

# Black Christians register higher in holistic spiritual health

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PHILADELPHIA (BP)—Black Christians score 10 percent higher than all other Christians in spiritual vitality, according to a new scale of holistic spiritual health the American Bible Society introduced in its [2023 State of the Bible report](#).

The Spiritual Vitality Gauge measures spiritual health through a set of nine concise questions focused on beliefs, practices and faith in action among self-identified Christians, the Bible society said July 13 in releasing its findings in the report's fourth chapter.



The higher score among African Americans, when compared to whites and Hispanic Americans, should not be surprising, the American Bible Society said, as Black Christians lead in nearly every measure of spiritual life the study uses.

“State of the Bible research shows overwhelmingly that Black Christians lead the way on virtually every desirable metric. This group has a lot to teach the rest of the American church,” the American Bible Society wrote.

“People in this group are more likely to attend church weekly, to read the Bible, to be ‘Scripture Engaged,’ to be ‘Bible Centered,’ and now to display spiritual vitality in their lives.”

Religion has been a source of resiliency for many racial and ethnic groups, the American Bible Society said, referencing a 2020 article from

researchers at Case Western University based on a study of historical and contemporary literature. The church's appeal to Black Americans is both spiritual and practical, the [Case Western article](#) asserts.

"Historically and contemporaneously, the Black church, in addition to being a religious institution, is a social, cultural, civic, educational and political institution that is central to Black communities," the article reads.

"Because of social, economic, and institutional disenfranchisement, Black Americans have traditionally had difficulty accessing public and private services. As a result, Black churches tend to offer a greater number of community programs and mental health services than white churches."

Specifically, Black Christians registered 76 on the spiritual vitality scale of 0-100, at least 10 percent higher than the 68 among Hispanic Americans and the 69 among whites.

## **How do people connect with God?**

The American Bible Society also explores the various ways people connect with God in the study's fourth chapter, incorporating nine spiritual temperaments bestselling author and former Southern Baptist pastor Gary Thomas presented in the 1996 book *Sacred Pathways*.

Naturalists, those who connect best with God while in nature (32 percent); ascetics, connecting most with God while alone, reading the Bible or praying (14 percent); and contemplatives, connecting with God when they sense he is touching their heart (11 percent), ranked as the top three temperaments among study participants. Thirteen percent of those studied feel no connection to God.

Consequently, those who connect best with God in nature were least likely to attend church services, with 72 percent almost never attending church

and only 11 percent attending weekly. Contemplatives scored highest in church attendance, with 48 percent attending weekly and 31 percent attending almost never. Among ascetics, 42 percent attend weekly.

In addition to church attendance, the American Bible Society studied how spiritual temperaments impact spiritual commitment, beliefs about God and scriptural engagement.

Evangelical Protestants and historically Black Protestants were more prevalent among ascetics, with the temperament accounting for 23 percent of both groups; followed by naturalists, accounting for 22 percent of Evangelical Protestants and 21 percent of historically Black Protestants.

The State of the Bible annually looks at the Bible, faith and the church in America. The American Bible Society collaborated with the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center. The 18-minute survey, conducted Jan. 5-30, produced 2,761 responses from a representative sample of adults 18 and older within the 50 states and D.C.