



## WORLDVIEW MADE PRACTICAL Volume 20 Number 13 April 2, 2025

### Christian Beliefs in America Continue to Weaken

By Freddy Davis

#### What are the Trends?

George Barna, the Christian pollster who monitors the religions trends in America, continues to provide the Christian community with profound information about what is going on in our society. This is information we can either use to reverse the trends that are taking us down the tube, or ignore and watch society fall off the cliff.

In a recent expose, he noted five trends that have been building over the last several years, and that he expects to continue into the near future. Lets have a look at these to try and understand the challenge the church is facing in modern times. He lists five specific trends.

1. The syncretism train will keep rolling
2. Discipleship drops off the radar
3. Mental health issues escalate
4. Altering the political conversation
5. Reimagining the family

Let's look at these five and see what we can discern from them.

#### *1. The Syncretism Train Will Keep Rolling*

Syncretism is the blending of multiple philosophies to form a person's belief foundation. Barna's observation regarding this trend is that 92% of Americans live by a syncretistic set of beliefs, and as biblical teaching continues losing its cultural influence, this trend will continue to grow.

The problem with this is that every worldview category is necessarily exclusive. Thus, when you combine beliefs from more than one worldview category, you end up with irreconcilable internal contradictions. For instance, God can't be personal and impersonal at the same time. God can't exist and not exist at the same time. Human beings

can't be persons created in the image of God and naturally evolved animal creatures at the same time. A person can't believe that salvation is received by grace through faith and that is must be earned at the same time. These are only a few of the possibilities, but syncretized beliefs of this magnitude are commonplace in modern society.

People who hold syncretized beliefs are not in a position to know objective truth, whether they say they believe in it or not. In a world where syncretism rules, relativistic morality is the name of the game.

#### *2. Discipleship Drops off the Radar*

Concerning the discipleship training trend, Barna notes that while many churches and parachurch ministries claim to be interested in discipleship, actual follow through in discipling believers is trending downward. He goes on to note that his research provides no basis for expecting an upturn in serious discipleship going forward. This tracks with my own experience, as well. Discipleship training is probably the most difficult of all activities for a church to pull off, so it naturally ends up being the lowest priority for most churches. There are numerous reasons why that is the case, but perhaps the greatest impediment is the fact that it takes more time and effort to implement consistent discipleship training in a church than for any other program or activity – both for the leaders and participants. We live in such a busy world, and that makes it more difficult for people to spend the time necessary to take discipleship training seriously, so most just don't do it.

#### *3. Mental Health Issues Escalate*

Concerning mental health, Barna notes that these days, Americans are constantly bombarded with negative news such as institutional collapse, corruption, climate turbulence, financial chaos, crime, disunity, and social

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alienation. As a result, the rates of anxiety, depression, fear, and addictions are skyrocketing. This is a trend he sees continuing into the foreseeable future.

The truth is, America is as polarized now as it has ever been in its history. Probably the main reason for this polarization is that non and anti biblical beliefs are not only dominant in society, but those who hold many of these other beliefs are actively working against those who hold beliefs that they don't agree with. There is a militancy that exists in modern America that has led to a lot of social tension. As a result, an increasing number of people are impacted in ways that affect their mental health.

### 4. *Altering the Political Conversation*

The results of the 2024 election ushered in a new political direction in America. Over the last number of years, naturalistic worldview beliefs have dominated among the political leadership, and this has resulted in political policies that run counter to biblical beliefs – both politically and morally.

The most recent election ushered in an entirely different direction that has precipitated a new level of tension in society. Those who agree with the new direction are working hard to implement new policies, while those who are invested in the old policies are fighting back hard.

Barna has identified, in particular, a diminished focus on abortion, a continued decline in political party affiliation, a redefinition of climate change, an expansion of gender issues, moving beyond transgenderism to new frontiers in gender rights, and sexual autonomy battles. This change cannot help but heat up many of the culture war battles. In fact, we already see it happening.

### 5. *Reimagining the Family*

Finally, Barna sees a trend where the traditional family will be increasingly contested and maligned. The traditional family structure has already been ma-

ligned and broken down massively, and this has created a great deal of confusion among the general population about how the family should be defined. Barna believes that as a result of this confusion, those in society will increasingly settle for “inclusive solutions” as opposed to biblical definitions. This will, without a doubt, have a huge negative and long-term impact on our nation.

### What Are the Implications of These Trends?

In a general sense, the implications of these trends is that American society will continue to move in a direction that drifts further from God, and cause individuals to have more and more problems. Human beings were created in a way that allows for personal fulfillment and fullness of life, but in order to achieve those things, it is necessary for them to conform their lives to the reality of our existence. This means not only focusing our lives in ways that corresponds to who we are as material individuals, but also connecting spiritually with God. We were made for those things, and when even one of these is missing, it is impossible to attain genuine fulfillment in our lives.

In modern society, human beings have created all kinds of substitutes for God to try and find fulfillment outside of Him. People attempt it by becoming immersed in their professions, making a lot of money, getting involved in hobbies and sports, attaining positions of power in society, seeking after other religions and philosophies, and indulging in sexual relations outside the bounds God created for it to occur. While all of these things can be distractions that fill our minds and our time, ultimately they cannot provide fulfillment. In our core, we are spiritual beings, and no expression based only on our material environment can fill the spiritual void that is God shaped except for God Himself.

The result of every attempt to create a counterfeit solution for the spiritual void is frustration and emptiness. On a personal level it results in internal emptiness, and on a societal level a spi-

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raling to destruction. It is powerfully evident in the broken lives, broken families, culture war fights in society, and even wars that are part and parcel of today's world. If everyone was aligned with God, these things would not exist. Since they are not, they exist.

While most people will look at this fact and attribute the trends to "social" problems, that is only partially true. The trends do, indeed, reflect problems that are outwardly expressed in society, but the root causes of the problems are spiritual.

When people who hold a naturalistic worldview look at these various problems and consider ways to solve them, they necessarily look only at social solutions. That is the only perspective people have who come from that belief foundation. And make no mistake, that is the majority view of people in modern day America.

### *Concerning Syncretism*

Syncretism is the blending of multiple worldviews into a single belief system. It is impossible, however, to do this without creating irreconcilable internal contradictions since every worldview literally contradicts every other worldview at the most fundamental level.

The only way to get around syncretism is to have an objective authority source, and the only way for that to exist is for it to come from outside the natural universe. Christians acknowledge God as that objective authority source, but Naturalists do not believe that is possible. Their only possibility for authority is their own beliefs, which make it necessarily a relativistic system. With that, syncretism is inevitable.

### *Concerning Discipleship*

The issue of relativism enters the picture with discipleship, as well. When no objective authority source is acknowledged, the decision to follow someone else as their disciple is not based on what is considered true or right, but on what, or who, is able to

fulfill the personal desires of an individual. With that as a starting place, there can be no agreement on the content of a discipleship program.

### *Concerning Mental Health*

An objective authority source is also necessary for good mental health. If what is true and right is based only on what humans determine, mass confusion is the only possible result. And with societal confusion, anxiety, depression, fear, and addictions are inevitable.

### *Concerning Political Conversation*

Political policies are always based on people's moral convictions, and when there is massive disagreement on what is moral and immoral, there is going to be political conflict. This also traces back to the authority sources acknowledged by those in society. As it now stands, relativism rules, which means that there are going to be conflicts in the political discourse based on the various moral priorities of those who are making political policy.

### *Concerning the Family*

The Bible defines the nuclear family as the basis of human society. Naturalistic philosophy, however, has introduced other social constructs into the definition of family. As long as people who hold non-biblical beliefs have influence in society, there will be culture war battles in this arena, and the trend of accepting alternative family structures will continue.

### **What Is the Solution to the Negative Impact of These Trends?**

The solution? Ultimately, the only solution is to get society aligned with truth and reality. And there is such a thing. Whether people are willing to acknowledge it or not, reality exists in some objectively real way, and it doesn't exist in any other way. If God exists as an objectively real person who has revealed Himself and His ways, then the moral beliefs expressed in the Bible are true, and the only way to straighten out society is by people's

hearts and minds being changed by God to align with that reality. If God doesn't exist, then getting society straightened out is an impossibility.

Knowing God is the only way. The solution is spiritual not material or social. As such, it is up to Christians to share Christ with the world. The change of heart and mind that comes with that is the only solution.

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