



## More God Awareness

Adapted from “More: How God Increases” series by Scott Erickson

God has a plan to improve your life. He has a desire to increase your sensitivity to His presence and power. Today, we live in a country where fewer and fewer believe in God. As men, church leaders, and fathers, we have a daunting task before. Pew Research has done some fascinating work to challenge men and leaders.

God is frequently invoked in American public life. Indeed, there is no shortage of instances of official acknowledgement of the divine, from the appearance of “In God We Trust” on our currency to the phrase “one nation under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance.

To be sure, the vast majority of Americans still believe in God. But there are strong signs that many are less certain about this belief than in years past. And a small but growing minority of Americans say they do not believe in God at all.

When asked if they believe in “God or a universal spirit” in the Pew Research Center’s 2014 Religious Landscape Study, 89% of U.S. adults say yes – down from 92% from the previous RLS in 2007. Nearly one-in-ten (9%) now say they don’t believe in God, up from 5% in 2007.

The changes have been even more substantial when it comes to certainty of belief in God: 63% of Americans are absolutely certain that God exists, down 8 percentage points from 2007, when 71% said this.

These shifts have been especially sharp among the growing share of Americans who do not identify with any religious group (and call themselves atheists, agnostics or “nothing in particular”). While 22% of these religious “nones” said that they did not believe in God in 2007, that figure has risen to 33% in 2014. And just 27% of the religiously unaffiliated are absolutely certain that God exists, down from 36% in 2007.

But a lack of certainty in God’s existence has become more common even among some Christian groups and members of non-Christian faiths. For example, two-thirds (66%) of those in the mainline Protestant tradition now say

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they are absolutely certain that God exists, down from 73% in 2007. A similar trend is seen among Catholics: 64% expressed an absolutely certain belief in God in 2014, compared with 72% in 2007. And among those who identify as Jewish on the basis of religion, the share saying they do *not* believe in God at all has risen from 10% to 17% over this seven-year period.

This trend is not universal. Indeed, belief in God has been more stable among some more highly observant religious groups, such as evangelical Protestants and members of the historically black Protestant tradition – among whom nearly nine-in-ten say they are absolutely certain God exists. And 84% of U.S. Muslims are certain there is a God or universal spirit, similar to 2007 (82%).

There are other demographic differences as well when it comes to belief in God. For instance, blacks are more likely than whites and Hispanics (83% vs. 61% and 59%, respectively) to be absolutely certain about God’s existence. Women are more likely than men to be certain about God (69% vs. 57%), as are less well-educated Americans compared with college graduates (66% vs. 55%).

But perhaps the most striking divide – and the driving force behind the overall drop in belief – is generational. As younger Americans enter adulthood, they are far less likely to be sure about God’s existence than are their elders. While 70% of those ages 65 and older express an absolutely certain belief in God or a universal spirit, only about half of adults under 30 feel the same way (51%).

Pew Research Center surveys are not the only ones that have found a long-term decline in the overall share of Americans who say they believe in God. For example, 86% of Americans said in a 2014 Gallup poll they believed in God or a universal spirit, down from 96% in 1994 and the lowest figure since Gallup first asked the question in 1976.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Lipka, “Americans’ faith in God may be eroding,” Pew Research Center, November 4, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/04/americans-faith-in-god-may-be-eroding/> (accessed July 31, 2017).

## COURAGE

**C1:** Write down some things you have tried over the years to make your life better. After you have written these down, write down how your life has improved by doing these things.

**C2:** God has a plan to improve your life. He has a plan to teach you to believe for His best every day. Read and answer the following.

**Ezekiel 36:26 (ESV)** And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

- What do you glean from this verse?

**C3:** On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate how satisfied you are with your life right now. Write out a plan to improve.

## STRENGTH

**S1:** To find someone who is truly positive about life, confident in God, and in His ability, is unusual. God's plan for you is to be influenced by His world and His way over any influence of our culture. Read and answer the following.

### Genesis 1:9–13 (ESV)

- From these verses, what has God programmed into the world?
  
- From these verses, how were the trees planted? What do you glean from this?

**S2:** Read and answer the following.

### Genesis 2:8–9 (ESV)

### Exodus 16:4–5 (ESV)

### Numbers 11:31–32 (ESV)

- From these verses, what do you glean about God's ability to supply?

**S3:** On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate how well you live a life of expectancy? Write out a plan to improve your expectancy level.

## ENDURANCE

**E1:** There are several things God desires for everyone in the world. Read and answer the following.

**John 3:16–17 (ESV)**

**Acts 2:21 (ESV)**

**1 Timothy 2:4–6 (ESV)**

- From these verses, what does God want for everyone in the world?
- Write out at least a ½ page testimony of your life. Include in your story your life before Christ, how you came to Christ, and your life after Christ.

**E2:** Read and answer the following.

**Exodus 15:26 (ESV)**

**Matthew 8:16–17 (ESV)**

**Luke 9:10–11 (ESV)**

**Acts 10:38 (ESV)**

**Hebrews 13:8 (ESV)**

- From these verses, what does God desire for everyone in the world?
- Read the article in the Fire Bible about divine healing. What are your thoughts on this subject?

**E3:** When Jesus left the earth, He left us with a commission. Read and answer the following.

**Acts 2:42–47 (ESV)**

- From these verses, what does God want for His Church?
  
- God added to the Church daily. What are five reasons God added to the Church?