



Study: Believers Don't Support Gov't. Programs

A study at Baylor University shows that a large majority of Americans believe that "God has a plan," and that idea influences their level of support for government programs. According to the researchers, the study should not come as a complete surprise, as the vast majority of Americans believe in the existence of a higher power.

The study includes a random sample of 1,714 adults, conducted for Baylor by the Gallup Organization during fall 2010. The authors write, "There are several core themes for this wave of the survey. These include health and religiosity, the relationship between entrepreneurship/work and religion, religion and the American ethos (individualism), as well as recurring themes such as religion and cultural issues (e.g. politics, same sex marriage).



The Baylor study, entitled, "[The Values and Beliefs of the American Public](#)," reveals that the same Americans who believe that God has a plan for their lives also tend to be less supportive of government programs.

Christianity Today's Tobin Grant reports:

Those who agreed more strongly were more likely to see financial success as the result of hard work and ability. As a result, they were also least supportive of government programs that help those out of work.

Those people are more likely to believe that the government is doing too much. The study shows that 53 percent of those with strong beliefs in that area are more likely to believe that the government is overreaching, and failing to permit its citizens to be self-reliant. Only one-third of individuals who do not believe in God see the government in the same way.

Likewise, those with a strong belief in God's plan are more likely to agree with the following statement: "Able-bodied people who are out of work shouldn't receive unemployment checks."

Christianity Today reports, "Three-quarters of those who do not believe in God's plan believe that government should provide unemployment aid to those out of work."

The study also investigated how people's religious beliefs impact their thoughts on the economy. One in five Americans hold a combined view that God is actively involved in daily worldly happenings. Those same Americans express economically conservative views. As a result, they are more opposed to the federal government becoming involved in regulatory processes and view the free market as a "matter of faith."



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 21, 2011

Sociologist and study co-author Paul Froese explains, “They say the invisible hand of the free market is really God at work. They think the economy works because God wants it to work. It’s a new religious economic idealism.”

He continues, “When Rick Perry or Michele Bachmann say, ‘God blesses us, God watches us, God helps us,’ religious conservatives get the shorthand. They see ‘government’ as a profane object — a word that is used to signal working against God’s plan for the United States. To argue against this is to argue with their religion.”

The study also reveals that a large portion of the American public views homosexuality as the result of a choice, and hold gays and lesbians responsible for their orientation. The study’s authors concluded that if a “gay gene” was found, attitudes towards those groups would be more favorable. The authors wrote:

[The study] suggest that those who do not affiliate with any religious denomination are much more likely to agree that homosexuality is the result of genetics and much less likely to agree that gays and lesbians choose their sexual orientation. Therefore, increasing numbers of religiously unaffiliated individuals in the United States could shift public opinion on the perceived cause of homosexuality.

Those surveyed were also questioned on their beliefs about heaven and hell. Nearly two-thirds of American adults absolutely believe in heaven, while barely half express the same certainty about hell.

The same study also covered a number of other Christian tenets and their connection to real-world policies such as liberalism and conservatism, religious characteristics of entrepreneurs and the American dream.



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