Clergy devoted to teaching parishioners about Christian scripture and how to apply it to their lives often find an audience quick to revere the Bible but slow to read it for themselves—at least in a fashion beyond reading into it what they want it to say. Seminary professors struggle to help the next generation of ministers convey the Bible's relevance and meaning in a world where online sources compete with the traditional authority of the church. Social science and humanities scholars attempt to understand the relationship between religious beliefs and practices of individuals, on the one hand, and congregational or denominational teachings that are sometimes at odds with those beliefs and practices, on the other. All three of these—clergy, seminary faculty, and university professors—struggle with the dearth of research on Bible reading as an aspect of lived religion.

This project seeks to provide the first large-scale investigation of the Bible in American life. The project is driven by the recognition that, though the Bible has been central to Christian practice throughout American history, many important questions remain unanswered in scholarship, including how people have read the Bible for themselves outside of worship, how denominational and parachurch publications have influenced interpretation and application, and how clergy and congregations have influenced individual understandings of scripture. These

questions are even more pressing today, as denominations are losing much of their traditional authority, technology is changing people's reading and cognitive habits, and subjective experience is continuing to eclipse textual authority as the mark of true religion. Understanding both the past and the future of Christian communities in the United States depends, even if only in part, on a serious analysis of how these cultural shifts are affecting Americans' relationship to the Bible.

Description of the Surveys

We set out to learn how ordinary Americans use scripture, and in the United States, scripture use overwhelmingly means Bible use. Our main goal was to learn about individuals' personal use: do they read the Bible outside formal services and, if so, how and why? But we were also interested in other aspects of Bible use. We wanted to learn more about the use of scripture in American congregations. And we wanted to learn how contemporary Bible use fits into American historical patterns at the individual and congregational level. Are we seeing big changes, or is there a recognizable continuum on which we can understand contemporary use in its appropriate context?

To learn about scripture use among Americans, we placed questions on two large surveys—one for individuals, and one for congregations. The General Social Survey (GSS) is conducted every other year by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. Largely funded by the National Science Foundation, it has collected information on Americans' demographics and attitudes since 1972. We commissioned questions in the 2012 survey asked of 1551 people who had also responded to the GSS in 2010 (see Appendix A). Our questions appeared alongside many others that helped us distinguish among groups of people, including denominational affiliation, age, gender, race, education levels, income, political persuasion, region, etc. This gave us deeper insights into Bible reading in relation to other social factors.

To learn about Bible use in congregations, we placed questions on the National Congregations Study III (see Appendix B). The NCS has gathered information about American congregations since 1998. Drawing its sample from the congregations named by GSS respondents, the NCS III provides the best available data on American congregations. This survey questions representatives of congregations from across the religious spectrum, but we limit our attention to Christian churches. We included questions on the translation used, memorization, and how the Bible is employed in services, including in Christian education classes. While our study focuses on Bible usage outside of services, these data help us understand the context of Bible readers' behavior outside of formal worship.

Historical and Cultural Contexts

In order to provide historical and cultural contexts for the sociological data gathered in the surveys, we asked several scholars from different disciplines to read and react to early drafts of the report. Their work helped to add nuance and perspective throughout. Additionally, in order to flesh out the data and brief analyses offered here, the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture is hosting a conference, “The Bible in American Life,” in Indianapolis from August 6 to 9, 2014. Papers from various perspectives and disciplines will be given, thus deepening contexts for the work presented here.

Limitations of this Study

While we are interested in whether and how scripture is used by Americans, we make no theological judgments or normative claims about our findings. It is important to remember that the Bible will play a greater or lesser role in the lives of American Christians according to their religious traditions, the regions they live in, and other social factors. Christians in “Biblicist” traditions are most likely to make individual scripture reading a major part of their religious lives. For those from more liturgical denominations, Bible reading may appear to be more limited to worship services; however, for the liturgical churches, much more of the Bible is read in services and, in a much more systematic manner, covering the broadest range of the Bible’s contents. We are fully aware of the various types of Christians who practice in the United States. This study of individual Bible reading is not meant to judge or discriminate among them; rather, our purpose is to understand whether and how scripture is used by Christians in the United States in their daily lives apart from worship, especially as that practice is related to other aspects of American life.

About the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture

The Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture was established in 1989 to explore the connection between religion and other aspects of American culture. It is a research and public outreach institute that supports the ongoing scholarly discussion of the nature, terms, and dynamics of religion in America. As a program of the IU School of Liberal Arts at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), the Center pursues its aim as part of the mission of humanities and social science learning. It seeks to elevate among students, faculty, and the larger American public the understanding of the influence of religion in the lives of people. For more information about the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture and its programs, please visit its website at www.raac.iupui.edu.

Research and programs at the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture are supported by external grants from public and private sources, as well as philanthropic gifts. The

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Executive Summary

“The Bible in American Life” is a national study by the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, which is located at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. The purpose of the study is to understand better how Americans use the Bible in their personal daily lives and how other influences, including religious communities and the Internet, shape individuals’ use of scripture. The study discovered these key facts, along with others described in the report.

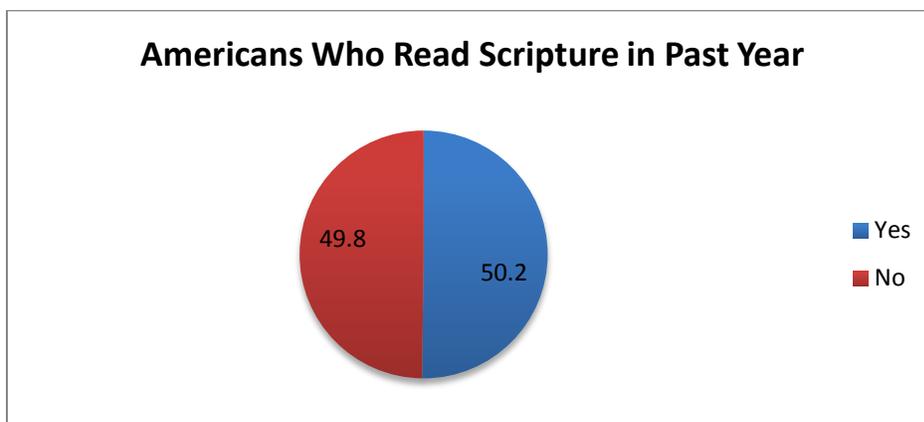
- There is a 50/50 split among Americans who read *any form of scripture* in the past year and those who did not. Among those who did, women outnumber men, older people outnumber younger people, and Southerners exceed those from other regions of the country.
- Among those who read any form of scripture in the past year, 95% named the Bible as the scripture they read. All told, this means that 48% of Americans read the Bible at some point in the past year. Most of those people read at least monthly, and a substantial number—9% of all Americans—read the Bible daily.
- Despite the proliferation of Bible translations, the King James Version is the top choice—and by a wide margin—of Bible readers.
- The strongest correlation with Bible reading is race, with African Americans reading the Bible at considerably higher rates than others.
- Half of those who read the Bible in the past year also committed scripture to memory. About two-thirds of congregations in America hold events for children to memorize verses from the Bible.
- Among Bible readers, about half had a favorite book, verse, or story. Psalm 23, which begins, “The Lord is my shepherd...” was cited most often, followed by John 3:16.
- Bible readers consult scripture for personal prayer and devotion three times more than to learn about culture war issues such as abortion, homosexuality, war, or poverty.
- There are clear differences among Bible readers consulting scripture for specific reasons. Age, income, and education are key factors.
- Those reading the Bible frequently consult it on culture war issues more than two times the rate as those who read it less frequently.
- Less than half of those who read the Bible in the past year sought help in understanding it. Among those who did, clergy were their top source; the Internet was the least cited source.
- Among Bible readers, 31% read it on the Internet and 22% use e-devices.
- Bible reading differences among religious traditions followed predictably the historic divides between Protestants and Catholics, and between white conservative and white moderate/liberal Protestants. However, reading practices defy some stereotypes about certain groups.

1. A Nation Divided

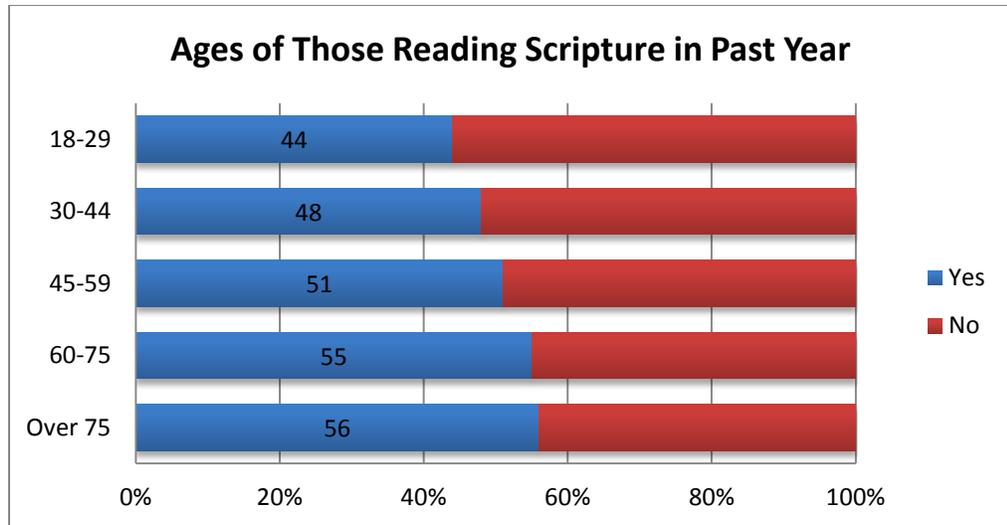
Scripture Reading in the United States

There are many ways to read or use scripture, but we were especially interested in learning how many people read scripture on their own outside of worship services. This is not to discount the use of scripture in worship—which we also examined—or to ignore references to scripture in law, literature, or popular media. But we wanted to know, “Who reads scripture and how often do they do it?” As one might expect, scripture reading in America is overwhelmingly Bible reading, so we begin by asking about *all* scripture and then turn quickly to the Bible because of its dominant position.

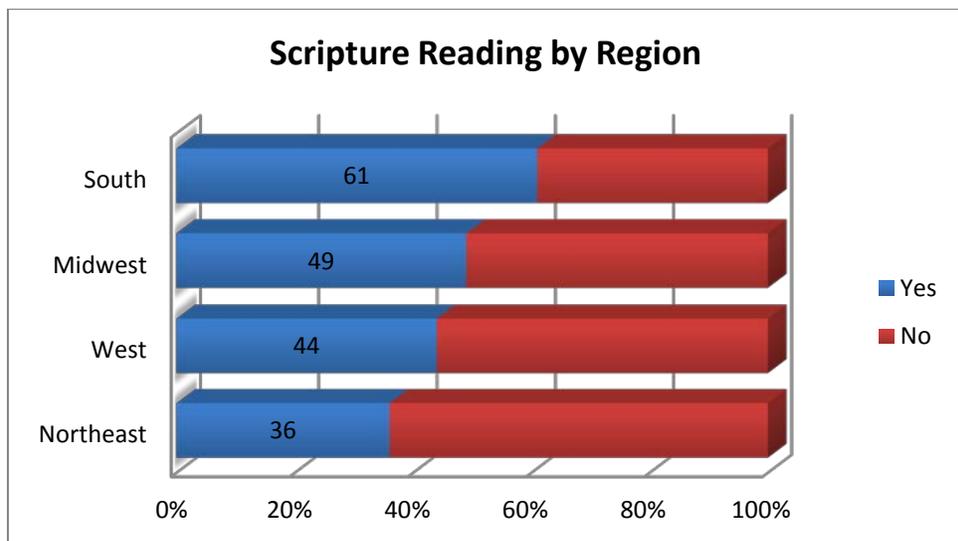
1. The first question to individuals—the question on which all other results depend—was simply this: ***“Within the last year, have you read the Bible, Torah, Koran or other religious scriptures, not counting any reading that happened during a worship service?”*** The nation is divided almost equally between those who read any scripture in the past year and those who did not.



2. Among most faiths and denominations in the United States, women constitute the greater portion of congregants and attendees. This gender difference can also be seen among those who read scripture individually, outside formal services: 56% of women and 39% of men said they read scripture individually in the past year.
3. There are also differences in age. For all scriptures, older people read more than younger people do.



4. Regional differences appear. The regional demographics of scripture readers closely align with the regional distribution of race and religious traditions, both of which are discussed later in the report.



Bible Reading in the United States

While it is important to know about all types of scripture reading in the United States, most of this report concerns those who identified the Bible as the scripture they read, which is 48% of the total U.S. population.

This split on Bible reading is fascinating because we can look at so many characteristics of people on two roughly equal sides. For instance, the United States is frequently portrayed as a land of conservative, even fundamentalist, beliefs about the Bible, so one might reasonably

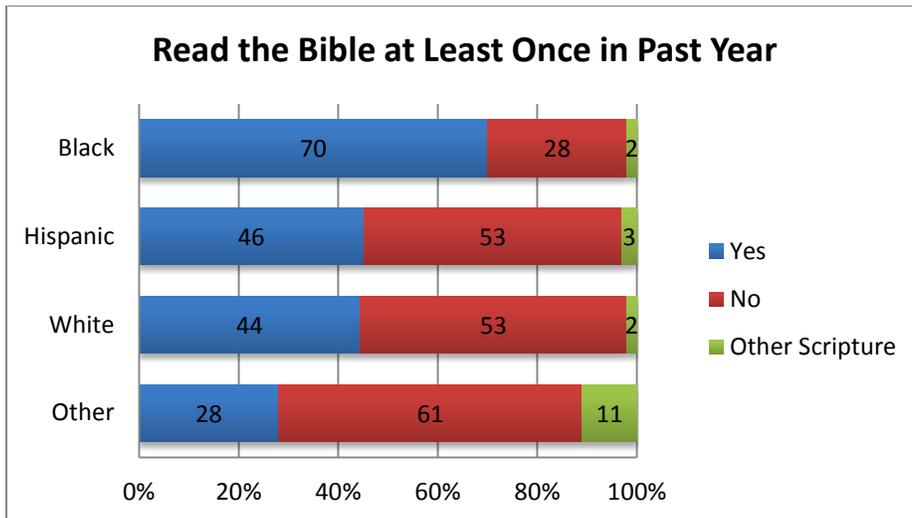
assume that the half who have read the Bible in the past year are the religious conservatives or fundamentalists. But it might be better simply to say they are *more* religiously conservative than the population as a whole. In fact, 15% of those who have *not* read *any* scripture in the past year still think the Bible is the “inerrant Word of God,” and another 50% of those who have not read scripture think of the Bible as the “divinely inspired Word of God.” In other words, two-thirds of Americans who do not read any scripture still have a very high view of the Bible.

Feelings About the Bible

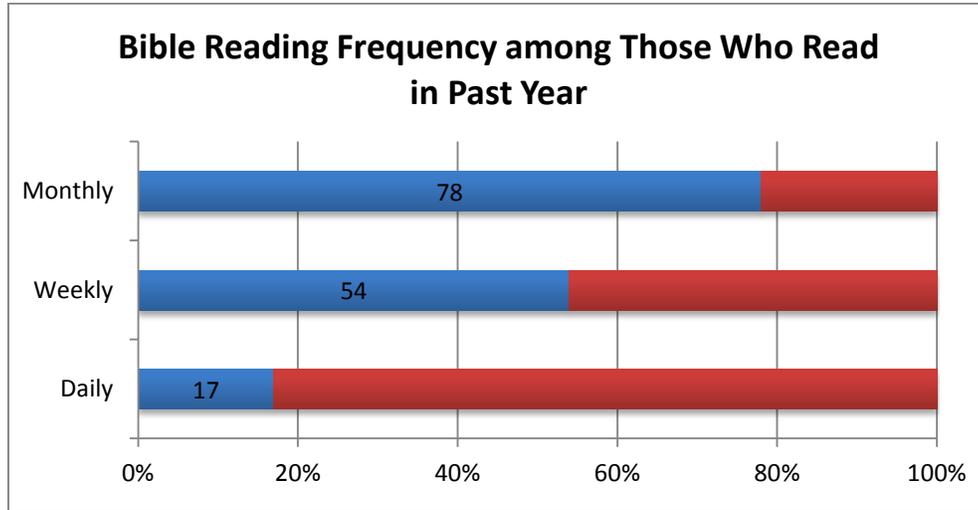
In the past year, have you read the Bible outside of a worship service?	Inerrant Word of God	Inspired Word of God	Book of Fables	Other
Yes	45%	46%	9%	1%
No	15%	50%	33%	2%

This reinforces what religion scholars knew already: *Americans have a very high view of the Bible—they think of it as inerrant or at least divinely inspired—whether they read it or not.* As Paul Gutjahr, one the advisors of the study, said, “There is an interesting connection here between the fact that one need not necessarily read the Word of God regularly to deem it divinely inspired. There is a separation here between belief and practice. A strong belief in the status of the Bible does not necessarily dictate regular reading of that same Bible. In that sense, the Bible takes on a sort of sacred totemic value that might be less instrumental in terms of reading practices than one might originally think.”

Of course, people who *have* read the Bible in the past year have views of it that are higher still. Among them, 45% think it is the “inerrant Word of God” and 46% think it is “inspired.” What else can we say about those who did read the Bible at least once in the past year? Most importantly, 70% of black people said they read the Bible at least once, a rate much higher than for any other group. Meanwhile, 44% of whites (non-Hispanic) and 46% of people who identified themselves as Hispanic said they had read it.



Because the question “Within the past year, have you read...?” hardly constitutes a standard of intense scripture reading, we also asked those who answered “yes” to tell us about their scripture reading in the past 30 days. While these frequencies apply to all scripture readers, the frequencies for “Bible readers” are essentially the same. The number of people who read other scriptures is too small to make meaningful comparisons even in a very good sample such as this.

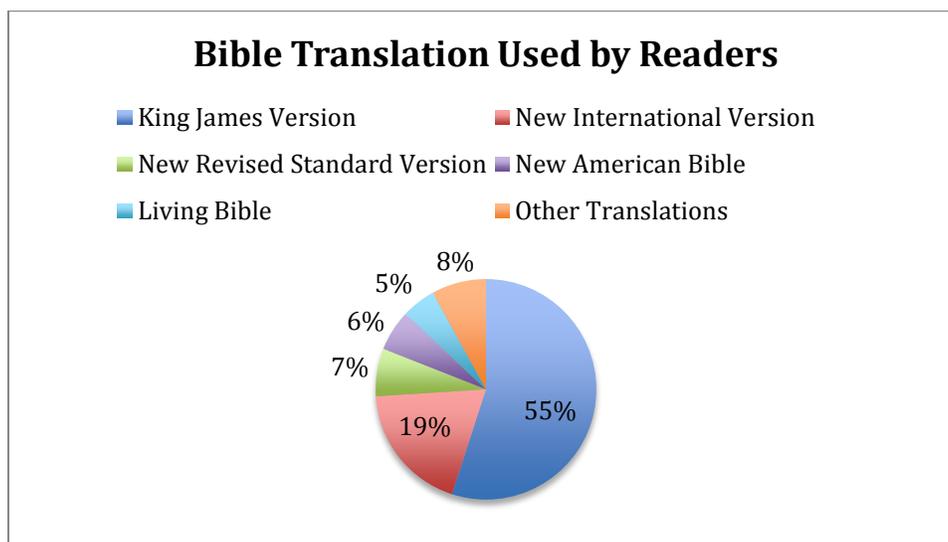


In summary, roughly half of Americans have read scripture outside of worship in the past year. For 95% of those, the Bible is the scripture they read. Most of those people read at least monthly, and a substantial number—9% of all Americans—read every day. Women were more likely to read than men, older people were more likely to read than younger, southerners were more likely to read than those of any other region, and black people were more likely to read than those of any other race. Even Americans who do not read the Bible tend to have a high view of it, but, not surprisingly, those who do read it have a higher view still—or put another way, those with a higher view are even more likely to read it.

2. Which Version of the Bible?

Most Americans who use the Bible in their everyday lives read it in translation from the original Hebrew and Greek. Since the earliest English-speaking settlements in America, the Protestant King James Bible (1611) has had a special place in the culture. Yet huge advances in biblical scholarship led to an explosion of new Bible versions by the twentieth century. These included the Revised Standard Version (1952) and its successor, the New Revised Standard Version (1990), both sponsored by the National Council of Churches (an ecumenical coalition of Protestant denominations that share a moderate to liberal stance on social issues), and the New International Version (1978), published by Zondervan (a conservative evangelical press).¹ The NIV quickly became so popular among evangelicals that in 1986 it overtook the King James Bible as the bestselling translation.² Since then, the NIV has been published in a variety of study editions catering to different niche markets, including the *NIV Women’s Devotional Bible* (1990), the *NIV Men’s Devotional Bible* (1993), the *NIV Teen Study Bible* (2004), the *NIV Couples’ Devotional Bible* (1994), and the *NIV Engaged Couples Bible* (2012).

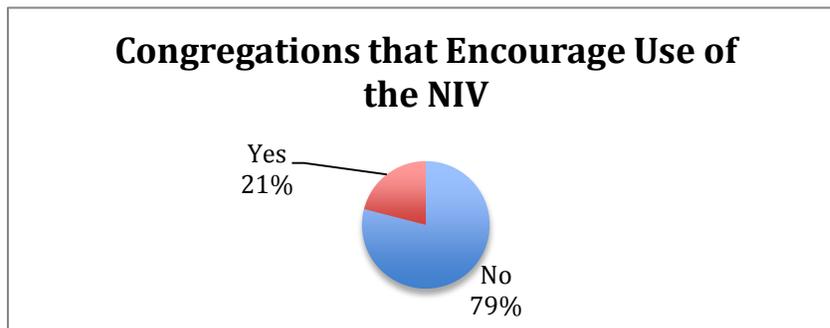
Though the NIV’s bestselling status has been driven in part by the multi-million-dollar evangelical publishing industry, we wondered whether Americans actually choose to read the NIV more than other Bibles. On the GSS, therefore, we asked the self-identified Bible readers: “What translation of the Bible do you most often read? Is it the King James Version, New International Version, New American Bible, New Revised Standard Version, Living Bible, or some other version?”



¹ For an explanation of the liberal and conservative ideologies behind the RSV and NIV, respectively, see Peter J. Thuesen, *In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles over Translating the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 67-144.

² Paul C. Gutjahr, “From Monarchy to Democracy: The Dethroning of the King James Bible in the United States,” in Hannibal Hamlin and Norman W. Jones, eds., *The King James Bible after 400 Years: Literary, Linguistic, and Cultural Influences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 164.

On the NCS, we asked: “Does your congregation encourage people to use the New International Version of the Bible rather than other translations?”



As the graphs above show, about one-fifth of both individual respondents and congregations either use or encourage the use of the NIV. Among congregations, approximately 40% report using the KJV in worship and 10% the New Revised Standard Version (the translation adopted for use in some mainline Protestant lectionaries). The percentages for other translations are all in the single digits.

Clearly, then, the King James Bible is far from dead, since more than half of individual respondents and two-fifths of congregations still prefer it. The percentage of KJV readers among black respondents on the GSS is even higher, 79%, compared to 51% of white respondents, including 58% of white Protestants in traditionally conservative denominations. The GSS also revealed that 69% of respondents who make less than \$25,000 read the KJV, compared to 44% of those making \$75,000 or more. Similarly, 72% of respondents with less than a high school education read the KJV, compared to 33% of those with a graduate degree.

The full reasons for the KJV’s enduring popularity remain to be investigated by scholars. Is the version’s appeal mostly aesthetic—a preference for the way familiar passages sound? The archaic diction of the KJV lends a certain grandeur to favorite texts (“behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy,” KJV) that may be missing from modern versions (“see—I am bringing you good news of great joy,” NRSV). Or do particular denominational cultures account for much of the KJV’s popularity—its venerable status in black churches, for example? Some groups’ attachment to the KJV may be theologically motivated; witness the “King James Only” movement, which claims that the KJV alone corresponds to the literal words of God.³ Interestingly, of KJV readers, 53% responded that the Bible is the literal word of God, while only 39% of NIV readers agreed with this statement. At the same time, the GSS revealed that people who read the NIV are more likely to have read the Bible individually at least weekly (four days or more in the past 30 days). Of NIV readers, 70% read weekly, compared to 54% of KJV readers.

³ An overview by an opponent of “KJV-Onlyism” is James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust the Modern Translations?* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1995).

This may be related in part to the aforementioned heavy marketing of the NIV in niche devotional Bibles designed to encourage daily use.

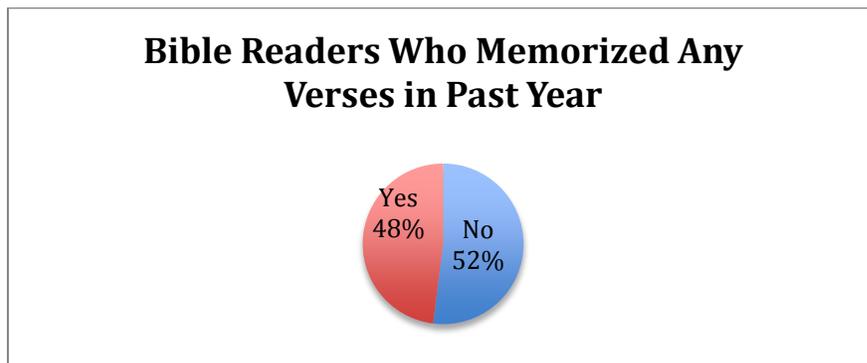
Yet the continued prevalence of the KJV, despite the welter of up-to-date competitors, is a major finding, according to project advisor Mark Noll. “Although the bookstores are now crowded with alternative versions, and although several different translations are now widely used in church services and for preaching, the large presence of the KJV testifies to the extraordinary power of this one classic English text,” Professor Noll commented. “It also raises most interesting questions about the role of religious and linguistic tradition in the make-up of contemporary American culture.” Project advisor Sylvester Johnson also remarked on the peculiar cultural power of the King James Bible, noting that its language seems to function for many Americans as “a type of lingua sacra or sacred dialect.”

3. Bible Memorization and Views of Scripture

In the Protestant-dominated culture of nineteenth-century America, the memorization of Bible verses was commonplace. Mark Twain satirized the practice in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), recounting the fate of a boy who recited three thousand verses without stopping: “[T]he strain upon his mental faculties was too great, and he was little better than an idiot from that day forth.”⁴ Bible memorization was theologically important for Protestants because of their adherence to the dictum of “scripture alone,” which meant that the book, not the church, was the preeminent religious authority. Memorized verses also furnished a ready source of comfort in affliction. The American Bible Society distributed by the thousands a little tract entitled *Where to Look in the Bible*. It suggested chapters and verses for a variety of life situations, including starting a new job, facing temptation, lapsing in faith, or fearing death.

Yet with some other polls showing that Americans have little knowledge of the Bible, we wondered if individuals or congregations still memorize scripture passages. A highly publicized Gallup poll in 2005, for example, revealed that fewer than half of the American teenagers surveyed knew that Jesus turned water into wine at the Cana wedding, nearly two-thirds could not identify a quotation from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, and about one in ten thought Moses was one of Jesus’ twelve disciples.⁵

On the GSS we asked the self-identified Bible readers: “In the past year, have you memorized any Bible verses?”

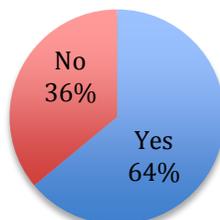


On the NCS, we focused the question on children: “In the past 12 months, have there been any events during which children from your congregation recited scripture from memory?”

⁴ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticisms*, ed. Beverly Lyon Clark (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 29.

⁵ “Poll Finds Teens Don’t Know Bible” *Chicago Tribune*, April 29, 2005.

Congregations with Bible Memorization Events for Children



The percentage of verse memorizers among Bible readers (48%) equates to roughly a fourth of the American population as a whole, or nearly 80 million people. Memorization is roughly equal among men and women, and is highest among black respondents (69%). Among white respondents, 51% of conservative Protestants said they memorized verses, while 31% of moderate/liberal Protestants said they did. Similarly, the NCS revealed that 73% of white evangelical congregations hold memorization events while 46% of white moderate/liberal congregations do. The inverse relationship between income/education and use of the King James Version is repeated here, as respondents of higher income and education show lower rates of scripture memorization. Among individuals with less than a high school education, 57% commit scripture passages to memory, compared to only 30% of persons with a graduate degree.

Rates of Bible memorization are one measure of the Bible’s authority for individuals and congregations. Another classic barometer, included on both the NCS and GSS, was some form of the question of whether respondents consider the Bible the literal word of God. On the NCS, in answer to the question, “Does your congregation consider the Bible to be the literal and inerrant word of God?” fully 83% responded yes. On the GSS we found that 77% of all participants regard the Bible as either the literal, inerrant word of God (29%) or the inspired word of God (48%). Views of scripture were highest among black respondents on the GSS, with 50% regarding the Bible as the literal word of God, compared with 45% of Hispanic respondents and 23% of white respondents. On income and education, 42% of individuals living in households making less than \$25,000 regard the Bible as inerrant, while only 20% of people living in households making \$75,000 or more do. Of individuals with less than a high school education, 52% are inerrantists; only 10% of those with a graduate degree are.

As reported earlier, high views of the Bible are not confined to persons who actually read it. Of the 50% of Americans who have not read scripture at all in the past year, 15% consider the Bible to be the literal, inerrant word of God and 50% consider it to be the inspired word of God. In

other words, fully two-thirds of non-Bible readers (65%) have a high view of scriptural truth and authority. This suggests that the Bible's outsized status in the culture transcends (and is separable from) any theologically defined fundamentalism since a genuine biblical fundamentalist would presumably revere the Bible and read it too.

4. Favorite Books or Stories

We asked the 48% of people who had read the Bible at least once outside of worship in the past year whether they had a favorite verse or story. Just over half of those—or roughly a quarter of the total population—said they did.

Verses from the Book of Psalms, or Psalms in its entirety, were named much more often than anything else (about a quarter of those with a favorite said this). Not surprisingly, Psalm 23—which begins “the Lord is my shepherd”—was the most popular. It is possible this passage was named most often simply because it is so frequently memorized or quoted. But it is worth noting that this soothing chapter, which for centuries has been read aloud at funerals and in other times of trouble across Christian cultures, fits well with another of our findings: more people read the Bible for personal prayer and devotion than for any other reason. (See Section 6 of this report.) Little surprise, then, that they take solace in this extremely well known passage from Hebrew scripture.

Historian Mark Noll did not find this surprising. “The Bible has historically been a source of great comfort and consolation for those who read it regularly, or who turn to it in times of crisis. This historical usage of scripture seems to have continued, and with surprising strength, into the present.” Project advisor Thomas Davis reminds us, “Historically, this may be explained for Protestants, anyway, by Luther, Calvin, and other early reformers, all of whom held the Psalms up as special—indeed, elevating it practically to the status of Gospel.”

After Psalms, the most cited response was the Book of John, especially John 3:16. Again, this passage is often repeated in popular culture. Readers of a certain age will remember seeing signs that read “John 3:16” at sporting events all over America, and might even associate them with (Rock’n’) Rollen Stewart and his multicolored wig. It is a famous verse but it also fits the pattern of finding comfort and consolation, in addition to being a tool for evangelism. The verse, “For God so loved the world that He sent his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life,” is an assurance. It offers people a promise that many find supportive when the going gets hard.

The pattern seems clear. Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” is mentioned frequently, as is the story of David and Goliath, another place where God helps someone overcome disadvantage.

On the other hand, well-known stories that are not about gaining support or consolation are mentioned much less frequently. The story of Jesus’s birth, for instance, plays as large a role in American popular culture as any, but it was only cited by a handful of people. Paul’s letters are mentioned only infrequently despite their importance (especially his Letter to the Romans) in American evangelicalism. The Book of Revelation is mentioned infrequently despite the popular

imagery surrounding the apocalypse. In fact, the Book of Ruth—another example of consolation and hope, especially for women—is mentioned more often than the Book of Revelation. Perhaps consolation is not the only concern. As Thomas Davis helpfully reminds us, “In much of the literature, it is also about a type of active perseverance and love that may be at odds with ‘consolation and hope,’ especially as those two words together evoke a sort of passivity, a patient waiting, that may not be at the heart of Ruth.”

The connections are suggestive and strong: Poorer people read the Bible on their own more frequently than richer ones. Black people read it on their own more than white people. Women read it on their own more than men. And among all people, personal prayer and devotion is the reason given by the most people for reading scripture. None of these *proves* these same people are reading the Bible to gain inspiration, hope, consolation, and perseverance, but since the abovementioned passages are, by far, the ones most often cited, the connection between readers and what is most often read seems clear enough.

Early twentieth-century theories of religion, often influenced by Freud and Marx, viewed all religious activity as an otherworldly response to present-world deprivation. That reductive view of religion has largely been discounted. However, it is possible, even likely, that *some* religious activity is geared toward spiritual and emotional comfort, and individual Bible reading seems to be one such activity.

Similarly, contemporary American religion is often described as “therapeutic.” One need not reduce all religious ideas and activities to “therapy” to acknowledge that *some* religious ideas and activities are therapeutic and, again, it would not be surprising to find that this is especially true at the level of individual activity. As project advisor Amy Plantinga Pauw says, “Evangelical Bible study is often very individually and therapeutically oriented. ‘What does this verse mean to me?’ Scripture is a companion in the journey of faith, providing strength and consolation in difficult moments.” If others use the Bible less for this purpose, Pauw explains, “perhaps it is because seeking external therapeutic help for troubled relationships is more socially acceptable to liberal Protestants, Catholics, and those with no religious affiliation.”

5. Race

Throughout this report, we see many different factors that are positively associated with Bible reading outside of worship. Older people are more likely to have read it in the past year. Protestants are more likely than Catholics. People who make less than \$75,000 are more likely than those who make more. Southerners are more likely than people from any other region.

But the strongest correlation with Bible reading is race. Specifically, black people read the Bible at a higher rate than people of other races, and by a considerable margin. As we saw in Section 1, 70% of all blacks said they read the Bible outside of worship at least once in the last year, compared to 44% for whites, 46% for Hispanics, and 28% for all other races.

While the role of race and the Bible reading practices of African Americans are discussed throughout this report, several general findings must be underscored here. Of those who have read scripture in the past year, 68% of black people have memorized some passage, compared to 40% for whites and 55% for Hispanics. Most clearly, black people take a more conservative view of the Bible as they read it. Out of all respondents, 50% of blacks view the Bible as the “inerrant word of God.” This is more than twice the rate for white people.

These results at the individual level mirror what we found at the congregational level. If all black congregations—those in which at least 80% of the attendees are black—are counted together as a group, they are as biblically conservative as white conservative Protestants. Approximately 98% of all black congregations report that their members regard the Bible as inerrant. Three-fourths (75%) of all black congregations held an event in the past year where children were encouraged to recite scripture from memory.

The subset of white congregations categorized as conservative/fundamentalist has numbers approaching black congregations’ level of confidence in biblical authority, but it is worth noting that this similarity is between the most biblically conservative set of white congregations, on the one hand, and *all* black congregations on the other. Nowhere else in our data is there such a clear linkage between one descriptive variable—self-identification by race—and such a high level of interaction with the Bible.

Black Christians read the Bible outside of worship at rates as high as or higher than conservative/fundamentalist white Protestants, and higher than any other religious tradition, but there are significant differences in *why* black Christians read.

On some of these—personal relationships, wealth, and learning about the future—it is worth noting that Hispanics (both Catholic and Protestant) read the scripture for reasons similar to black Protestants. But this comparison to Hispanics, like the earlier comparison to white conservative Protestants, helps make the point. On most individual measures, black people are

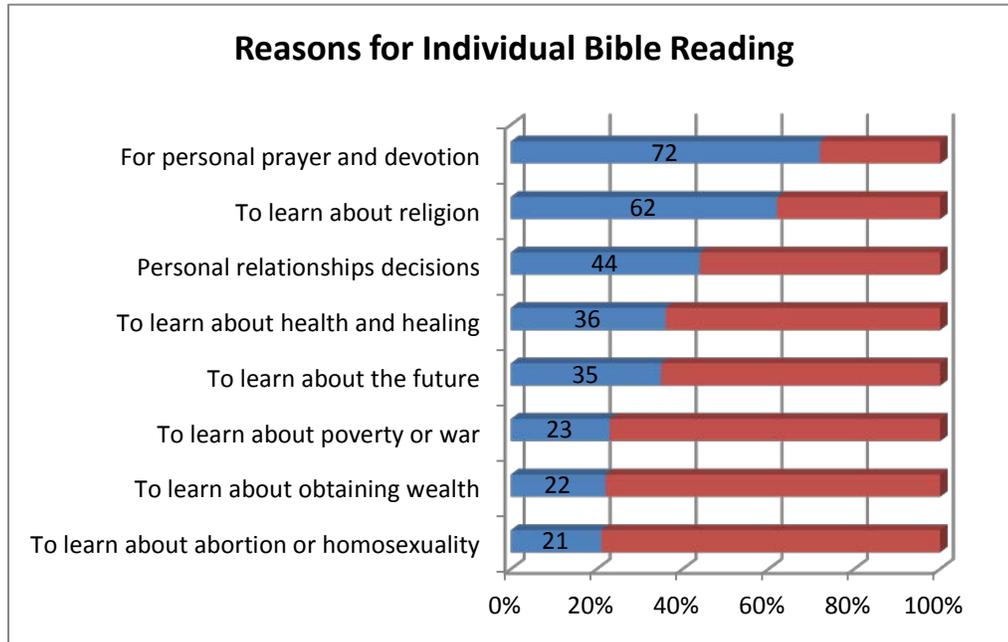
the most literal and most engaged Bible readers across the board. On some measures, black Christians as a whole are as religiously conservative as the most conservative white Protestants. On other measures, black Christians read scripture to learn about life issues at the same high rate as Hispanic Protestants. But there are *no* measures, individually or in congregations, where “black” is not strongly correlated with the most conservative, most active, most involved level of scriptural engagement, no matter which other group comes closest. If one wanted to predict whether someone had read the Bible, believed it to be the literal or inspired Word of God, and used it to learn about many practical aspects of life, knowing whether or not that person was black is the single best piece of information one could have.

Scholars will not find this surprising. Sociologically speaking, we know from previous surveys that African Americans are more likely to report a formal religious affiliation. Even those who are not members of congregations are still religious at much higher rates than others. Black congregations remained the “center” of the African American community longer than religious congregations did for whites. The Civil Rights movement was led by pastors. And, until recently, political leadership in the African American community still came out of the so-called black church. Historically speaking, it is important to remember that, as project advisor Sylvester Johnson said, “African American Christianity (in its denominational formation) is almost singularly the product of missionary theology, which is deeply rooted in Biblicist, fundamentalist theology.” White Protestants evangelized first the slaves and later the freed blacks with a theologically conservative message built on a high view of the Bible’s authority. Generally speaking, the Bible remains important in the black community because it has for centuries been identified with the African American narrative in U.S. history (moving from slavery to freedom just as ancient Israel in the Old Testament, and moving to freedom in Christ in the New Testament). Simply put, black Christians since the eighteenth century have been able read their experience into the Bible more easily than other groups.

On the other hand, while the finding that African Americans use the Bible more across the board is not surprising, the level of difference with other groups is striking. This finding has important consequences for the ways scholars, pundits, and all Americans think about race in America. As Mark Noll says, “the significantly higher proportion of black Americans who read the Bible regularly reveals a significant fact about African American religious life as well as a significant fact about public life in general. Approaches to the nation’s continuing racial disparities and problems that leave scripture completely out of the picture seem to be missing a vital element in black culture.”

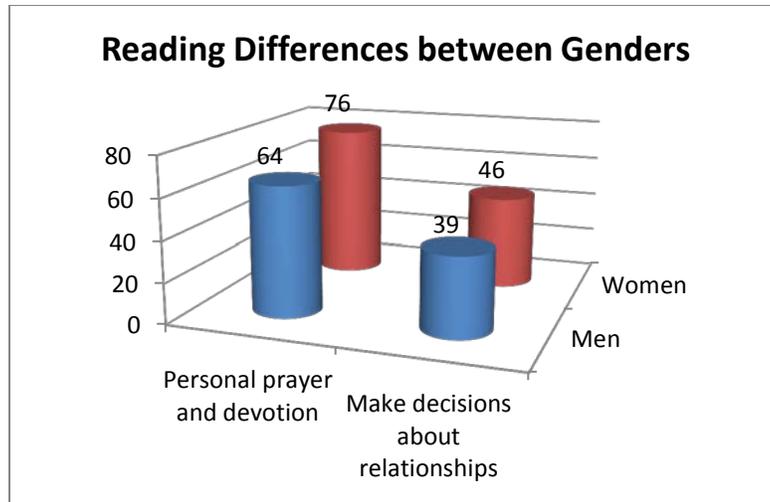
6. Individuals' Reasons for Reading the Bible

Despite the coverage popular media gives to people claiming biblical mandates on social issues, individuals are actually far more likely to read the Bible for personal edification and growth than to shape their views of culture war issues. Indeed, Bible readers consult scripture for personal prayer and devotion three times more than they do to learn about abortion, homosexuality, poverty, or war.

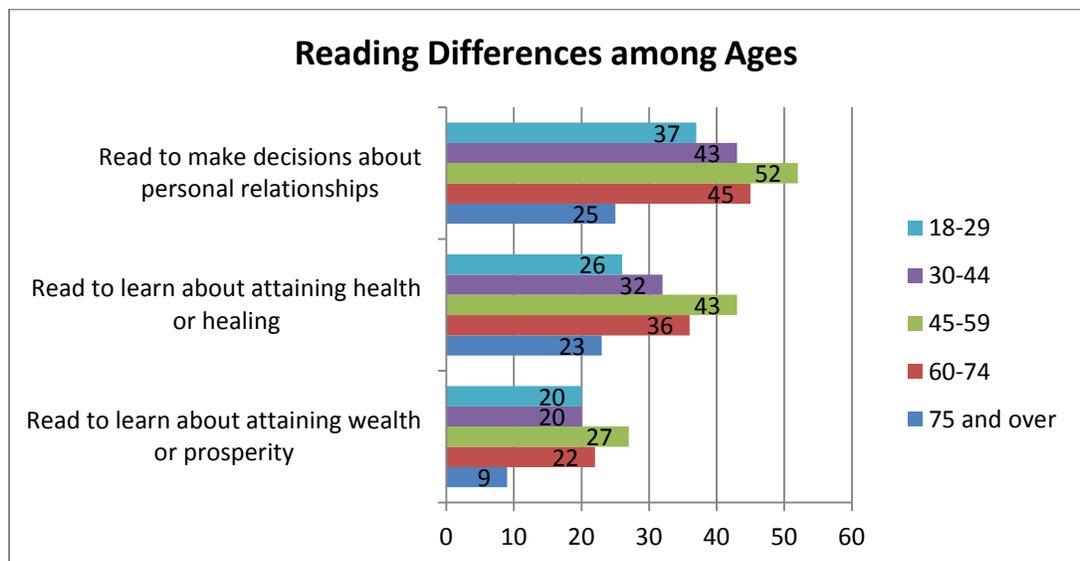


Several key facts about the reasons people read the Bible emerged from those surveyed.

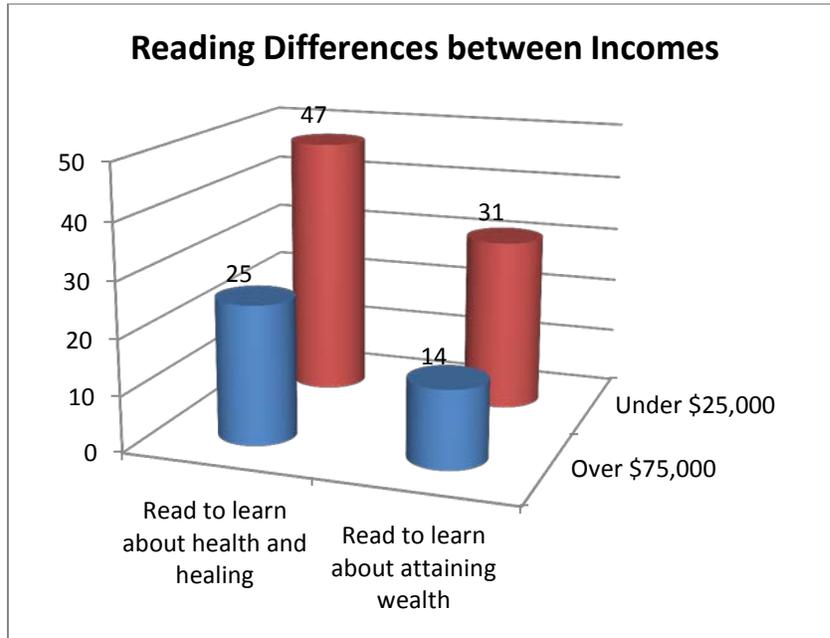
1. Women read the Bible more than men for reasons of personal prayer and devotion, as well as to make decisions about relationships with a spouse, parents, children, and friends. This roughly corresponds to the gender difference in church attendance and membership.



2. There was a fairly consistent difference in age among stated reasons for reading the Bible, with the youngest (18-29) and oldest (75 and over) reading scripture the least for specific purposes. This difference was especially pronounced on such culture war issues as abortion and homosexuality, where 15% of those under 45 and 12% of those 75 and older consulted scripture, compared to 25% of those 45 to 74 years old. Meanwhile, those between 40 and 60 years old more often consult the Bible on health, money, and personal decisions about relationships. Recent work on the “sandwich generation”—who are simultaneously raising children and caring for aging parents—might conceivably explain why this age group moves to the front on these particular issues. It is a question worth further exploration.

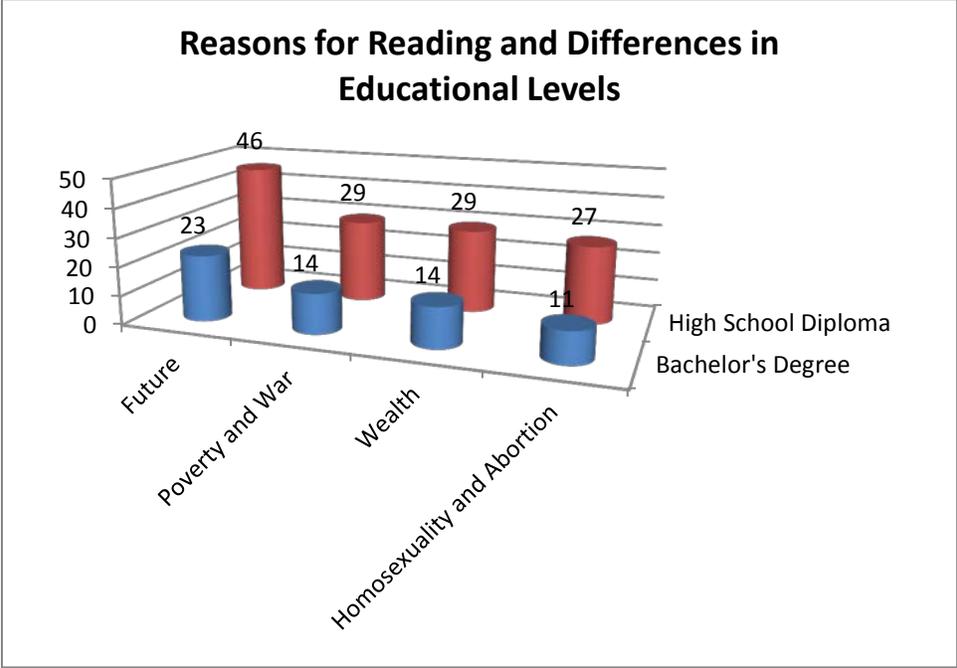


- Income differences appeared among those who read the Bible for specific purposes, with lower income readers (\$25,000) consulting scripture more often than higher income readers (above \$75,000). Usually the percentage of difference was in the double digits. For instance, those with lower income read the Bible to learn about their religion more often than those with higher incomes, 67% to 54%. The difference continued even among those making less than \$50,000 and those making over \$75,000: lower income Bible readers consulted scripture more often to make decisions about personal relationships (49% to 36%) and to learn about the future (42% to 28%). The two starkest examples of reading practices among those with different incomes appeared in the areas where lower income individuals are most at risk: health and accumulation of wealth. In those cases, Bible readers with lower incomes were about twice as likely to consult scripture.

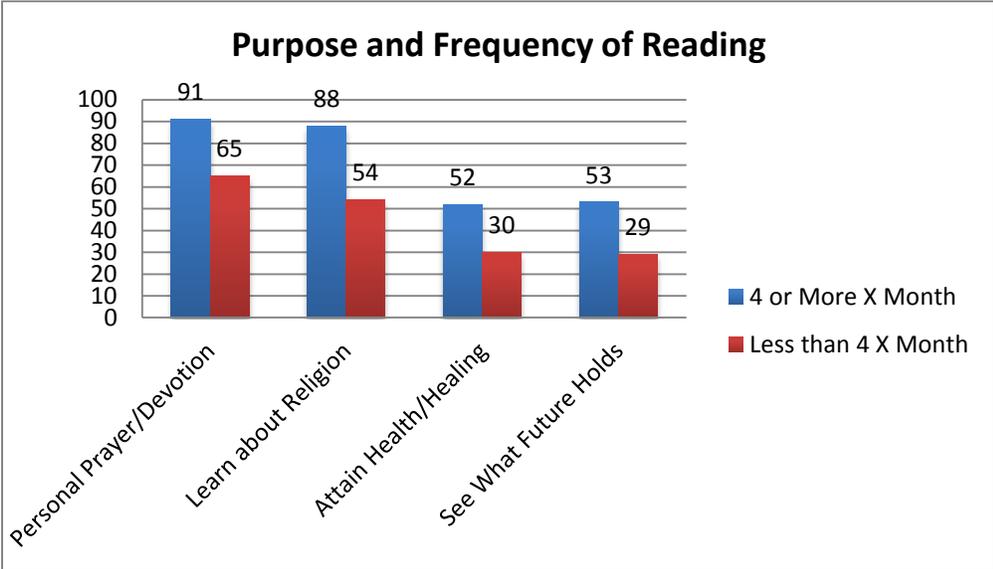


- The level of education, often linked to other social and economic factors, consistently separated Bible readers who turned to scripture for a specific purpose. Those with a high school diploma or less generally read the Bible more, and at several key points they did so at least twice as much. For instance, 48% of Bible readers with less than a high school diploma and 39% of those with only a high school diploma consulted scripture to learn about obtaining health or healing, compared to only 25% of those with a bachelor's degree. This difference in reading also appeared when it came to learning about the future, homosexuality and abortion, poverty and war, and attaining wealth. In other words, those with less

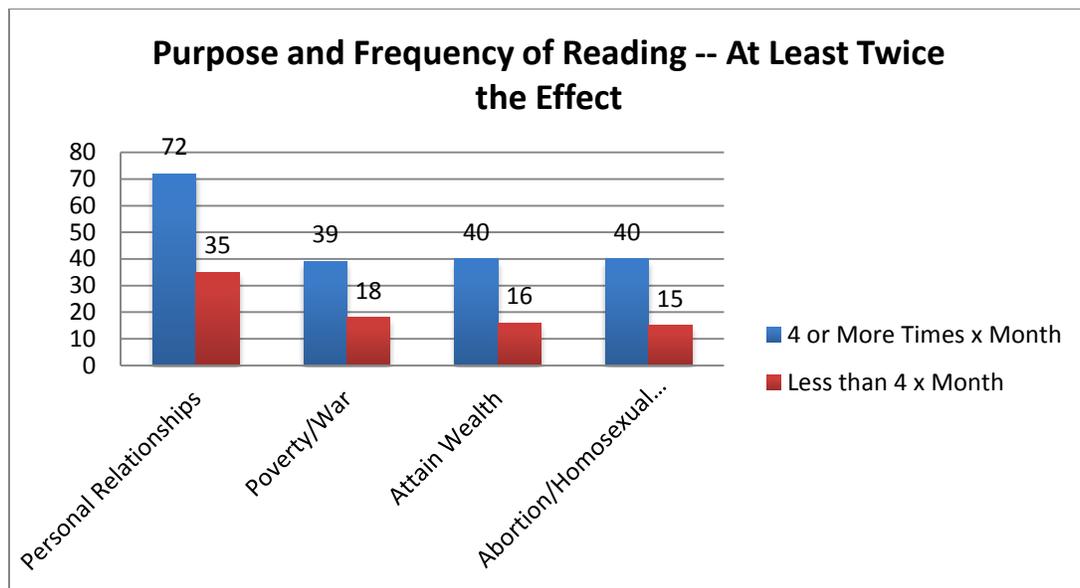
education read the Bible at twice the rate of someone with a college degree for the purposes of learning about culture war issues, health and wealth, and what the future holds.



5. Reading the Bible with a specific purpose is closely aligned to individuals' frequency of consulting scripture. Those reading it weekly more often affirm one or more of the eight purposes for reading scripture than those who consult the Bible less often. The trend is generally clear for four of the stated purposes for reading the Bible.



Even more striking was the relationship between those who read the Bible often and the four other stated reasons for doing so – making decisions about personal relationships, learning about poverty and war, attaining wealth, and learning about abortion or homosexuality. In those cases, more frequent Bible readers consulted scripture twice (in some cases, nearly three times) as often.



6. Meanwhile, how one feels about the nature of the Bible—is it the Word of God, an inspired document, or a book of fables?—corresponds to the reasons people read the Bible. Literalists, those who believe the Bible is the literal word of God, are, not surprisingly, the most likely to read scripture in all eight categories. Those with more complicated views of the Bible, who believe it is inspired but not necessarily literally God’s word, tend to consult it more often than those who believe the Bible is a book of fables. Overall, the traditions that hold to literalist views of the Bible—black Protestants, Hispanic Protestants, and white conservative Protestants—read at higher rates that correspond to feelings about the nature of scripture.

Feelings about the Bible and Reasons for Reading

	<u>Word of God</u>	<u>Inspired</u>	<u>Book of Fables</u>
Personal Prayer/Devotions	81%	71%	42%
Learn about Religion	74%	58%	35%
Decisions about Personal Relationships	59%	35%	28%
Attain Health	49%	25%	30%
See What Future Holds	53%	23%	16%
Poverty/War	36%	15%	9%

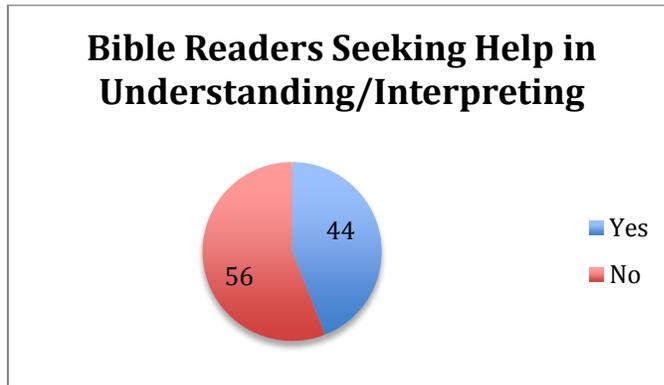
Attain Wealth	35%	11%	17%
Abortion/Homosexuality	34%	12%	13%

In summary, Bible readers rated the extent to which they consulted the Bible on a number of issues. Grouping readers who said they did so “to a moderate extent,” “to a considerable extent,” and “to a great extent,” we found that respondents overwhelmingly turned to scripture for personal growth and to learn about the faith as compared to other reasons. Overall, culture war issues rated about one-third as popular as devotional reasons for reading scripture. As project advisor and seminary professor Ronald Allen says, “this is hugely important for the minister or teacher in a typical congregation who may think that the (usually) small number of parishioners who are loudest on social issues and the Bible represent the congregation as a whole.”

Even with a clearer picture of the more personal reasons individuals read the Bible, the situation remains complicated. Frequent readers consulted the Bible three times more often about abortion, homosexuality, poverty, and war, as well as to attain wealth and seek guidance on decisions about personal relationships. The Bible, as advisor Sylvester Johnson points out, is “not just a book to be read. It is also a cultural symbol.” As such, in public life “the Bible’s use in culture wars is more likely rooted in its power as a cultural symbol of moral authority than in reading its specific content.” Mark Noll concurs but is hopeful these findings can affect the conversation. “Religion has been a major subject of popular American journalism since the Civil Rights Movement, and even more since the rise of the Religious Right. Such journalism has often reported accurately on how the Bible has been brought into public life. What it has often missed, however,” he reminds us, “is that political uses of the Bible have never been their most important uses. These IUPUI surveys should bring sanity back into journalists’ reporting on religion, at least to the extent that they show how important non-political use of scripture continues to be in modern American life.”

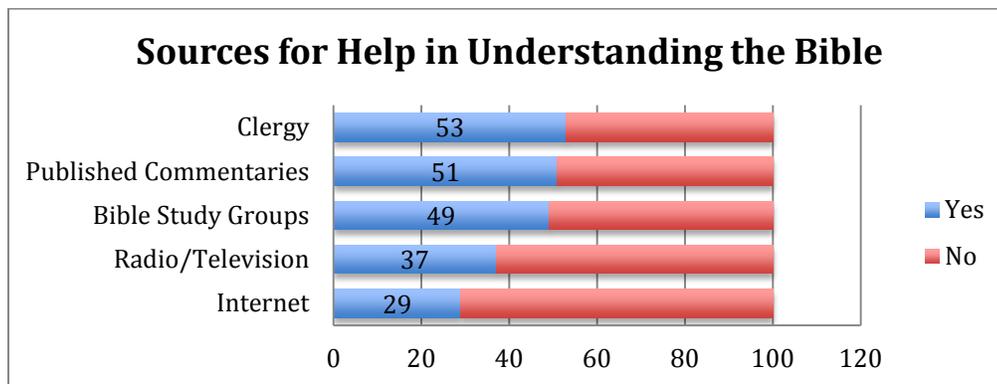
7. Sources of Help in Understanding and Interpreting the Bible

On the GSS we asked those who have read the Bible in the past year whether they have turned to people, books, or other sources for help in interpreting it. The majority had not.



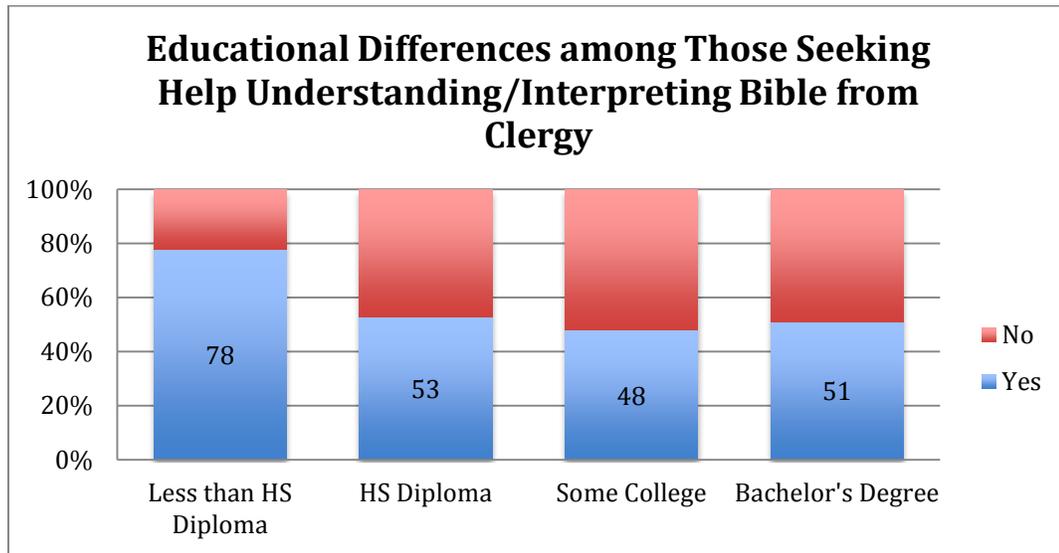
Among those who did seek help in understanding and interpreting the Bible, a number of key facts emerged.

1. Those with more education seek help in understanding and interpreting the Bible at a higher rate. Those with a bachelor's degree (53%) or graduate degree (49%) did so more than respondents with less than a high school diploma (38%) or a high school diploma (41%).
2. Clergy remain the top source for individuals looking for assistance in understanding or interpreting the Bible. Indeed, by nearly a two-to-one margin, respondents turned to clergy over the Internet, although, as we will see, seeking help on the Internet appeals to certain populations.



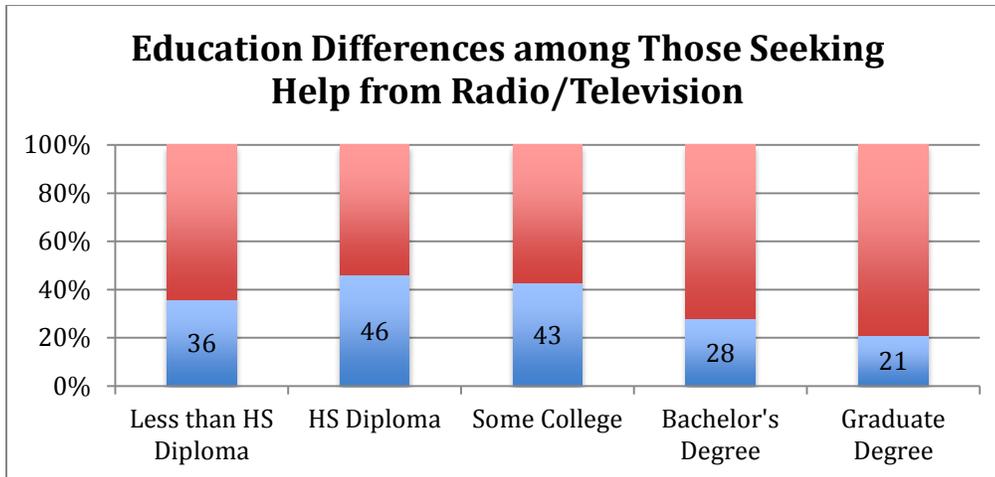
3. Education is a factor between those who seek help from clergy and those who do not. Although less educated people seek help understanding the Bible at a lower rate than

more educated people, those with the least education sought help from clergy more than from others sources of assistance.

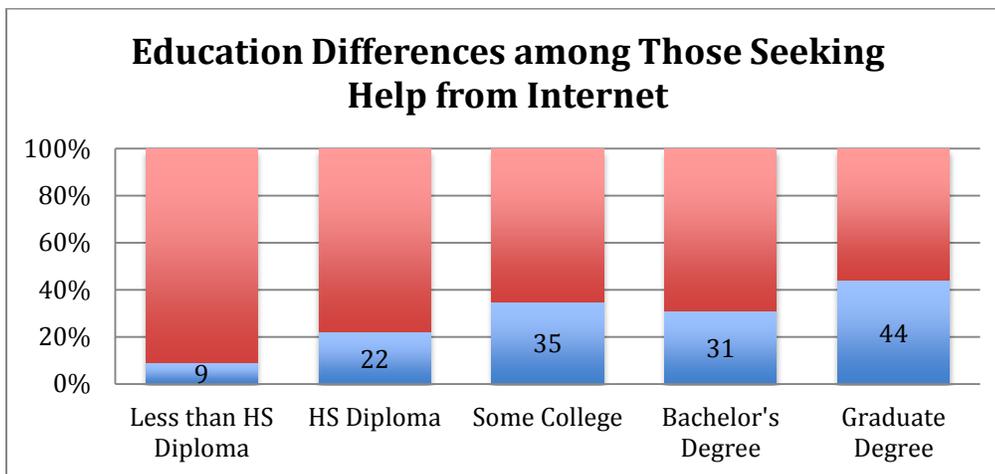


4. Differences in age and income appear prominently among those who read Bible commentaries as books, CDs, or DVDs. Older respondents (60-75) consulted published sources nearly twice as often as younger people (18-20), 65% to 33%. Those making over \$75,000 seek help understanding and interpreting the Bible from published sources more often than those making less than \$50,000, 63% to 39%.

5. Several differences appeared among those who turn to mass media for help in understanding the Bible. Black people, who read the Bible at higher rates than other racial groups, also turn to radio or television more than others. Indeed, 54% of African Americans consult mass media compared to 34% of Hispanics and 32% of whites. Meanwhile, these older forms of media appeal to those 45-59 years old (47%) and 60-74 years old (40%) more than they do to those 18-29 years old (28%). Finally, differences in education levels again appeared. Although radio and television preachers are portrayed in popular culture as preying on the least educated, that group actually tunes in less than those with high school diplomas or some college. One should keep in mind, as we have just noted, that those without a high school degree turn to their clergy at a much higher rate than others.



6. Two striking differences appeared among respondents who sought help understanding and interpreting the Bible on the Internet: gender and education. First, while females make up the majority of congregation members and read the Bible at higher rates than men (56% to 39%), among those seeking help in understanding it, men turn to the Internet at a higher rate (36% to 24%). Second, while education has appeared as an important variable in a number of ways, it shows a clear distinction among those seeking help from the Internet. Economic situations tied to education levels may be behind these differences, as well as familiarity with using the Internet to research topics. Whatever the reason, many ministries hoping to provide help in understanding and interpreting the Bible on the Internet will find these differences important to their work. Project advisor Ronald Allen, a seminary professor, noted that very point: “As a biblical scholar, I have to say the quality of resources on the Internet is uneven. Indeed, much of the material on the Internet can generously be described as appalling. However, the rates of internet use suggests that congregations, judicatories, and schools should provide more high quality interpretive materials in that venue.”

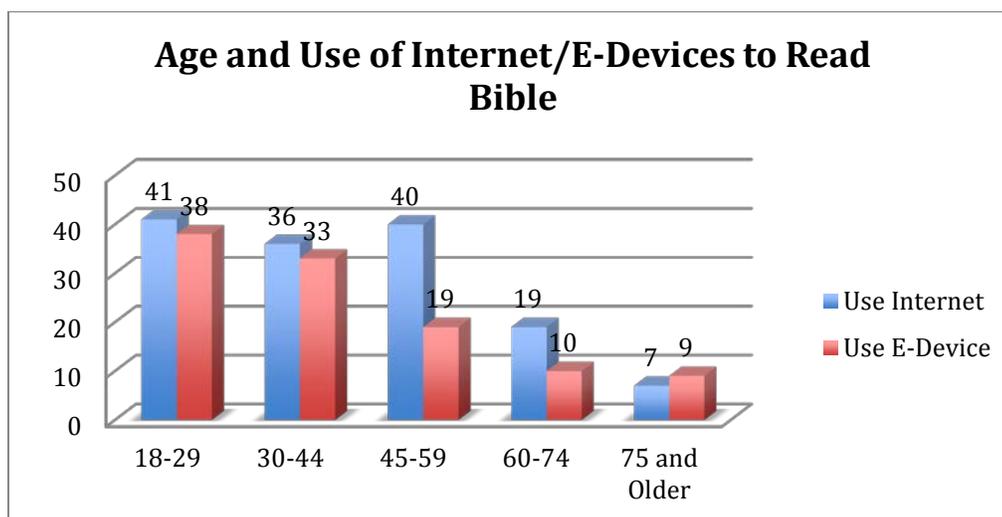


8. Reading the Bible on the Internet and E-Devices

Recent claims by e-device applications such as YouVersion place the number of subscribers in the hundreds of millions.⁶ Given the changing reading habits of Americans, we wondered how many people actually use the Internet and e-devices such as i-Pads, smart phones, and Kindles as their source for Bible reading. In all, we found that, among those who have read the Bible in the past year, 31% read it on the Internet, while 22% employed e-devices.

Among those who read the Bible on the Internet or e-devices, we found differences when it comes to age, income, and education level.

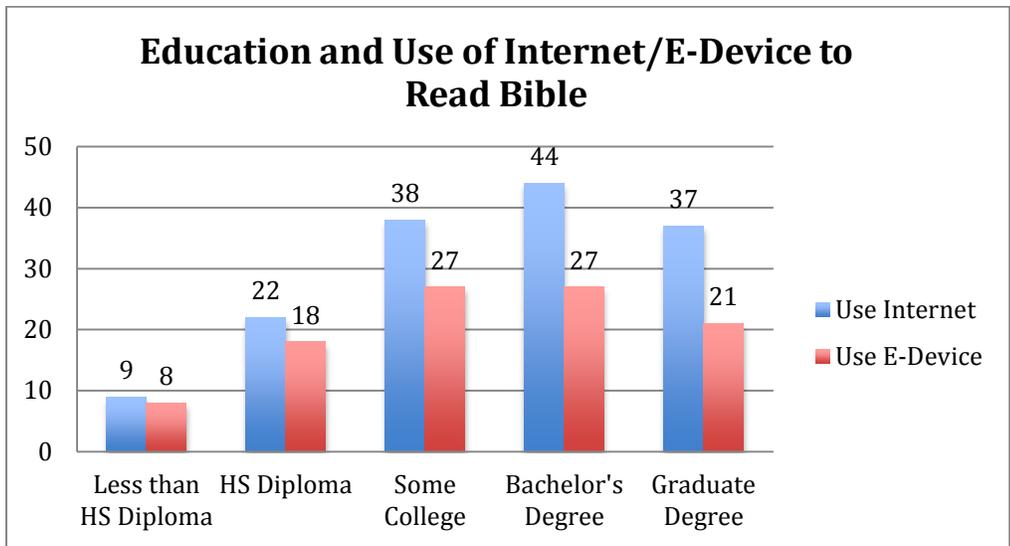
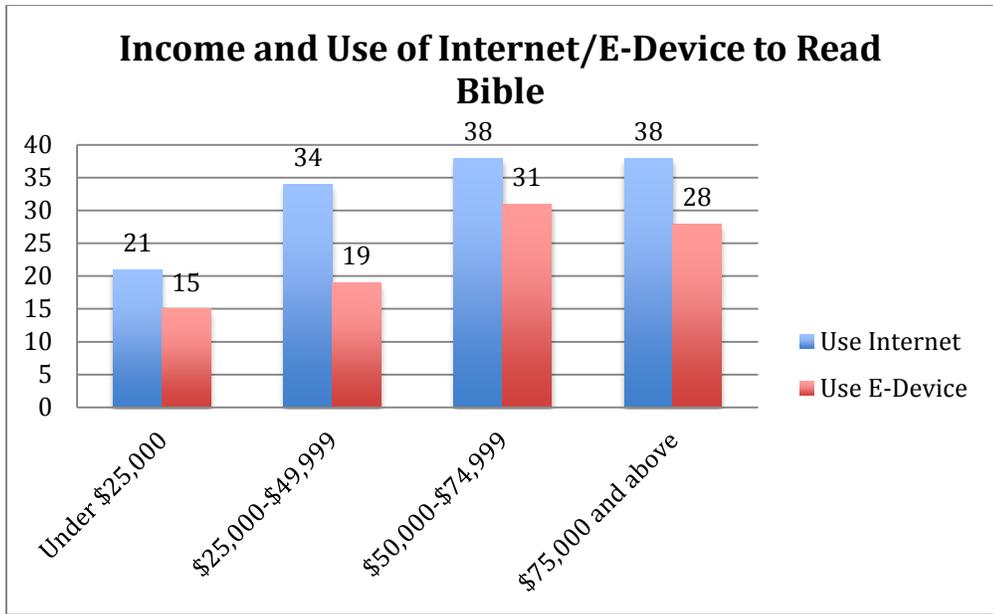
1. Reading the Bible on the Internet is fairly popular for those under 60 years of age, but those over 60 do so much less than others. Not surprisingly, younger people read the Bible on an e-device more often than other age groups.



2. According to a recent study by the U.S. Department of Commerce, lower income and less educated households experience computer ownership and broadband adoption rates well below the national average.⁷ This likely helps to explain our findings. Respondents with higher incomes and more education read the Bible on the Internet or on an e-device more than those with low incomes and less education. The difference of use among education levels was particularly striking.

⁶ Amy O’Leary, “In the Beginning Was the Word; Now the Word Is on an App,” *New York Times*, July 26, 2013.

⁷ *Exploring the Digital Nation – America’s Emerging Online Experience*, United States Department of Commerce, June 2013, www.ntia.doc.gov/files/ntia/publications/exploring_the_digital_nation_-_americas_emerging_online_experience.pdf.



In all, numerous categories that affect socio-economic differences are significant for ownership and use of technology. That may be driving some of the differences we see here. Generational differences in one's relation to technology could also be at play. What we can say, however, is that younger people, those with higher salaries, and most dramatically, those with more education among the respondents read the Bible on the Internet or an e-device at higher rates.

9. Religious Traditions

Beginning with our very first pass at the survey results, we followed with keen interest the differences among religious traditions in reading the Bible outside formal services. Among our respondents, there was a clear difference among traditions.

However, as we queried the data over several months from various angles, it became clear that religious traditions were inextricably tied to race and region. For instance, black people as a whole read the Bible at similar rates to black Protestants. Here, race seemed to be as important, or more so, than religious tradition. Similarly, we know from multiple previous studies that region complicates our understandings of religious traditions. For example, a Midwestern Methodist couple who migrates to the South often does not remain Methodist. Rather, they join a Southern Baptist church and thereby align with the dominant religious culture. On an institutional level, it appears that individual congregations in moderate/liberal Protestant denominations often reflect their local surroundings rather than holding to the official teachings of headquarters. This is not always the case, of course, but the dominant role of this sort of “hard shell” regionalism that persists in religion in the U.S. makes it difficult to argue for religious tradition as an independent variable to be applied across the board.

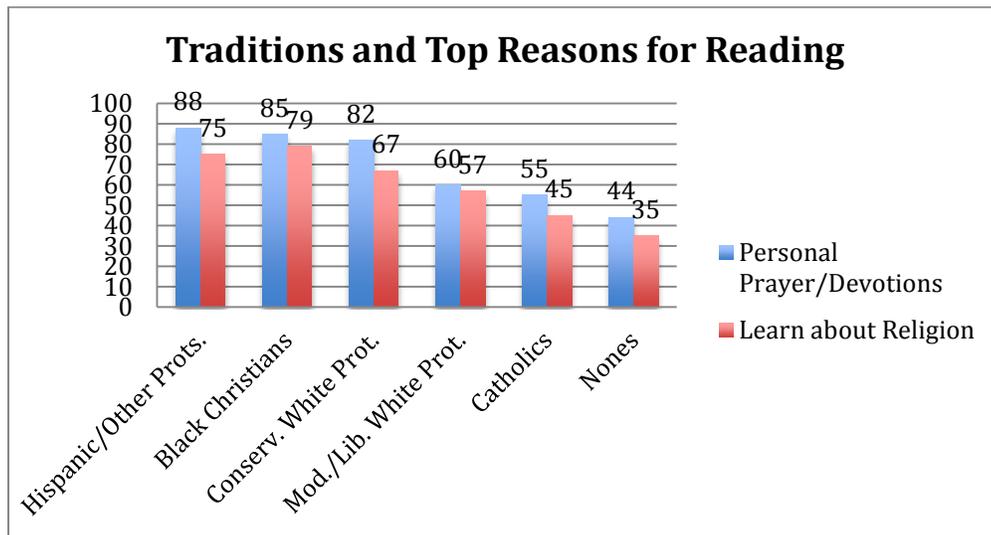
That is not to say that religious tradition plays no part in rates of reading the Bible outside services. The historical differences between Protestants and Catholics and between white conservative Protestants and white moderate/liberal Protestants clearly contribute to regional differences. Black Protestants and white conservative Protestants, both of whom place great emphasis on biblical authority, have higher concentrations in the South. Catholics, who historically elevate the church over scriptural authority, dominate the Northeast and many sections of the Midwest and West. White moderate/liberal Protestant denominations, with strongholds in the Northeast and Midwest, were influenced by historical-critical methods and today read the Bible outside worship at lower rates than white conservative Protestants. It is not surprising then to find that respondents in the South, as a whole, read the Bible at higher rates than those in all other regions of the country.

Clearly scholars will continue to work toward understanding this dynamic relationship. At this point, we are not making sweeping claims about religious tradition as an independent variable with strong explanatory power extending beyond the historical Protestant/Catholic and the conservative and moderate/liberal Protestant divides.

Still, with all of this in mind, approaching religious traditions from the perspective of Bible reading revealed findings that contradict the stereotypes of specific traditions. We note them here.

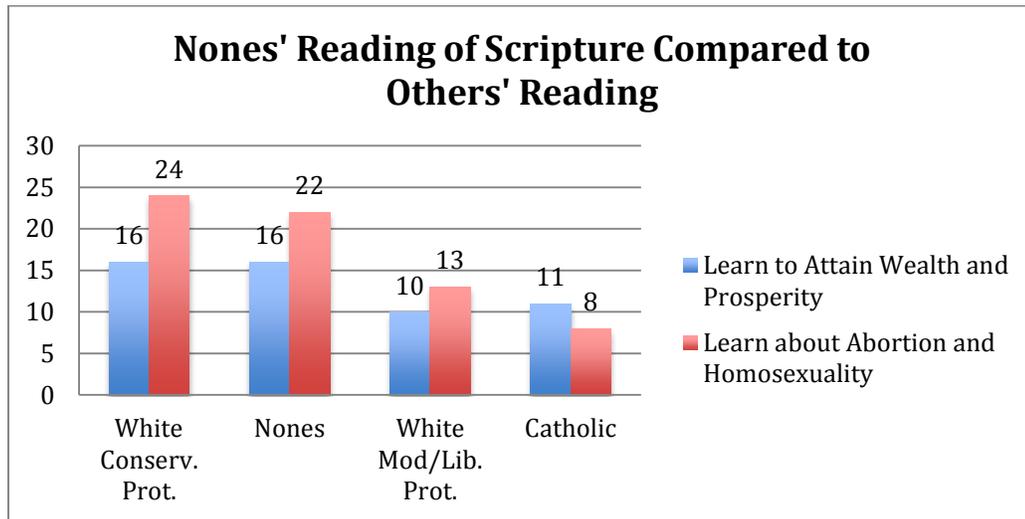
1. Although the survey showed the historic difference between Protestants and Catholics in individuals' Bible use, we found several cases where a less familiar story has developed. "What seems to be taking place for a minority of Catholics," said historian Mark Noll, "is a somewhat more Protestant use of the Bible (personally read for personal purposes), though historical Catholic-Protestant differences remain obviously important."

Indeed, when asked about the two topics that ended up being the top reasons why people read the Bible—for personal prayer and devotion and to learn about their religion—Catholics read at higher rates than one might anticipate. While the difference between Catholic and Protestant traditions is still noticeable, those who think Catholics only read scripture in services are missing an important point: over one-third of Catholics consult scripture outside formal services, and among those readers, about half do so for their personal devotions and to learn more about their faith.



2. The chart above also indicates something important: Nones—that growing demographic of people who do not identify with any religion—read scripture, at least from time to time. In fact, we discovered that in certain situations they consult scripture more than adherents of some Christian traditions do. For instance, they read it more than white moderate and liberal Protestants do to learn about attaining health or healing (21% to 15%) and about the same as moderate to liberal white Protestants and Catholics to learn about poverty or war (15% to 13% each). When it comes to reading in order to attain wealth and prosperity and to learn about abortion and homosexuality, they rival the reading levels of white conservative Protestants (see graph below). The important point here is not to compare the rates of reading; rather it is to point out that Nones,

who eschew religious identity, read scripture at times as often as those who identify with specific traditions.



3. With race playing a major role in this study, it makes sense to return to it one final time in the context of religious traditions. As Sylvester Johnson pointed out, there persists “the radical disconnect between the dominant reality of biblical fundamentalism in Black churches on the one hand and the symbolism, on the other, that governs popular ideas about African American churches.” Because of their struggle against slavery in the nineteenth century and for civil rights in the twentieth century, black churches are generally perceived as centers of a socially progressive Christianity that left behind conservative theology. In fact, there were major debates on this very issue within the Southern Christian Leadership Council, culminating in 1961 when members of the National Baptist Convention separated to found the Progressive National Baptist Convention. Today, black Protestantism exists in the public imagination as the Civil Rights Movement’s legacy. However, as Johnson points out, “it is especially ironic and significant that fundamentalism actually defines, in the main, the theological disposition of most Black churches today. In this sense, the data from this study offer incisive and starkly important insight into the legacy and present reality of Black churches.”

In summary, while the different Bible and scripture reading practices of various religious traditions are on a certain level interesting, they rarely provide an independent variable separate from race and region beyond the predictable Protestant/Catholic and white conservative and moderate/liberal Protestant divides. Nonetheless, using Bible reading as a prism, we found that some traditions appear different on the ground than from a flyover. A minority of Catholics read the Bible outside services at a higher rate than some might imagine, or at least than some might characterize as historically Catholic practice. At the same time, while the quickly increasing number of Nones has drawn the attention of scholars and the media as

signs of further secularization, we found that a number of them read scripture privately, giving credence to recent findings that there is a “seeker mentality” among some Nones. Finally, despite the perception of black churches as the bastions of social Christianity, the data of this study make clear that the vast majority of black congregations and believers also hold to highly conservative views of the Bible and consult it on more topics than do members of any other tradition. As discussed in Section 5, there are a number of historical and sociological reasons for this. Despite popular notions of black Protestantism as highly influenced by the Social Gospel, it is also, in certain respects, as biblically conservative as white conservative Protestantism. As advisor Mark Noll notes, “I hope one of the survey’s major results will be to reduce the hyper-politicized treatment of religion that has prevailed since the early years of the Civil Rights Movement. The ideal result would not be to deny such uses, but to realize that such uses are only the tip of a very large iceberg, with the vast majority of its bulk hidden away out of the political public eye.”

Next Steps

Our purpose in this study has been to illuminate the use of the Bible in Americans' everyday lives outside formal services. But we see this report as the first step in that process. Indeed, we are hopeful that scholars of all sorts will continue to pursue these and other findings in order to further our understanding of this topic. We see this occurring in three ways.

First, the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture will host "The Bible in American Culture Conference" in Indianapolis, 6-9 August 2014. Scholars from a variety of disciplines will present papers that help to flesh out ideas touched upon here. The Call For Papers and conference description can be accessed at the Center's website: www.raac.iupui.edu. We intend to gather those papers that complement each other and add to our understanding in a published volume.

Second, scholars at the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture intend to continue pursuing a number of lines of inquiry begun here. With the ability to compare and contrast readers (and non-readers) of the Bible across a wide spectrum thanks to the many categories covered by the General Social Survey, we feel the data in this report is but the tip of the iceberg. Indeed, we look forward to both deepening and broadening our understanding of the Bible in American life.

Finally, we purposefully chose to use the GSS in order to make available our questions for scholars. The GSS is considered the gold standard for gathering attitudes of Americans, so we looked to it first. We hope that, beyond the 2014 conference and the ongoing analysis done at the Center, the data in the GSS will be accessed by scholars and studied from a variety of angles for years to come.

Appendix A
Questions on the General Social Survey

We are interested in whether or not people read the Bible, Torah, or other religious scriptures such as the Koran or any others, in addition to the reading that often happens in worship services.

Within the last year, have you read the Bible, Torah, Koran, or other religious scriptures, not counting any reading that happened during a worship service?

In the past year, which scripture have you read most often, the Bible, Torah, Koran, or some other scripture?

If you most often read a scripture other than the Bible or Koran, please name it:

In the past year, have you read the {NAME OF SCRIPTURE} on the internet?

In the past year, have you read the {NAME OF SCRIPTURE} on an e-device such as iPad, Kindle, etc.?

In the past year, have you made an intentional effort to commit any parts of (NAME OF SCRIPTURE) to memory?

The {NAME OF SCRIPTURE} is used in many ways. In the past year, to what extent have you used the {NAME OF SCRIPTURE} in the following ways? Please use a scale of 1-5 with (1) being "not at all", (2) being "to a small extent", (3) being "to a moderate extent", (4) being "to a considerable extent", and (5) being "to a great extent."

To what extent did you read {NAME OF SCRIPTURE} to learn about your religion?

To what extent did you read {NAME OF SCRIPTURE} to prepare to teach or participate in a study group?

To what extent did you read {NAME OF SCRIPTURE} to make decisions about your relationship with your spouse, parents, children or friends?

To what extent did you read {NAME OF SCRIPTURE} to learn about attaining wealth or prosperity?

To what extent did you read {NAME OF SCRIPTURE} to learn about attaining health or healing?

To what extent did you read {NAME OF SCRIPTURE} to learn about what the future holds?

To what extent did you read {NAME OF SCRIPTURE} to learn about issues like abortion or homosexuality?

To what extent did you read {NAME OF SCRIPTURE} to learn about issues like poverty or war?

When reading the {NAME OF SCRIPTURE} in the past 30 days, have you turned to other people, books, or other sources for help in interpreting and understanding what you read?

In the past 30 days, have you received help in interpreting and understanding scripture from . . .

- a. Your pastor, priest, or other clergy?
- b. Study group leader or members?
- c. Published commentary in a book, CD, or DVD?
- d. Internet site?
- e. Television or radio program?

What translation of the Bible do you most often read? Is it the King James Version, New International Version, New American Bible, New Revised Standard Version, Living Bible, or some OTHER version?

- King James Version 1
- New International Version 2
- New American Bible 3
- New Revised Standard Version 4
- Living Bible..... 5
- Other 6
- DON'T KNOW DK

NO ANSWER

Do you have a favorite book of the Bible? (PLEASE NAME)

Do you have a favorite Bible story, verse, or passage? (PLEASE NAME)

APPENDIX B
Questions on the National Congregations Study III

Does your congregation encourage people to use the New International Version of the Bible rather than other translations?

YES1
NO.....2

Does your congregation consider the Bible to be the literal and inerrant word of God?

YES1
NO.....2

Are there Bibles in the pews or chairs for people to use during worship services?

YES1
NO [GO TO Q68]2

What translation?

Are people encouraged to bring their own Bibles to worship services?

YES1
NO.....2

Does your congregation follow a lectionary or some other schedule of scripture readings when it comes to what passages are read in worship services?

YES1
NO.....2

In the past 12 months, have there been any events during which children from your congregation recited scripture from memory?

YES1
NO.....2

Personnel

Principal Investigators

Philip Goff is Professor of Religious Studies and American Studies, Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, and co-editor of *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*. A historian of religion in North America, he is author or editor of over thirty books or journal issues, most recently *The New Evangelical Social Engagement* (with Brian Steensland). He is author of nearly two hundred articles, chapters, papers, and reviews on religion in the United States.

Arthur E. Farnsley II is Research Professor of Religious Studies at IUPUI, Associate Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, and Executive Officer of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR). His books include *Flea Market Jesus; Sacred Circles, Public Squares: The Multicentering of American Religion; Rising Expectations: Urban Congregations, Welfare Reform, and Civic Life; and Southern Baptist Politics: Authority and Power in the Restructuring of an American Denomination*. He edits an Indiana University Press series on urban religion and was research director for the video series, *Faith and Community: The Public Role of Religion*.

Peter J. Thuesen is Professor of Religious Studies and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at IUPUI, where he also serves as Co-Editor of *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*. A historian of American religion and of the Christian tradition since the Reformation, he is the author of *Predestination: The American Career of a Contentious Doctrine*, which received the 2010 *Christianity Today* Book Award for History/Biography, and *In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles over Translating the Bible*, which received the Frank S. and Elizabeth D. Brewer Prize of the American Society of Church History. He is also the editor of a major critical edition, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 26, Catalogues of Books*.

Project Advisors

Ronald J. Allen is Professor of Preaching and Gospels and Letters at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. He is the author of some 40 books including studies of preaching, commentaries for preaching, and Bible study books for use in

congregations. He is one of the editors of *Preaching God's Transforming Justice*, a three volume commentary on the Revised Common Lectionary. His most recent book is *Sermon Treks: Trailways to Creative Preaching*.

Mark Chaves is Professor of Sociology, Religion, and Divinity at Duke University and director of the National Congregations Study, which has just completed its third wave. His research focuses on the social organization of religion in the United States. His books include *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*; *Congregations in America*; and *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*.

Thomas J. Davis is Associate Dean for Academic Programs, Professor of Religious Studies, Professor of Philanthropic Studies, and Co-Editor of *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*. He teaches in the area of the History of Christianity, and his research focuses on the Reformation time period, on images of Calvin in American culture, and philanthropy in American culture. Most recently he edited the works *John Calvin's American Legacy* and *Religion in Philanthropic Organizations: Family, Friend, Foe?*

Amy Plantinga Pauw is the Henry P. Mobley, Jr., Professor of Doctrinal Theology at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary. Her books include *The Supreme Harmony of All: Jonathan Edwards' Trinitarian Theology*; *Making Time for God: Daily Devotions for Children and Families to Share* (with Susan Garrett); and *Essays in Reformed Feminist and Womanist Dogmatics* (with Serene Jones). She is the general editor of *Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* and has recently completed a commentary on Proverbs and Ecclesiastes for the series.

Historical and Contextual Advisors

Paul C. Gutjahr is Professor and Chair of the Department of English at Indiana University. His research areas include American religious print in the United States and history of the book. He is author of *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1881*; *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy*; and *The Book of Mormon: A Biography*.

Sylvester Johnson is Associate Professor of African American Studies and Religious Studies at Northwestern University and co-founder of the *Journal of Africana Religions*. He is author of *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity: Race, Heathens, and the People of God*, which won the AAR award for Best First Book in the History of Religions. His current research is on colonialism and African-American religions.

Mark A. Noll is the Francis McAnaney Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame. Over the years he has studied the Bible and American life from several directions. Relevant publications include: *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*; "The King James Version at 300 in America," in *The King James Bible and the World it Made*, ed. David Lyle Jeffrey; "Bishop James Gibbons, the Bible, and Protestant America," forthcoming in *U.S. Catholic History*; "North America," *The New Cambridge History of the Bible, Vol. 3*, forthcoming; and (as co-editor), *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*.

Survey Materials

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