

The Sociology on Belief

Survey: Interviewing People on their Perspective of God

Baylor University Study:

The Gallup Organization contacted 3,702 potential respondents on behalf of Baylor University in fall 2005 and asked them to complete a 16-page bookleton The Values and Beliefs of the American Public — A National Study. The English-only survey included 77 questions with more than 350 possible answers. More than 46% of the surveys (1,721) were completed and returned. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Highlights of Baylor's analysis:

The Authoritarian God (31.4% of Americans overall, 43.3% in the South) is angry at humanity's sins and engaged in every creature's life and world affairs.

- He is ready to throw the thunderbolt of judgment down on "the unfaithful or ungodly,"

The Benevolent God (23% overall, 28.7% in the Midwest) still sets absolute standards for mankind in the Bible. More than half (54.8%) want the government to advocate Christian values.

- But this group, which draws more from mainline Protestants, Catholics and Jews, sees primarily a forgiving God, more like the father who embraces his repentant prodigal son in the Bible, Froese says.
- They're inclined (68.1%) to say caring for the sick and needy ranks highest on the list of what it means to be a good person.
- "God is in control of everything. He's grieved by the sin of the world, by any created person who doesn't follow him. But I see (a) God ... who loves us, who sees us for who we really are. We serve a God of the second, third, fourth and fifth chance.

The Critical God (16% overall, 21.3% in the East) has his judgmental eye on the world, but he's not going to intervene, either to punish or to comfort.

- "This group is more paradoxical, they have very traditional beliefs, picturing God as the classic bearded old man on high. Yet they're less inclined to go to church or affiliate seriously with religious groups. They are less inclined to see God as active in the world. Their politics are definitely not liberal, but they're not quite conservative, either."
- Those who picture a critical God are significantly less likely to draw absolute moral lines on hot-button issues such as abortion, gay marriage or embryonic stem cell research.

The Distant God (24.4% overall, 30.3% in the West) is "no bearded old man in the sky raining down his opinions on us.

- Followers of this God see a cosmic force that launched the world, then left it spinning on its own.

The Survey: This survey is designed to leave you with a two fold approach, one for the person who has a belief in a higher power and one for the non believer. The interview is meant to be a

guide and is meant for you to have a direction. Feel free to ask other questions as the conversation flows. Let the Spirit of God guide you.

1. Do You Believe in a Higher power?
 - a. If Yes why? (FOR THE BELIVER)
 - b. How did you choose or decide your faith system?
 - c. What level of commitment would you say you have?
 - d. How can you be sure that what you believe or found in the truth?
 - e. If you are unsure are you willing to investigate further to find truth?
 - f. How do you define faith and where does truth come into play with faith?
 - g. How do you define love? (the person may talk about a fluffy worldly kind of love but potentially try to lead them to the idea of love through sacrifice)
 - h. Ask them if they don't mind allowing you to share your personal story with them.
 - i. Close with inviting them to a planned event where they can come learn the truth about Jesus. Make sure you have the event or meeting planned prior to having them attend.
 - j. Leave them with contact information so they can contact you or someone if they have further questions.

2. Do You Believe in a Higher power?
 - a. If No why? (FOR THE NON BELIEVER)
 - b. How did you reach your conclusion that there is no God?
 - c. Was there ever a time that you did have a belief system with a higher being?
 - d. Are you sure that you have done fair research before reaching your conclusion?
 - e. Do you believe that there is a chance that you might be wrong?
 - f. Are you willing to pursue the other side for maybe one more time before ruling it out?
 - g. Ask them if they don't mind allowing you to share your personal story with them.
 - h. Close with inviting them to a planned event where they can come learn the truth about Jesus. Make sure you have the event or meeting planned prior to having them attend.
 - i. Leave them with contact information so they can contact you or someone if they have further questions.