



WOODROW KROLL MINISTRIES

“An Overview of the Crisis in America”

Dr. Woodrow Kroll, Founder

After analyzing more than 10,000 personal interviews, researcher George Barna maintained that while three-fifths of Americans say they believe the Bible is totally accurate in all that it teaches, they both appear to know little of what’s in the Bible nor does what’s in the Bible appear to have much impact on their lives. As a result, the moral foundations of the nation continue to crumble more rapidly each year. The crisis in American morality is ultimately a crisis in Bible illiteracy.

A recent year saw increases in the proportions of people who believe that cohabitation (60%), adultery (42%), sexual relations between homosexuals (30%), abortion (45%), pornography (38%), the use of profanity (36%) and gambling (61%) are “morally acceptable” behaviors.

George Gallup Jr. is right: *“Biblical illiteracy presents not only a spiritual or religious problem in this nation, but a cultural one as well.”* We cannot inhibit the great American slide into a moral vacuum until someone seriously addresses the problem of Bible illiteracy both in the world and in the church.

When we say that a person has succumbed to Bible illiteracy we are not talking about peoples’ inability to read the Bible. We are talking about people who willfully refuse to read the Bible. These are not people who do not have a Bible. These are people who have more than one but never read the Bible. Bible illiteracy is the state of being ignorant about God and His Word by willfully neglecting to read the Bible even though one is available to you.

How Bad Is The Problem Of Bible Illiteracy?

A few years ago the Gallup Organization devised *The Gallup Biblical Knowledge Quiz* to test the Bible knowledge of the American public. When asked: “What is first book of Bible?”, 49% answered correctly. When asked: “Can you name one of the prophets in the Old Testament?”, 21% could. And 35% of the American population could name the four Gospels. This means, of course, that 51% could not name the first book of the Bible, 79% could not name a single prophet of the Old Testament, and 65% of Americans could not name Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

“In many parts of the country, we cannot assume any biblical knowledge on the part of our hearers at all: the most elementary bible stories are completely unknown. Furthermore, the situation is getting worse!”

– D. A. Carson

But that’s the general population. Surely Bible illiteracy isn’t a problem for the Christians in America. There is little discernable difference between the knowledge of God’s Word in the “Born Again” community and the American population at large.

One of America's bastions of evangelical education is Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL). Still, when Dr. Gary Burge, Chairman of the New Testament department tested incoming Freshmen to Wheaton, students from fine Evangelical homes and Christian schools, alarmingly he discovered: one-third of freshmen could not sequence in order Abraham, the OT prophets, the death of Christ, and Pentecost. Half could not sequence Moses in Egypt, Isaac's birth, Saul's death, Judah's exile. One third could not find Paul's travels in Acts. And one-half didn't know the Christmas story was in Matthew.

These facts do not reflect poorly on Wheaton—we are talking about freshmen—but on the churches and homes that sent these students to a Christian college.

Christians Have The Money; They Lack The Will

Very early on George Barna identified the lack of will among Evangelicals to become more Bible Literate. Nearly a decade and a half ago he noted, *'Christian ministries will raise nearly \$60 billion for domestic ministry in 2003, and there is an estimated \$3 billion of new construction work occurring on church properties to facilitate expanded ministry activities. All of these figures lend an air of security and stability to the religious condition of the country.'* But while the Church in America tears down its barns and builds bigger barns, the people in the pews become more biblically ignorant in each generation. Bible illiteracy has reached crisis proportion in America.

Even missions-minded Christians fail to see the importance of Bible-teaching in their missionary goals and expenditures. Renowned British missiologist and author of the popular book *Operation World*, Patrick Johnstone lamented: *"Christian donors need to be guided by the Lord rather than by their emotional response to physical suffering. The famine of the Word of God is still a more serious problem than that of food in Africa today."* (Operation World, 21st Century Edition (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2001, p. 702)

If we truly believe that an informed public will become an active public, we should also believe that a biblically-informed Christian will become a biblically-active Christian. Action without understanding is like heat without light. Inaction because of a lack of understanding is the absence of both heat and light. But biblical understanding that leads to biblical action is the ideal combination of heat and light. Who will address the crisis of Bible illiteracy in America?

The Conclusion of the Whole Matter

The late pollster George Gallup Jr. once remarked, *"Americans revere the Bible—but, by and large, they don't read it. And because they don't read it, they have become a nation of biblical illiterates."* If serious patrons of the Word of God don't address this need, who will? If we don't address it now, when?

**"If Christians blew the dust off their Bibles at the same time, we'd all be killed in the dust storm."
– Woodrow Kroll**