

The State of Theology in America

Saturday, Oct 01, 2022 08:00 AM CT • 54:00

Host: David Wheaton 00:08

The State of Theology in America. That is the topic we'll discuss today, right here on The Christian Worldview Radio Program, where the mission is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm David Wheaton, the host.

The Christian Worldview is a nonprofit listener supported radio ministry. We are able to broadcast on the radio station, website or app on which you are listening today because of the support of listeners just like you. You can connect with us by calling our toll free number 1-888-646-2233, writing to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331, or visiting TheChristianWorldview.org.

Well before we get to the preview today, I just want to say that people around the country and certainly we as well, are praying for the people in the southeast part of this country, Florida, South East Coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian. It just looks devastating. So please know that you are in our thoughts and in our prayers as well.

Theology is defined as, "The study of the nature of God and religious beliefs." So "what do Americans believe about God, salvation, ethics, and the Bible?"

That is how Ligonier Ministries frames The State of Theology survey that they and LifeWay Research partnered together every two years to find out. If you're a Christian and are paying attention to the shift away from God in Scripture that has taken place in our country over the last 75 years, you won't be surprised to learn that Americans have an unbiblical, syncretistic worldview, which is a mix of flawed human reasoning, and remnants of religious moralism that's borrowed from Christianity.

The State of Theology survey makes 35 theological statements to over 3,000 respondents of differing backgrounds and regions. Respondents can answer this statements in one of a few ways. They can strongly agree, somewhat agree, say not sure, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.

Here are a few examples of the theological statements in the survey: "God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam." Obvious answer, that's false. Of course God doesn't accept false religion. But 67% of the people in the survey agreed with that

falsehood, as did 56% of Evangelicals. Here's another statement. "Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God." Obviously, a lie, complete falsehood. Jesus claimed to be God. He did things that only God could do. But 53% of those in the survey agreed with that falsehood, as did 43% of professing Evangelicals. One more statement as an example. "The Bible has the authority to tell us what we must do." That's a truthful statement. 52% in the survey agreed with that statement, with 94% of Evangelicals agreeing, thankfully.

So today in the program, Dr. Steven Nichols is going to join us. He's the chief academic officer of Ligonier Ministries, and the President of Reformation Bible College. He's going to help us understand what is going on with the theological viewpoints, the worldview of Americans, and also Evangelicals as well. Let's get straight to the interview with Dr. Steven Nichols.

Steve, thank you for coming back on the program. Tell us up front, How is the survey conducted? Is this believers or non believers or both? I guess there's more than 3,000 respondents. From where? Tell us how it's done.

Guest: Dr. Stephen Nichols 04:07

It's great to be back with you, David. And I really appreciate your drawing attention to the survey. We think it's really important. You know, it seems like we're awash in a sea of polls, political polls, all kinds of polls. We wanted to put a poll in the field that got at ultimate issues, that got at worldview issues, theology issues. So we partnered here at Ligonier Ministries, we wrote the statements and then we partnered with LifeWay Research. They put the research in the field to over 3,000 participants. It was not to targeted Christians. It was to the general American public. Of course, part of the demographic data is their religious affiliation. So as we go through the data from the survey, we were able to look at both what professing Evangelicals believe on these very crucial theological issues and on what the American public in general believes. And of course, you can go down in the data finder and break it down into gender and age demographics and education demographics. So it's a very fascinating tool, very well done by Lifeway, and then just gives substance to the findings here as we get into it.

Host: David Wheaton 05:19

Now, Steve, we have the link to the survey if listeners want to read all 35 statements and see how people responded. It's linked in our website, TheChristianWorldview.org. Or the direct website is thestateoftheology.com. I'm going to read, Steve, from various statements. I chose about six or seven of them that I thought were interesting for the purpose of our conversation today. So I'm gonna start with statement number four, Steve. And the statements this: God learns and adapts to different circumstances. 50 to over half of the respondents agreed with that, 31%, disagreed. God learns and adapts to different circumstances. God is learning. He's adapting to what's going on in the world. So why is that question so fundamental

and reveals such a terrible, really is the only way you can say it, misunderstanding of the character and nature of God?

Guest: Dr. Stephen Nichols 06:22

Well, yeah, you're absolutely right. We're talking about who God is. This is the foundation. At Ligonier Ministries, our founder, of course, R.C. Sproul, and this is what animated R.C.'s writing and teaching through the decades. This inability of both the culture and the church to see who God is, and he labored passionately for people to have a true picture, not the God they wanted. As we think about this, you know, a God who changes his mind, a God who adapts to circumstances, well, that's sort of a God who is in conversation with us. That's a God who is sort of looking at what we're doing and responding and reactive in sort of a very relational kind of way. You can understand how that's appealing. The problem is, it's dead wrong. And it's a false view of God. It's sort of like dominoes, right? It's the first domino to fall, the doctrine of God. And if it falls in the wrong direction, well, then all those other dominoes, all those other doctrines, who we are, who Christ is, what salvation is, what the Bible is, the purpose of church, all those dominoes will also fall in the wrong direction. So you're absolutely right to focus in on this and see it as essential to a sound theology and biblical worldview. And it should catch our eye as statistic.

Host: David Wheaton 07:47

Yeah, it did. That was statement number four. Dr. Steven Nichols with us today here on The Christian Worldview. He is the Chief Academic Officer of Ligonier Ministries, also the president of Reformation Bible College in Sanford, Florida. Let's ask the question you mentioned earlier about some other surveys and research going on. There was the recent Pew research study that just showed the overall characterization of Americans. Their profession is far less to be Christians than ever.

Let me just read this recent article on Fox News. A recently released study suggests the number of Christians in the US is diminishing quickly and being replaced by those who do not identify with any religion. A new report by Pew Research Center and the General Social Survey found a surge of adults leaving Christianity to become atheist, agnostic or, "Nothing in particular," NONES as they're called. It predicted that if the number of Christians under 30 years old, abandoning their faith accelerates beyond the current pace, adherence of the historically dominant religion of the U.S., Christianity, could become a minority by the year 2045. Noting how approximately 90% of Americans identified as Christians in the early 1990s, the study observed that number, which includes children, had fallen to only 64%. So 90% professed to be Christians back in the 90s. Now, in 2020, down to 64%. That's a huge drop of professing Christians.

Now, of course, this does not mean they are a genuine Born Again Christians, but the survey is about what people profess to be and that is significant in and of itself. The article goes on to say, The number of people in the U.S. who identify as religiously unaffiliated, meanwhile, skyrocketed from 16% in 2007 to 29% in 2020 the research showed. That from Fox News, looking into the Pew Research Center study. Now George Barna has also found similar things in his worldview studies that Americans and even Christians, a very low percentage of them, actually have a biblical worldview. I'm talking like single digits percentage wise. And then this study, The State of Theology comes out and it really shows the same thing. That Americans and Evangelicals do not have a biblical worldview. So the question is, what is causing this?

Guest: Dr. Stephen Nichols 10:31

Well, I think we all sense it. We feel that the winds have shifted. I've seen data on the so called NONES, you know, N O N E S, those with no religious affiliation. And we've very well may be on the precipice of by the time this next generation comes of age, that NONES will actually outnumber Christians in American culture. And I think as you look at it, you have to chalk it up to a rampant secularism in our culture. And, you know, there's aggressive secularists, and there are sort of that militant atheists that are out there. But there are also more mild forms of secularists who just simply go through their lives thinking God is optional and they don't go to church. You know, there used to be a time where everybody had a Bible in their home. Well, now, the Bible is actually sort of a dangerous book. It promotes slavery, it demeans women, it's no longer culturally favorable to have a generic Christian, Protestant worldview. And I think we're sensing it as we look at culture and I think some of the survey data bears it out.

Host: David Wheaton 11:50

Dr. Steven Nichols with us today on The Christian Worldview. Let's get to some more of the statements. First, statement number 15 out of the 35. Everyone is born, this has to do with sin, so I thought this was interesting, everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God. 70% of the respondents agreed with that, that everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God, an overwhelming majority. Only 21% disagree. Now I want to do statement 13 because it relates. Even the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation. 69% nearly 70% of that statement, the respondents disagreed with. In other words, if you sin just once or twice that deserves eternal damnation. Nearly 70% of people disagree with that. 25% agree. So let's focus in on statement number 13. The smallest sin deserving eternal damnation. Why is that true, Steven? Our human reasoning or culture would say that's just disproportionate punishment. You mean if I sin once I deserve eternal damnation? That doesn't seem like a fair or just God.

Guest: Dr. Stephen Nichols 13:00

Yeah. No, I think that is very much the cultural impulse. And sadly, I think that impulse is in the church as well and our view of God. And here we are, we're back to our understanding of who God is. We tend to think in terms of gradations. You know, I'm a good person. Okay, I have my

flaws. And yes, every once in a while, I'll lose my temper, or, you know, I may cut someone off in traffic. But in general, I'm a good guy. I'm certainly not as bad as that person over there, or as those people over there. And we tend to when it comes to morality, or comes to evaluating our standing, we tend to have the wrong metrics. We have a relative metrics, and we put ourselves against other people. The standard is God. And if the standard is God, then the standard is God in His absolute purity, and holiness, who dwells in inaccessible light. So that is the standard by which we are judged. And when we understand who God is in His holiness, then we're on our knees, our head is bowed to the ground. And we recognize that every sin, even the smallest sin, is worthy of eternal damnation because it is an affront to the holy God. And that just is not how we think. We want to say sort of judge ourselves against other people. And when we do that, we have a real misconception of our own guilt and of what sin is. And just to emphasize this point, David, that question number 15 that you mentioned, everyone is born innocent, and so seven out of 10 general population, U.S. adults agree with that statement. When you put that same statement to Evangelicals, 65% agree. So Evangelicals are just 6.5 out of 10. They're a half a person behind the culture on this question. So it's both what culture thinks about human nature and sin. But what even people inside the church think about it that we need to be paying attention to. You know, going back to that question of does God change? 51% of U.S. adults say that He does. And 48% of Evangelicals say that He does. The statistical margin of error there, they're pretty much right alongside of their non church counterparts.

Host: David Wheaton 15:49

That's extremely troubling. I'm going to ask you why that is in a second here. Dr. Steven Nichols with us today on The Christian Worldview, the Chief Academic Officer of Ligonier Ministries who did this State of Theology Survey. They do it every two years. You can go to the stateoftheology.com. It's really well laid out on the website to look into it. Or we have a direct link to it at our website, TheChristianWorldview.org as well. All right, we need to take a short break for some ministry announcements. Stay tuned. We have much more coming up on this topic today. You are listening to The Christian Worldview Radio Program.

Featured Resource: New Life in Christ by Dr. Steven Lawson 16:26

The momentum from the world is like a tsunami that's flooding our entire country. And the only way to change it is for people to be born again, is for there to be a great awakening in our country again and for people to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. And that will never happen until there is first conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment for people to repent and to turn from their sins and to turn to God and embrace his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That was Dr. Steven Lawson. His book, *New Life in Christ What Really Happens When You're Born Again And Why It Matters* is available for a donation of any amount to The Christian

Worldview. Regular retail is \$16.99. Go to TheChristianWorldview.org or call 1-888-646-2233 or write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331.

Featured Resource: Global Warming Skepticism for Busy People 17:27

The 2006 Oscar winning film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, featuring former Vice President Al Gore, painted a disturbing portrait of the future. Superstorms, melting icecaps, rising temperatures.

Is this crisis unfolding more quickly than you would have anticipated?

This is unfolding faster than the scientists warned us and now they're telling us we've got to prepare for much worse unless we take action quickly.

Instead of believing the false prophets of NBC News and Al Gore, order a copy of *Global Warming Skepticism for Busy People* by Roy Spencer for donation of any amount to The Christian Worldview. This 113 page, softcover book dispels the scare mongering with actual facts. Go to TheChristianWorldview.org or call 1-888-646-2233 or write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331.

Host: David Wheaton 18:34

Welcome back to The Christian Worldview. I'm David Wheaton. Be sure to visit our website [The ChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org) where you can subscribe to our free weekly email and annual print letter, order resources for adults and children, and support the ministry. Now back to the interview with Dr. Steven Nichols of Ligonier Ministries and reformation Bible College as we discuss *The State of Theology in America and the church*.

Steve, let's go down to statement number 17 and statement number 31. Statement number 17 is, The Bible is 100% accurate in all that it teaches. So 51% of the respondents agreed with that, 44% disagreed with that. So there's a real division on that one, the Bible being a 100% accurate, inerrant. Statement 31 is, Religious belief is a matter of personal opinion. It is not about objective truth. And 60%, the majority of respondents agreed with that. That religion is a matter of personal opinion. There's no objective truth there. Only 32% disagreed with that. So this would mean that our society has some sort of syncretistic worldview. It's not based on the objective truth of the Word of God. So what is shaping Americans worldview? And how do you think the survey results would have been different, let's say 100 years ago in this country?

Guest: Dr. Stephen Nichols 20:04

Well, we're getting into your area aren't we, of worldview. And we think about this doctrine of Scripture. We speak of the authority of Scripture, and what are we talking about? And we're talking about our authority for life and godliness. And we're talking about not just biblical truth with the other question of objective truth, but we're talking about just plain truth. And I do think

if you go back in time, you would find that there was much more of a cultural commitment to the idea of objective truth. There was a sense in which no, there is truth, and we're not all partially right, or we're not all equally right. There are those who are right and or those are wrong, and there's a judge and that judge is absolute and objective and transcendent. And it is an authority we can appeal to. Well, culturally we have a rabid relativism afoot. And that relativism has resulted in saying really absurd things like my truth and your truth. So now we live in a universe where there are as many truths as there are people. And that's just, first of all, it's not sustainable. It's absurd, if we all have to submit to an authority and a standard of truth. But it very much impacts the Bible.

You know I was thinking about this, not trying to make a case that he was a Christian, and not making that argument at all. But if you go back to Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address in the throws of the Civil War, it is absolutely full biblical citations, biblical allusions and references. And he could do that because his audience, he had a shared conception and common ground with his audience of the Bible. I don't think we're there anymore. And the Bible has been pushed further and further away from American life and American culture. And I think, sadly, it's affected the church. So this question you raised about the Bible, and is it true, and we see what culture thinks, but if you go to Evangelicals and you mentioned we do the survey every two years, well, if you go back to Evangelicals, back in 2016, 17% actually agreed with that statement. That's far different from their non church counterparts, but still 17% don't think the Bible is 100% accurate.

But if you come to 2022, so just six years later, that number goes from 17% to 26%. Now I want to pay attention to that, because what that's telling me that as the Bible is going down, down, down, in the eyes of culture, it's also going down as the authority in the eyes of those who are professing Evangelicals. So again, what we see here, and a worldview is not one that is founded on and informed by and safeguarded by the Bible, we're seeing Christians adopting worldviews that are informed by their culture and informed by what's happening around them.

Host: David Wheaton 23:16

And so the obvious follow up to that is, and we haven't broken every category down today in our conversation, but it is broken down in the survey as to Evangelicals that aren't necessarily too far behind the broader, unbelieving culture when it comes to the statements. And these statements, if you went through all 35, and you have a biblical worldview, the answers are pretty clear to every single one. These are not complicated, you know, really highly debatable issues. I don't think the answer is fairly obvious where it should be from Scripture. And so what is going on in Evangelical churches that they're not answering each of these questions, Oh, well that's obvious. You know, like, the Bible is 100% accurate. At least it should be 100%, right? Why isn't that the case? What's going wrong in the church?

Guest: Dr. Stephen Nichols 24:03

Well, first of all, David, is I love hearing you say that, because I remember, you know, Dr. Sproul, passed away in the end of 2017. But he was with us for the first two times we did this survey in 2014 and 2016. And whenever we saw a statistic and it was like, in the, you know, 91, 92 percentile for Evangelicals, you know, we'd want to celebrate it. And R.C. would be in the background saying, What? 100% should be the answer to that question. So I think you're right. I think if you are a biblically informed Christian, you know, this isn't a trick, theological final exam, it's pretty straightforward. And the answers are pretty obvious if you have the Bible as your authority to get to your real question there.

I think it shows two things. I think number one, it shows that there is this tendency for us to think behaviors are more important than beliefs. And we definitely get that behaviors flow from beliefs. We definitely want to stress that behaviors matter. But it's not about behaviors at the expense of beliefs. And I think there is this tendency sometimes in some pockets of evangelicalism to put the emphasis not on beliefs and doctrine, because after all, as the saying goes, doctrine divides, and put the emphasis on our behaviors and our actions and our activities. And I think that's misguided. And I think the results of the survey show that to be the case.

Doctrine doesn't divide, doctrine unites. True doctrine unites true Christians and gives us our mission and gives us our identity. And from that flows our ethic. This is very much, Paul. He's always talking about what you believe. Now, here's how you behave. And he doesn't make a competition between the two, or see the two as not related. He stresses the connection. So that's one thing. We've got to get back to this idea that no, beliefs do matter. Beliefs are foundational. Behaviors flow from beliefs. And then if we get back to that, that leads to the second thing which is, we sort of abdicated our role as teachers and teaching doctrine.

And sometimes theologians are to blame for this, David. You know they're the professionals and they talk in Latin, they have big syllable words, and they've sort of left us behind a little bit in the pew here. And the reality is, as Dr. Sproul taught us, everyone's a theologian. And there are professional theologians, and they're trained to be sure and they serve the church. But everyone in the church is a theologian. Everyone needs to be a student of God's Word. Everyone needs to recognize that they have an obligation to know what they believe. We certainly have an obligation to teach that to the next generation.

So I would say this is a clarion call for the church to teach. And, you know, you see this in the New Testament. You see this in Paul's exhortation to Timothy to safeguard the deposit of faith, to teach faithful men, and then those faithful men will be able to teach others also. And that is right at the very core of our identity of a Christian church. So those are the two things I'd say

let's remember. Beliefs matter, and they lead to behaviors. And secondly, let's teach. Let's roll up our sleeves and get in there and study God's Word and teach it.

Host: David Wheaton 27:30

Amen to that. Dr. Steven Nichols with us today on The Christian Worldview from Ligonier Ministries. He is also the president of Reformation Bible college. We're talking about The State of Theology survey. You can go to our website, TheChristianWorldview.org and get a link directly over to it or it's thestateoftheology.com where you can read it. Here is a difficult debatable question, Steve. This is statement number 19. This is one that there will be some disagreements on. I'm gonna ask you the tough one here. Statement number 19. God chose the people he would save before He created the world.

So this is the question of foreknowledge, predestination, God's election. 30% of the respondents agree with that. That God chose the people he would save before He created the world. I have to look into how many Evangelicals believed that. But 52% disagree that God did not choose the people he would save before He created the world. That's more of the Arminian standpoint, that it's really up to us, not God's sovereign election. So I'm going to ask you to frame the question this way. How do you explain the truth that the Bible teaches clearly about God's sovereign election before time began of those who would be saved? And yet at the same time the Bible clearly teaches that man has a responsibility to hear that truth and believe in it, were called to believe. We get questions about that frequently here at the program, you teach elections, so forth, the Bible says, Whoever believes in him. So how do you explain that tension?

Guest: Dr. Stephen Nichols 29:08

I think first of all, oftentimes doctrine of election is seen as something that comes from again, systematic theology, comes from Calvinists. We have to see this comes from Scripture. So I would say go read Deuteronomy, chapter 7. Go read Deuteronomy, chapter 10. Read Malachi chapter 1, and you'll see there God's election of Israel. You'll see that God chose Jacob as Malachi 1 says, and he hated Esau. And you also see that it wasn't because Israel was some great nation or had something going for it. In fact, at one point, Deuteronomy 10 it says, You are the fewest of all the peoples on the earth yet I have set my love on you. So that's the election of Israel.

Then you go to Romans chapter 9. And now we're bringing up Jacob and Esau again. And Paul in Romans nine says, Listen, it doesn't depend on what Jacob or Esau did at all. And God chose Jacob, because God in his sovereignty and out of his good pleasure, and his freewill, chooses some to salvation. I think first of all, we got to start there. The doctrine of election is not manmade. I do think it's taught in Scripture. And those are some texts I would encourage people to look at. In addition to Ephesians chapter 1, where God chose us in Him before the

foundation of the world, which is what we're talking about here. Now, the question then is, well, then why am I responsible? And I think that is part of the mystery here. First of all, we have to recognize that we are all sinful, we are all what some theologians call Adam's sinful lump. And it is out of that sinful lump that God chooses some to salvation, and passes over others, and leaves them fallen. So that's a lecture. But we are commanded, Jesus never stands in front of someone and gives them the option to believe in Him, He commands belief. When Peter preached at Acts 2, he commanded "repent", he didn't say, now it's up to you, you have a choice. He commanded repentance. When we see invitations in the epistles, they're not choices. They're commands to believe.

So every single human being is commanded to believe in Jesus Christ. And that unbelief, that failure to see Jesus as Savior, that is the condemnation of that human being. We have a challenge here to be sure, it is a mystery here to be sure that we are responsible. But there is the doctrine of election, side by side. And I do believe that's the mystery. But I don't think we relax the tension of that mystery by giving human beings free will. Recognize responsibility. And that's the tension. And some Christians want to relax it by saying, Oh, this is easy. There's no tension here. We're perfectly free. And we can either choose God or not. I don't agree with that.

Host: David Wheaton 32:33

I think that's well answered . That is such a difficult question for our human minds or limited human minds to understand but it's perfectly reconciled in the mind of God and it's something that He's revealed so much to us. And we just have to believe both that God is sovereign in election, but we're also like you said, commanded to repent and believe in Christ. So it's like, I guess you can maybe think of it like two train tracks, two rails of a track, they both go to the same destination. They're parallel each other and they're both true. Very interesting question. And thank you for explaining that.

Dr. Steven Nichols with us today. I'm going to group together statements number 25, 27, and 28. They all have to do with sexual morality. This is something so rebelled against today. Number 25 statement is, Sex outside of traditional marriage is a sin. Just over half of the respondents agreed with that, 42 disagree and think that it's okay to have sex outside of traditional marriage. Statement 28. The Bible's condemnation of homosexual behavior does not apply today. Nearly 50% of people agreed with that, 42% disagreed. So that was kind of in half. One more statement to do with this, statement number 27. Gender identity is a matter of choice. 42% of people agreed with that. That's actually very surprising. This has been something that's really come up in the last couple years that's being pushed so hard now, the transgender movement. Only 51% disagreed. This sexual ethic here, gender ethic and so forth, How has this become such an anti or unbiblical ethic become mainstream so quickly?

Guest: Dr. Stephen Nichols 34:15

So I think not only are the statistics important of the 2022 finding, but here's where it's valuable to go do a deep dive into the data. Most of these questions go back to 2016. The original question was sex outside of marriage is a sin. Based on the 2015 Obergefell decision and between 2014 and 2016 we changed that statement in 2016 to say traditional marriage. And I only mention that to say our culture has shifted radically. You go back to 2015 and the Obergefell decision and then you go into after the pandemic and the social upheaval response to that and the transgender movement and the rapidity with which the same sex agenda has been mainstreamed.

It's almost mind boggling, David. And I think as you look at it again, you just see how, without a basis without a standard, we will shift with the winds. And this is especially interesting in the case of Evangelicals. If you go to that gender identity statement that you read, gender identity as a matter of choice, 32% of Evangelicals agreed with that in 2016. 2022 is 37%. So 5% steady increase. You go to the homosexual question, the Bibles condemnation of homosexual behavior doesn't apply today, 19% of Evangelicals agreed in 2016, but it has gone up to 28% in 2022. That's a 9% increase.

So here you see, again, Christians being affected by the culture they are surrounded. And if you've abandoned an orthodox view of God, and an orthodox view of Scripture, it will impact your ethics and how you live. I mean, that's what you do with an emphasis on worldview. How we live is totally linked up with what we believe. And you see it culturally. And sadly, you see it in the church. So yeah, these are important things to be watching. And I'll give you one more hint here. Go in and look at the demographic data, because it's the younger Evangelicals coming up who are significantly shifting in their views on gender and homosexuality. And they are thinking very differently about these things than the previous generation in the church. And that's something that we should be paying attention to.

Host: David Wheaton 36:48

It certainly is. You are listening to The Christian Worldview. I'm David Wheaton. We have much more coming up on this topic after these ministry announcements.

Featured Children's Resources 36:57

Scripture commands that children how to be brought up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Offering Biblically sound resources for children is one of our top ministry priorities. At our store at TheChristianWorldview.org, you will find carefully selected children's Bibles and books along with video and audio resources. Check out the Bible Infographics for Kids books, Little Pilgrims Progress, and the popular Adam Raccoon set. Theo is a 15 episode video series addressing key doctrines of the faith that is a must see for children and adults. Satan and the world are bent on capturing the heart and mind of your child. Instead, get sound resources that

will train them up in the way they should go. Browse and order at TheChristianWorldview.org. Or give us a call for recommendations at 1-888-646-2233. That's 1-888-646-2233 or TheChristianWorldview.org.

Featured Resource: My Boy Ben 37:58

For a limited time, we are offering My Boy, Ben for a donation of any amount to The Christian Worldview. The book is the true story of a Yellow Lab that I had back when I was competing in the professional tennis tour. It's about relationships with Ben, my parents, with a childhood friend I would eventually marry, but ultimately with God who causes all things, even the hard things to work together for good. You can order a signed and personalized copy for yourself or for your friend who enjoys a good story, loves dogs, sports, or the outdoors and most of all needs to hear about God's grace and the Gospel. My Boy, Ben is owned by The Christian Worldview. It's 264 pages, hardcover, and retails for \$24.95. To order go to TheChristianWorldview.org or call 1-888-646-2233 or write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331.

Host: David Wheaton 39:04

Thanks for joining us today on The Christian Worldview. I'm David Wheaton, the host. Just a reminder that today's program and past programs are archived at our website, TheChristianWorldview.org. Transcripts and Short Takes are also available. Now back to the interview with Dr. Steven Nichols of Ligonier Ministries.

As we discussed The State of Theology survey for 2022, statement number 35, Steve, is another one of the most important statements of all here. We started out at the beginning talking about who God is. Well, let's go to statement number 35. The final statement in the survey and this has to do with how can we be right with God? Most key question for us as men and women. So the statement is this, Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their savior, receive God's free gift of eternal salvation. 60% of the respondents agreed with that, 40% disagree. So a little more than half agreed, less than half disagreed. And this is, like I said, a very, very critical question for every person. So how do you explain to someone, Steve, that you are reconciled to God through believing in what he has revealed about himself, about Christ, who he is, what he did on the cross and it's not just believing, plus doing certain religious deeds that saves you?

Guest: Dr. Stephen Nichols 40:35

Yeah, this is the gospel, as you said. And I love that. How can I be right with God? That's the ultimate question. It's, it's like every question leads to that one. So what we're talking about here is the gospel. And what we're talking about here is a right understanding of the gospel. If we don't have a right understanding of the gospel, it's not just a matter of life and death, it's a matter of eternal life and death. And so how are we saved? How are we right with God? How

do we have peace with God? Well, it is through Jesus Christ, His work on the cross, and His work alone. As R.C. Sproul would say, If we're going to get into heaven, we're going to need to be wearing the robes of someone else's righteousness, and that someone else's righteousness is Jesus Christ. And it's the only way we can get into heaven.

And the key to this is the alone part. The work of Christ alone, grace alone, faith alone is what saves us. And so this is sort of the bullseye that the arrow is pointed towards this question. And it just reminds us again of what's at stake here. This isn't just marginal, peripheral theological things. What we're talking about here, ultimately, is about the gospel, and our calling as a church to know and defend and proclaim a biblically faithful gospel. And for us as those who are sinners, which is all of us, who are the enemies of God, which is all of us, which are under the wrath of God, which is all of us, the gospel of Jesus Christ is our only hope. That's the message here that we need to think about. And I think, think about soberly, and seriously as we contemplate this survey.

Host: David Wheaton 42:24

Well, Steve, thank you so much for coming on the program today. This really gives us a lot to think about. As you read the statements, we should be thinking, Am I getting the right answers according to what the Bible says to these statements? And if I am, am I sharing these answers, trying to, looking for opportunities to share this biblical worldview with others? And especially that last statement about how Christ alone is the only means of salvation. We appreciate all you're doing at Ligonier and Reformation Bible College. Thank you for coming on the program today. All of God's best and grace to You.

Guest: Dr. Stephen Nichols 42:56

Oh, thank you, David. It's my pleasure and God's blessing on your work.

Host: David Wheaton 43:00

Again, that was Dr. Steven Nichols of Ligonier Ministries. He is also the president of Reformation Bible College. And you can read this survey for yourself by going to our website, TheChristianWorldview.org, where there'll be a link there, or you can go directly to the website which is, thestateoftheology.com. Now the goal of doing this is not to discourage you about where the country and the church is going, or to curse the God rejection going on in the country, but really, just to understand what is taking place in our society right now, what is taking place in the Evangelical Church, the culture in which we are living, so that we can have a sharper Christian or biblical worldview, and ultimately proclaim the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega of the Christian worldview, which is knowing and following Christ. You need to know the Christ of the Christian worldview. Otherwise, there would be no desire and be no power to actually keep the Christian worldview.

What this study shows is that there is an acceleration of Romans chapter 1 taking place in our culture today. It's a tidal wave. It's a God's judgment of being given over to the sin that society so craves. Romans chapter 1:18 says, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And here's the key word, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it evident to them. Like we were discussing, these statements are clearly taught in Scripture, there should be nearly 100% Yes, that's true or that's false. And yet you see in so many of them that the answers are all wrong, because people aren't thinking biblically about these theological statements. So the goal of the world is to suppress God, suppress the Bible, marginalize Christians and Christianity. The goal is to corrupt people, and particularly children. We see this today. And it really is to be direct. It's straight from Satan.

And whether people know it or not, who are pushing back against God's scripture and Christians, their advocates are agents of Satan. And it's now very blatant. You take the example of drag queen story hour, or the transgender indoctrination of children in schools and parents being totally deceived and for it. You can't categorize as anything beyond that, Satan has just deceive the minds and the hearts of people in this world. Now, you might think you can just kind of chalk up the the downward trend of these surveys away from Christianity, to the fallen nature of man. But you really can't do that, because man's nature has always been fallen since the, you know, shortly after creation when Adam and Eve fell. And the reason you can't do that is that there was once a time in America where The Christian worldview was much more prominent. And that has changed now for the worse. As Stephen Nichols said, Without a standard and that standard is scripture, we will shift with the wind.

So yes, there is an element that unregenerate mankind resists and wants to suppress the truth about God and about Christ. But the reason that the trend is away from sound, theological understanding of Scripture and truth is that the Bible is not being proclaimed clearly and boldly within the Christian realm, whether in the church, from the pulpit in churches, but also the teaching coming out of parachurches, whether Christian schools, colleges, seminaries, Christian book industry, the music industry, the social Christian ministries, biblical doctrines are not being taught correctly and clearly. There's a softening of the sharp edges. There's a neglecting parts of biblical truth. There is an affirming of there's a partnering together with those who preach a compromised Christianity. And this survey, as other ones have shown us, this is what happens.

Meanwhile, the worldly culture has a strong proclamation of their lives and people are being influenced by those lies. It's really as simple as that. I was reading this week an example of what will only make this trend go further away from a Christian worldview. Now, perhaps good intentions from this campaign, It is called, He Gets Us. Christianity Today wrote an article about this campaign saying, If you haven't seen the commercials yet, you will. This month what

is thought to be the biggest ever Christian advertising campaign will go national. TV commercials along with online ads and billboards will target millennials and Gen Z with a carefully crafted, exhaustively researched and market tested message about Jesus Christ. It's entitled, *He Gets Us*. Those behind the *He Gets Us* campaign say they'll spend \$100 million dollars donated by a small group of wealthy, anonymous families, it would be interesting to know who they are, on the national launch, putting the campaign in the same financial arena as big name brands, like Old Navy, TD Ameritrade and Mercedes Benz. The creators of *He Gets Us*, say this is a strength of their particular campaign, it can't be misunderstood as promoting a single congregation, because churches all over the country and across denominations are involved. Goes back to the ecumenical thing, de emphasize doctrine and you're gonna get something that's a mile wide and only an inch deep. And in that inch depth, an accurate, full depiction of who Christ is will be lost, the gospel will be softened and sound biblical truth will even more be muddied.

This from the *He Gets Us* website, "We're not left or right. We're not affiliated with any church or denomination. We simply want everyone to understand and relate to the authentic Jesus as he's depicted in the Bible. The Jesus of radical forgiveness, compassion, and love." Now, right there, even from that, Jesus does radically forgive. He is compassionate and He is loving. But it totally ignores the other side of of Christ being holy, righteous, and that He is a just judge. So let me just play 30 seconds of one of their many videos that they've made on this and we'll get into more in a coming week about this campaign because there's a lot to it, with \$100 million being spent. This little short audio clip is entitled, The Rebel Talking About Jesus.

Audio Clip: The Rebel Talking About Jesus 49:55

A rebel took to the streets. He recruited others to join him. They roam the hood and challenged authority. Community leaders feared them. Religious leaders abhorred them. We have to get them off the streets, they said. But they weren't part of a gang spreading hate and terror. They were spreading love.

Host: David Wheaton 50:25

The video ends with the words on the screen saying, "Jesus was wrongly judged. He gets us, all of us". There's definitely a strong social justice element to this whole thing. For instance, you can buy gear from the website, with a T shirt imprinted, Jesus was an immigrant or Jesus was a refugee. I'm sure you're getting the idea. But for now, let's close with how Paul reached out to the ungodly culture in which he was living when he visited Athens. He was troubled by the worship of false idols and false religion. And so here's what Paul proclaimed. He said, The God who made the world and all things in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, nor is he served by human hands as though He needed anything since he himself gives to all people life and breath in all things, and he made from one man, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth. So he starts out with who

God is, and how God is our highest authority, He is the standard for truth. Then skipping forward to verse 30 he says this, Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He, God has fixed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness through a man, Jesus Christ, whom he has appointed, having furnished proof to all men, by raising Him from the dead. That's called a strong declaration, proclamation, a command to repent and believe in Christ. And that's what churches and parachurch ministries and you and I, as individual Christians need to do.

Thank you for joining us today on The Christian Worldview. In just a moment, there'll be all kinds of information on this nonprofit listener supported radio ministry. Let's be encouraged though. We have much work to do to proclaim the gospel in a biblical worldview to a culture and a society in a church that desperately needs to have a clear understanding of who God is, who his Son is, and what His Word says, because Jesus Christ and His word are the same yesterday, and today and forever! So until next time, "Think biblically, live accordingly, and stand firm!"

The mission of The Christian Worldview is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. We hope today's broadcast encouraged you toward that end. To hear a replay of today's program, order a transcript or find out what must I do to be saved? Go to the Christianworldview.org or call toll free one triple 8646 2233 The Christian Worldview is a listener supported nonprofit radio ministry furnished by the Overcomer Foundation. To make a donation become a Christian worldview partner order resources, subscribe to our free newsletter or contact us visit the Christianworldview.org call one triple 8646 2233 Or write to box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331 That's box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331. Thanks for listening to The Christian Worldview.