

News Release

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AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY RELEASES SECOND STUDY ON AMERICAN TEENS AND SPIRITUALITY

The Great Majority of Teens, 92%, Say Their Prayers Are Answered

The great majority of American teens (92%) believe that their prayers are answered, with 24% saying all of the time, 24% most of the time, and 44% at least some of the time, according to a recent study commissioned by the American Bible Society. Females and southerners are more likely than their counterparts to say that their prayers are answered.

The results were part of a second study conducted on the role religion plays in the lives of American youth across the country, ages 12 to 17. The interviewing took place between April 8 and 14, 2004. The initial benchmark study was released in November 2003.

According to the new study, the prayer most often said is a personal one (54%), followed by The Lord's Prayer (12%) and the Our Father (10%) – which are very similar - and the Rosary (1%). Some 11% of the teens polled reported that they say some other type of prayer, while 14% say they don't pray at all. Females and southerners were more likely to say a personalized prayer than the other groups polled.

Of those teens who do pray, most pray for a sick friend or relative (77%), or for personal needs (72%). A little more than half pray for world peace or some other global concern (51%). About one-quarter of those polled pray for material things (23%). African-Americans are more likely than Whites to pray for personal needs, while females are more likely than males to pray for a sick friend or relative.

Respondents were also asked about attending voluntary prayer meetings if offered before or after classes at school. Nearly one-half (49%) of these teens say they would be likely to attend such meetings (19% say very likely, 30% say somewhat likely). More females, southerners and lower income respondents indicated interest in these prayer meetings than other groups.

Apart from religious activities for the major holidays, respondents were also asked about their ongoing religious activities, including prayer. Nearly half of teens (45%) pray daily or weekly before meals at home, while almost one-fourth (23%) never pray before meals at home. Fewer pray at school than home; the majority (64%) never prays before meals at school. However, 13% of respondents said they pray before school meals daily and 23% pray at least once a week.

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The findings about Bible reading among teens are of specific interest to the American Bible Society, which is committed to involving people in the life-changing message of the Bible. Although fewer than one in ten (7%) read the Bible daily, some 29% read the Bible at least once a week, while 35% say they never read the Bible. Blacks, females, southerners and the lower income group have higher frequencies of reading the Bible than other groups.

As for demographic differences, the data suggests that teens living in the South have higher levels of religious interest and involvement (Bible reading, church going and prayer) than those in other regions (Northeast, Midwest and West). They also have the highest interest in the idea of school-related prayer groups.

In terms of gender, teenage girls have across-the-board higher levels of religious interest and involvement than teenage boys.

On a majority of measures, African-Americans indicate higher levels of interest and participation in religious activities than Whites. On a few measures (e.g., intent to attend church on Thanksgiving and Christmas), Hispanics show higher levels than non-Hispanics. In addition, on some measures (intent to read the Bible on holidays and praying at home and at school), the low-income group (under \$25K) shows higher levels of interest and participation than do the higher income groups.

“This study reveals that American young people continue to have high levels of exposure to, and involvement in, religious activities, which is encouraging,” said Eugene Habecker, president of the American Bible Society. “Young people are our future and it is important to ensure that they have a firm grounding in religious and spiritual principles.”

The American Bible Society plans to conduct these surveys twice a year on an ongoing basis, to give the public an accurate and regularly updated snapshot of the spiritual life of American teens.

The survey was completed online, in partnership with Synovate/TeenNation. Five hundred males and females, ages 12-17, participated, evenly split by gender and age. In keeping with Synovate’s privacy policy, children under 18 completing the survey were encouraged to have parental supervision in completing the questionnaire.

Founded in 1816 and headquartered in New York City, the American Bible Society is a non-profit, interdenominational organization that works to transform lives, particularly among the young, by promoting personal engagement with the Holy Scriptures. The American Bible Society website is www.americanbible.org.

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