

Most Americans still say they want more Christ in Christmas

December 11, 2018

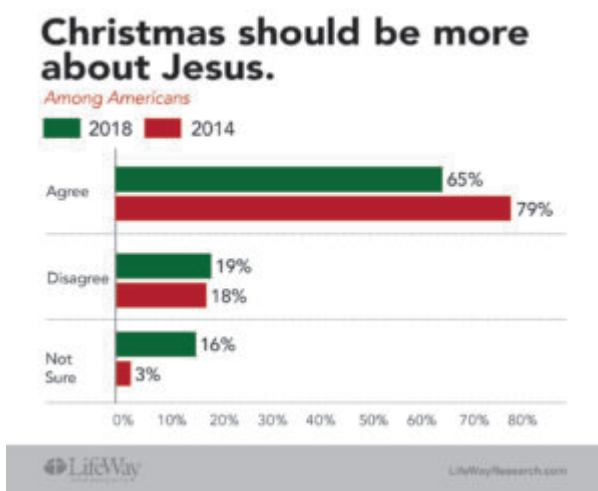
NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Most Americans want more religious meaning to the Christmas season. For about one-third, that includes the way seasonal greetings are expressed.

A [new study](#) from LifeWay Research found two-thirds of Americans (65 percent) say, “Christmas should be more about Jesus.”

Those looking for more Christ in Christmas in 2018 are proportionately fewer than four years ago, however. According to a [2014 LifeWay Research study](#) 79 percent of Americans at that time said Christmas should be more about Jesus.

While similar numbers disagreed in 2014 and 2018 (18 and 19 percent respectively), the percentage who said they were unsure if Christmas should be more about Jesus jumped from 3 percent four years ago to 16 percent today.

“Saying Christmas should be more about Jesus is a little like saying Thanksgiving should be more about giving thanks. It’s in the name of the holiday,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. “Yet, it appears there is less cultural expectation for celebrations of the Christmas holiday to include the religious aspect.”



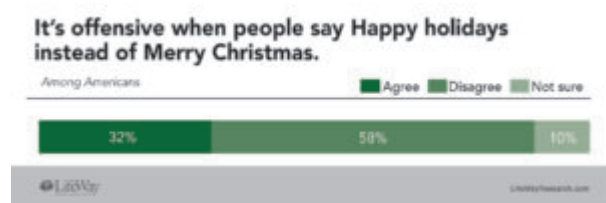
Much of the shift came from non-Christians. In 2014, a majority of members of other faiths (63 percent) and almost half of the non-religious (46 percent) agreed that Christmas should be more about Jesus. Today, those numbers have been cut in half.

In 2018, around a third of Americans of other religious persuasions (35 percent) and slightly more than a quarter of the non-religious (28 percent) believe Christmas needs more Christ.

Fewer Christians also say Christmas should be more about Jesus. In 2014, 92 percent agreed, while 81 percent agree today. Still, 97 percent of those with evangelical beliefs agree today.

Some say ‘Bah, Humbug’ to ‘Happy Holidays’

One of the ways some want to see more recognition of Jesus in the celebrations this time of year is in our greetings. Around a third of Americans (32 percent) say it is offensive when someone says “Happy holidays” instead of “Merry Christmas.” A similar number (33 percent) say the same about using “X-mas” instead of “Christmas.”



Those numbers are similar to four years ago. In 2014, 39 percent found “X-mas” offensive and 29 percent said the same about “Happy holidays.”

Today, 40 percent of Christians find “Happy holidays” to be offensive, compared to 12 percent of members of other religions and 15 percent of the non-religious. Around two-thirds of those with [evangelical beliefs](#) (65 percent) say they are offended by “Happy holidays” being used instead of

“Merry Christmas.”

Americans 50 and over are almost twice as likely to say they find “Happy holidays” offensive than those under 50—42 percent to 22 percent.

“It’s likely that Christians and older Americans are nostalgic for previous years or reluctant to acknowledge that not everyone celebrates Christmas this time of year,” McConnell said.

“Many have the idea that most Americans are the same or that we share one culture of baseball, apple pie and Christmas, but that’s not the case. And when we encounter someone who believes differently from us, that can be jarring and even seem offensive for some.”

Frequent religious service attenders are more likely to be offended by “Happy holidays.” Almost half of those who attend a worship service once a week or more (47 percent) say the substitute greeting is offensive, compared to 35 percent who attend once or twice a month, 32 percent of those who attend a few times a year, 23 percent of those who attend once a year or less, and 21 percent of those who say they never attend.

“Instead of refusing to accept there are other belief systems in our country today, Christians may be better served finding a way to wish their non-Christian friends and family would experience all the blessings possible during the season in which believers celebrate God blessing Earth with his Son,” McConnell suggested.

LifeWay Research conducted the study of 1,004 Americans, Sept. 21-23. Analysts used sample stratification and base weights for gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, metro/non-metro, home ownership, education and income to reflect the most recent U.S. Census data. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.