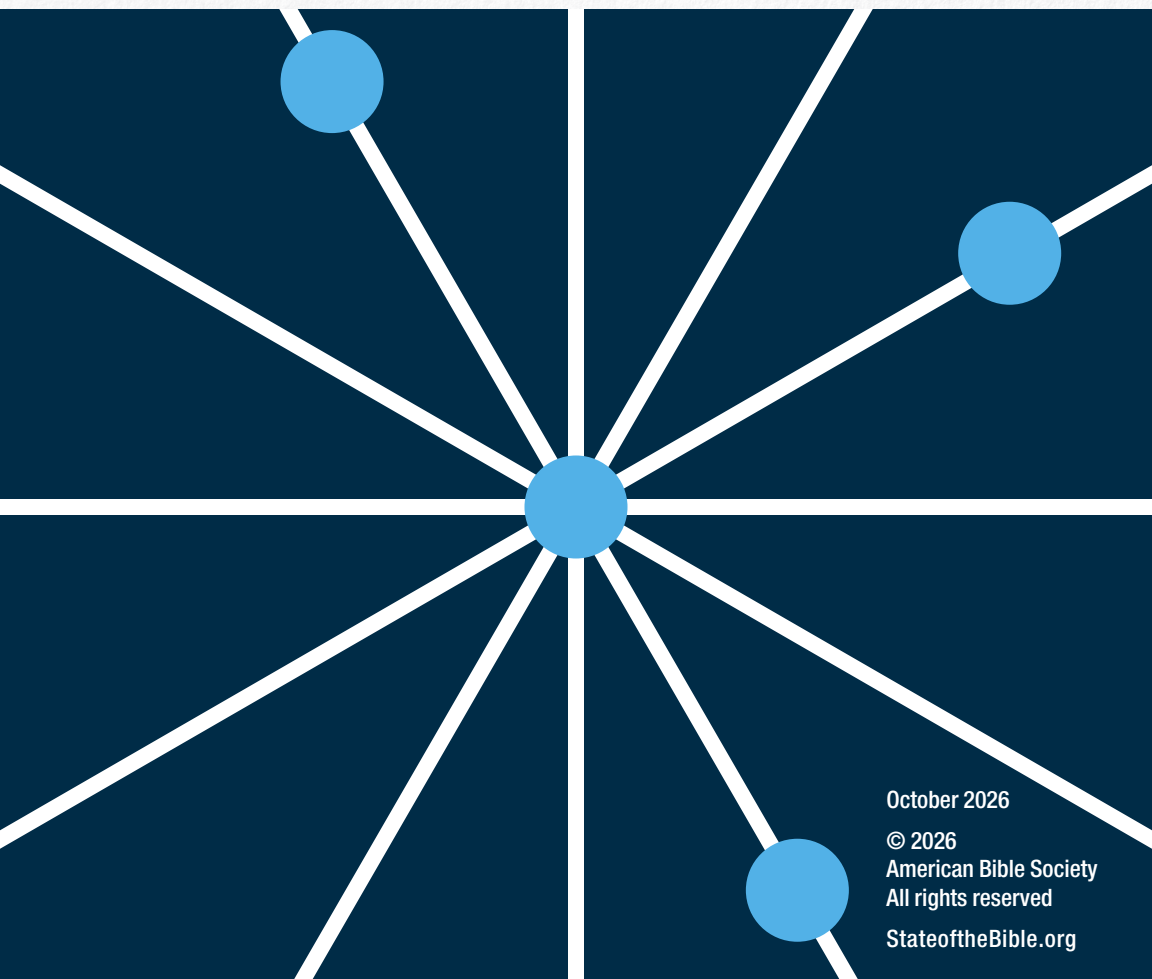


CHAPTER 7

THE SUPERNATURAL



October 2026

© 2026

American Bible Society

All rights reserved

StateoftheBible.org



THE SUPERNATURAL

Remember malls? What a concept! Whatever your taste or interest, the mall likely had something for you. Eventually the internet became our mega-mall, but the point is the same: Americans tend to be shoppers, no matter what they're shopping for.

In this chapter, we explore America as a “mall of beliefs.” Americans also tend to be believers, though there's considerable variation in what they believe in. Here we're focusing on belief in the supernatural—not only God, but angels and demons, heaven and hell, and miracles.

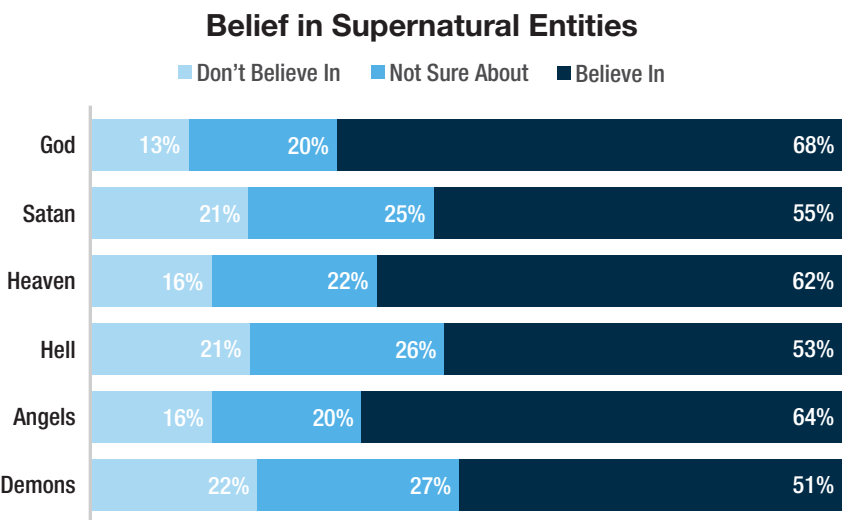
This chapter is something like the mall map, with the star labeled “You Are Here.” You'll see how your beliefs about the supernatural

line up with those of other Americans. And it might give you an idea of how to talk about these things with people in your church, in your community, and throughout the country—even on the internet.

BELIEF IN SUPERNATURAL ENTITIES

Two thirds of Americans (68%) say they believe in God, according to our survey, with another 20 percent not sure. Only about one in eight (13%) say they don’t believe in God.

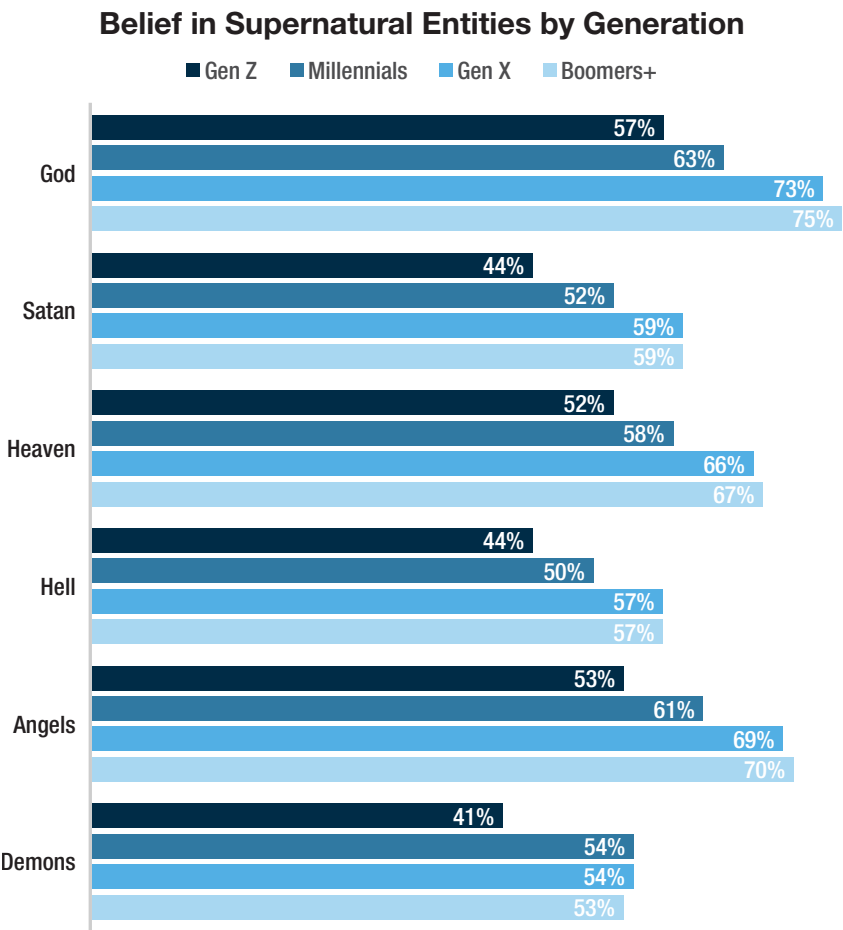
We asked about belief in six different “supernatural entities,” and each one claimed the belief of more than half of Americans. God was believed in the most (68%), with angels and heaven not far behind (64% and 62% believing). Three negative entities received somewhat less belief—Satan (55%), hell (53%), and demons (51%). Uncertainty levels ranged from 20 to 27 percent.¹



¹ Other surveys have reported higher levels of belief in God (up to 80%), but when “Not sure” responses are included, those results resemble ours.

SUPERNATURAL BELIEFS AMONG GROUPS

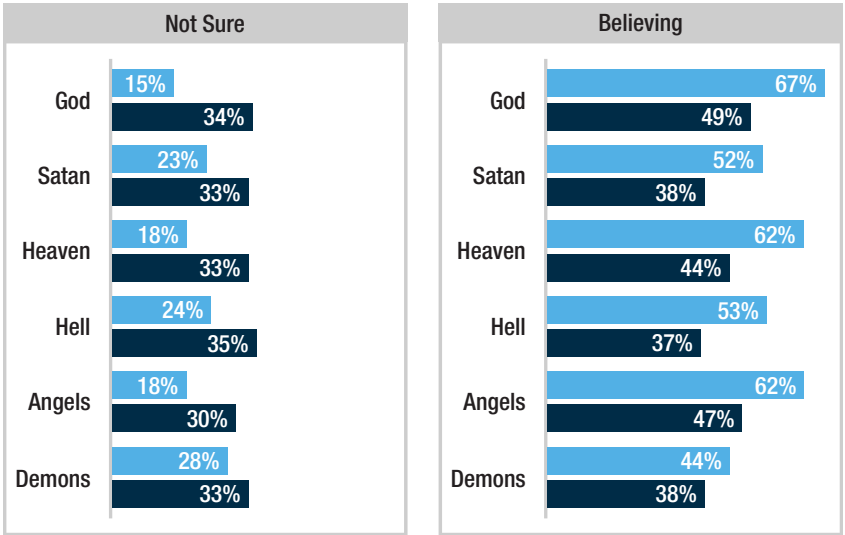
Generations. Older people report more belief than younger people in all of the six entities. In this area, Boomers and Generation X are nearly the same, while Millennials show significantly less belief, and Gen Z even less. While just over half of Gen Z indicates belief in the “good” entities of God (57%), heaven (52%), and angels (53%), well *under* half believe in the “bad” entities of Satan (44%), hell (44%), and demons (41%).



We find a fascinating divergence when we divide the adults of Generation Z at age 21. The younger group (18–21) is far more believing than the older group (22–29). What’s more, Younger Gen Z shows percentages of belief greater than those of Millennials, and remarkably similar to the levels of the entire population. That means Older Gen Z drops to even lower levels—where less than half believe in any of the six entities, even God (49%), heaven (44%), or angels (47%).

**Belief in Supernatural Entities
Among Younger and Older Gen Z**

■ 21 or Younger ■ 22 or Older

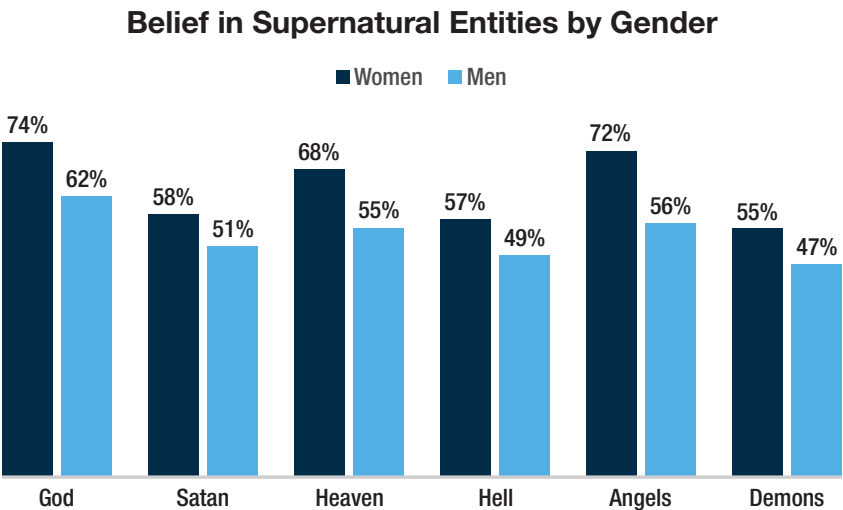


We find further insight when we examine the “Not Sure” scores of Older and Younger Gen Z. Those 18 to 21 have comparatively few indicating uncertainty, below the overall population regarding most of the entities. For instance, only 15 percent are not sure they believe in God. Those just a few years older (22–29) include 34 percent unsure of their belief in God, and high levels of uncertainty

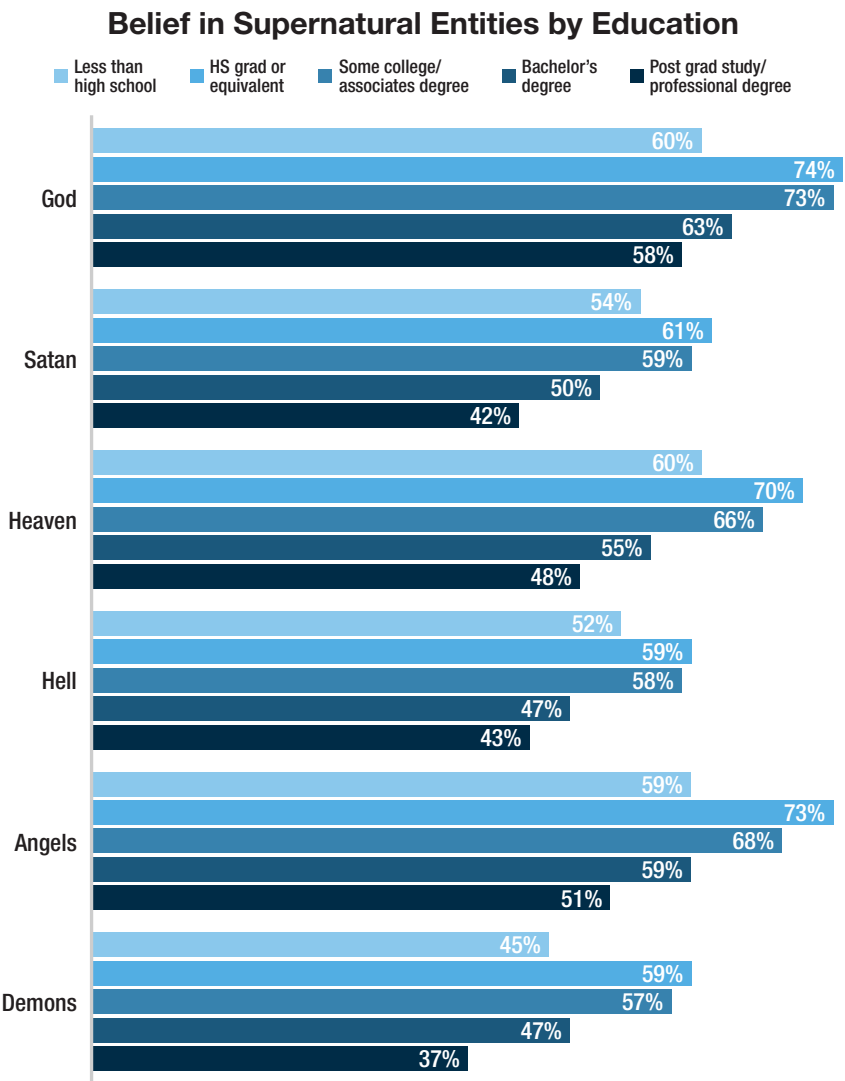
about the other supernatural entities. Where uncertainty among the general population ranges from 20–27 percent, for this Older Gen Z group, it ranges from 30–35 percent.

This may suggest a certain “tipping point” in the spiritual development of young people—not when they graduate high school (around age 18), but several years later, when a substantial portion of them begin questioning things they were previously sure of. (The greatest shift actually begins at age 25.) Notably, there’s only a slight increase in those who say they *don’t* believe, but many in the Older Gen Z group seem to have moved from belief to uncertainty.

Gender. Women believe in supernatural entities substantially more than men do. Nearly three quarters of women (74%) say they believe in God. Just over three fifths of men do (62%). A similar margin exists with belief in heaven (68% to 55%) and angels (72% to 56%). Notably, the gap narrows a bit with belief in the “bad” entities (Satan, hell, demons), though women are still more likely to believe in these.



Education. From high school graduates to post-college study, we find less belief with more education. Belief in God plummets from 74 percent among those with only a high school diploma to 58 percent among those with post-graduate study or professional degrees. Belief in demons takes an even greater dive (59% to 37%).

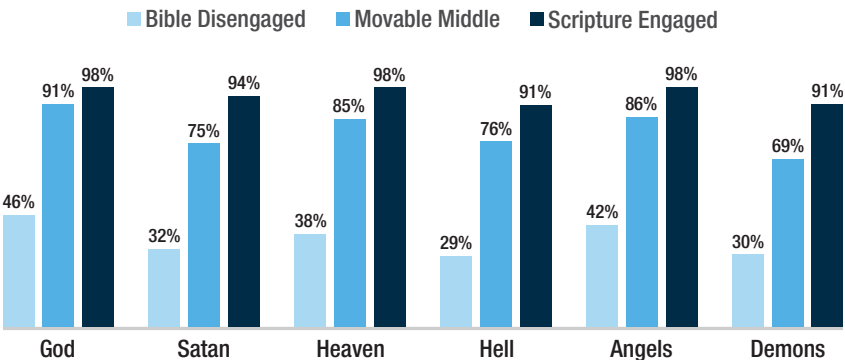


Race/Ethnicity. Of the major ethnic groupings in the U.S., Black Americans are the most likely to believe in any of the six entities (with 80% believing in God, 63% in demons). Hispanic Americans come next (72% in God, 58% in demons), followed by white Americans (66% in God, 49% in demons). No surprise here: on many questions in our survey, Black Americans tend to be the most religious.

FAITH DEMOGRAPHICS

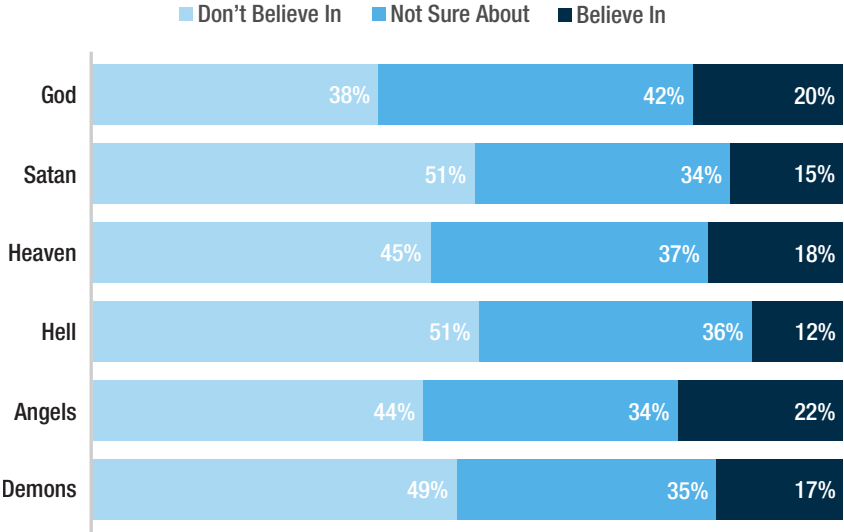
Scripture Engagement. Since the Bible teaches about all six of these supernatural entities, we would expect that Scripture Engaged people would believe in them, and more than 9 of 10 do, across the board. On many questions, we’re not sure where the Movable Middle will land, but here they show levels of belief almost as high as the Scripture Engaged, especially with regard to the three “good” entities (God 91%; heaven 85%; angels 86%). The Bible Disengaged, as expected, have low levels of belief in all six. Yet it’s worth noting that nearly half of them (46%) still say they believe in God. The question does not define “God,” so they may believe in the God of the Bible, or in nature, a “higher power,” or the god of another religion.

Belief in Supernatural Entities by Scripture Engagement



Nones. We turn now to the people who claim no particular religion at all, the “nones.” It’s an interesting group, including atheists and agnostics, but also Christians who haven’t found a particular faith tradition they’re comfortable with. We would expect that the group as a whole would have low levels of belief across the board, and that’s what we find. We also find that at least a third of them are just “not sure” what to believe about these entities. It’s also worth noting that they’re most likely to believe in angels, least likely to believe in hell.

Belief in Supernatural Entities Among “Nones”

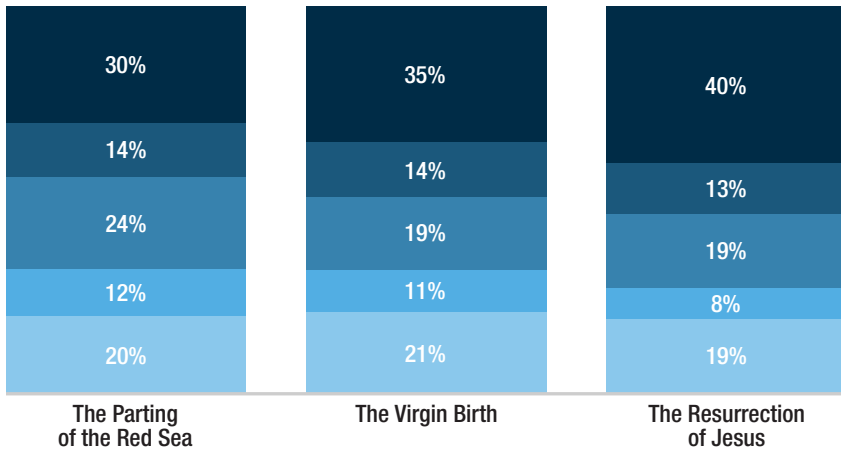


BELIEF IN BIBLICAL MIRACLES

Of the many miracles recorded in Scripture, we chose three very important ones and asked, “Do you believe these supernatural events really occurred, as recorded in the Bible?” Respondents had five possible answers: Definitely not; Probably not; Might or might not; Probably yes; and Definitely yes.

Overall Response to Biblical Miracles

■ Definitely not ■ Probably not ■ Might or might not ■ Probably yes ■ Definitely yes

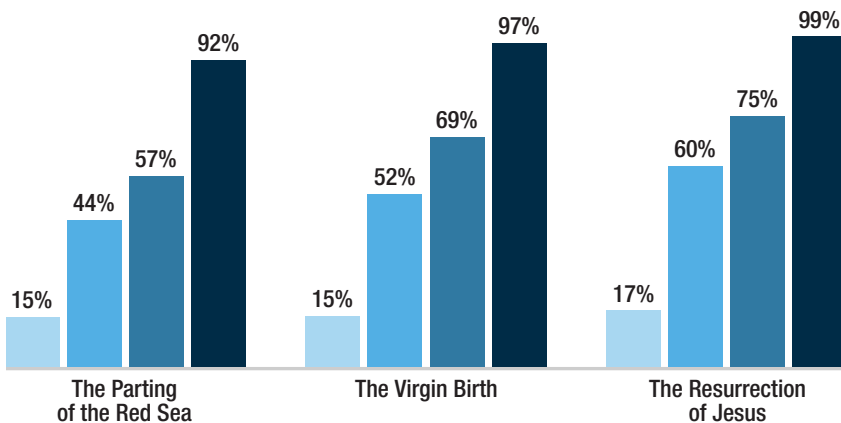


Combining the two “yes” responses, we find more than half of Americans (53%) believing in Jesus’s resurrection. Nearly half (49%) affirm the Virgin Birth. Less than a third of the public said no.

Response to Biblical Miracles by Faith Participation Level

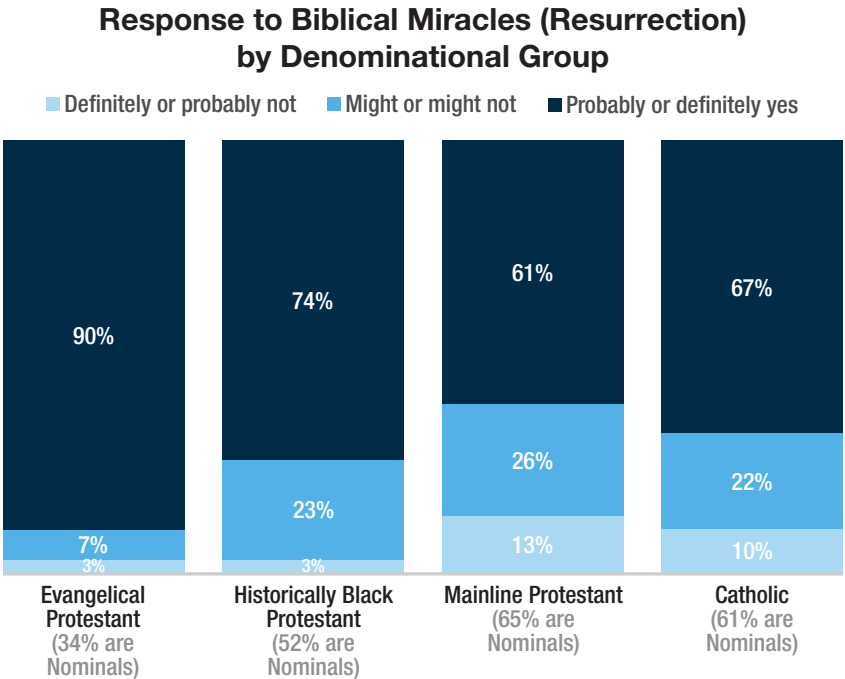
Percent saying “Probably yes” or “Definitely yes”

■ Non-Christian ■ Nominal Christian ■ Casual Christian ■ Practicing Christian



Practicing Christians are nearly unanimous in their support of these miracles, while Casual Christians (75% “yes” on the Resurrection) have fewer believing, but still a substantial majority. It’s worth noting that there is no creedal requirement for Practicing Christian status. These people simply attend church at least monthly and consider their faith “very important.” Here we see that belief in biblical miracles often goes along with the importance of faith in people’s lives.

The analysis of denominational groups reveals significant differences. Nine out of ten Evangelicals (90%) say yes to the biblical account of the Resurrection of Jesus (with eight of ten saying “definitely yes”). In Historically Black Protestant churches, nearly three of four (74%) say yes to the Resurrection, a bit more than in Catholic (67%) or mainline Protestant churches (61%).



The pattern is similar for the other two biblical miracles surveyed, though the percentage of “Yes” responses is lower. (For instance, belief in the Bible’s account of the parting of the Red Sea ranges from 83% combined yeses among Evangelicals to a low of 45% among mainline Protestants.)

Some readers might assume that these differences reflect varying views of Scripture among those denominational groups, and that might contribute to these findings, but there’s another important factor to consider. Evangelicals include a much smaller portion of Nominal Christians (34%) than the other groups (52 to 65%). Those non-attenders are far less likely to say they believe in biblical miracles, compared to the Practicing Christians who are more prevalent in Evangelical churches. When we examine just the Practicing Christians in each of these denominations, nearly all say yes to the Resurrection (97 to 100%) and the Virgin Birth (92 to 98%).

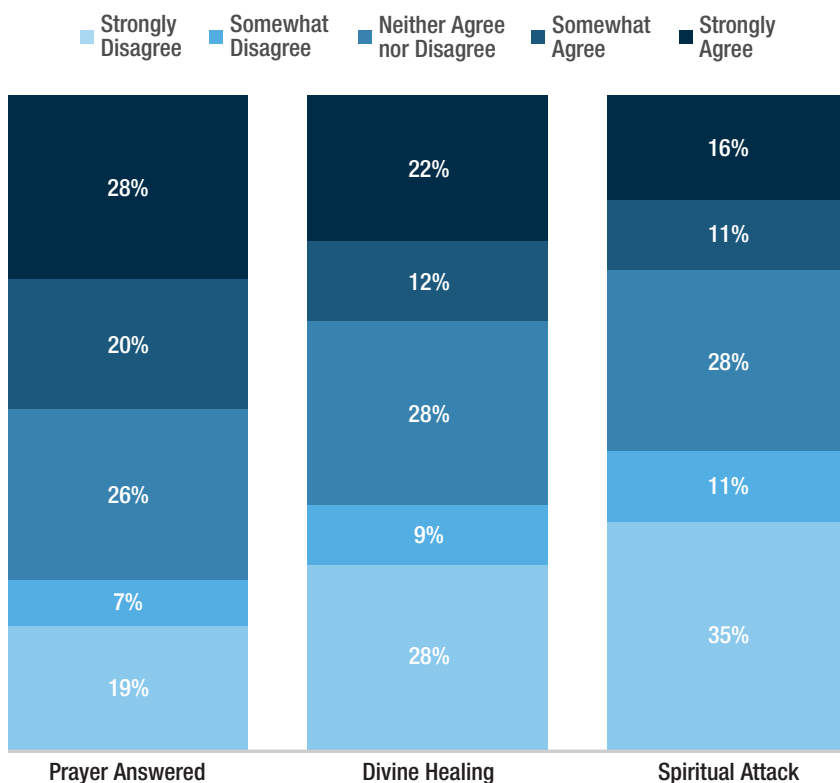
SUPERNATURAL EXPERIENCES

This year’s survey included three items about personal experiences with the supernatural.

- I have prayed for something that was answered in a miraculous way.
- I have witnessed/experienced a divine healing or miracle.
- I have personally experienced spiritual attack.

Respondents were invited to agree or disagree with each statement on a five-point scale.

Supernatural Experiences, Overall Response

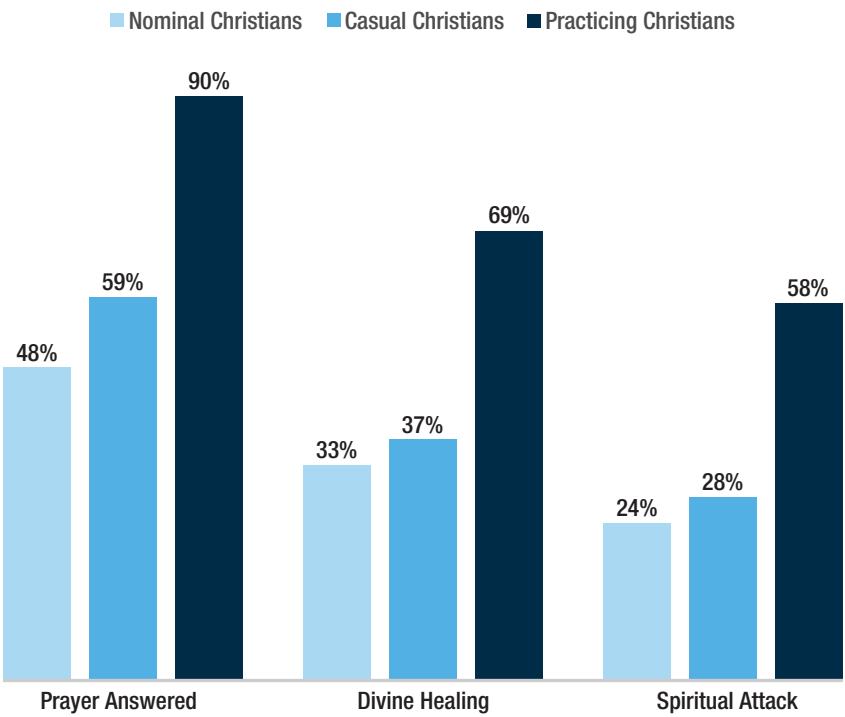


Combining the two levels of agreement, we find that nearly half of all respondents (48%) report answers to prayer, about a third of them (35%) say they have witnessed or experienced divine healing, and more than a quarter (26%) report spiritual attack. Understand that this is not some Christian subset of the survey; these percentages apply to our entire sample, representing all Americans. Of course they get to define for themselves “answered prayer,” “divine healing,” and “spiritual attack,” and those definitions may vary widely. Still, it’s worth noting that significant portions of the public say they have interacted with the supernatural in these ways.

But let’s take a closer look at that “Christian subset.” With regard to these supernatural experiences, we find a huge gap between Practicing and Casual Christians.

Supernatural Experiences by Faith Participation

Percent saying “Strongly Agree” or “Somewhat Agree”

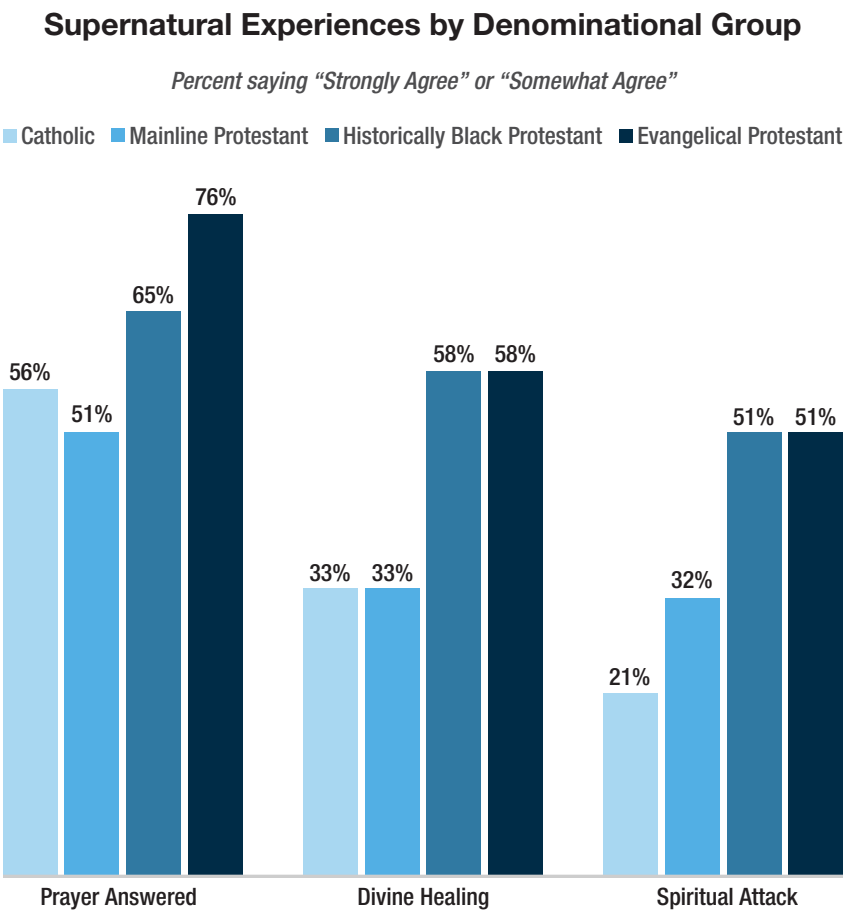


These people are sitting next to each other in church, but Practicing Christians frequently sense God at work in their lives, while the Casual Christians are less attuned to that sphere.

Granted, this may be a matter of definitions. You might take ibuprofen and still call it “divine healing” when your headache goes away. Is it a “spiritual attack” when a coworker offers a doughnut that will

wreck your diet? Maybe. Some religious cultures often use supernatural language for everyday realities, and others . . . not so much. We see that in a comparison of denominational groups.

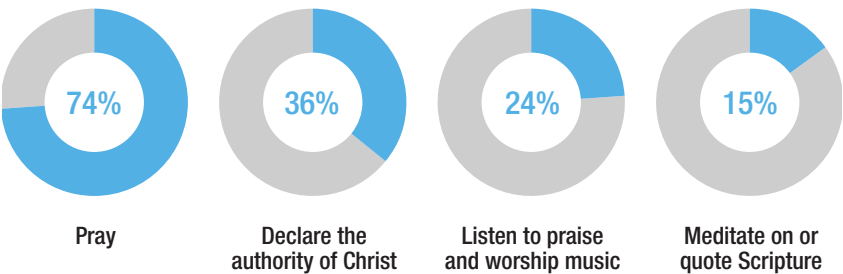
Mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics are much less likely to report any of these three supernatural experiences, especially divine healing or spiritual attack. That may reflect differences in theology and culture, but remember also that those groups have a greater portion of Nominal Christians influencing these numbers.



HELPFUL PRACTICES WHEN ATTACKED

Those who “agreed” (strongly or somewhat) that they had personally experienced a spiritual attack received a follow-up question, asking which of several practices they found “most helpful in times of spiritual attack.” They could choose up to two answers.

Helpful Practices in Spiritual Attack

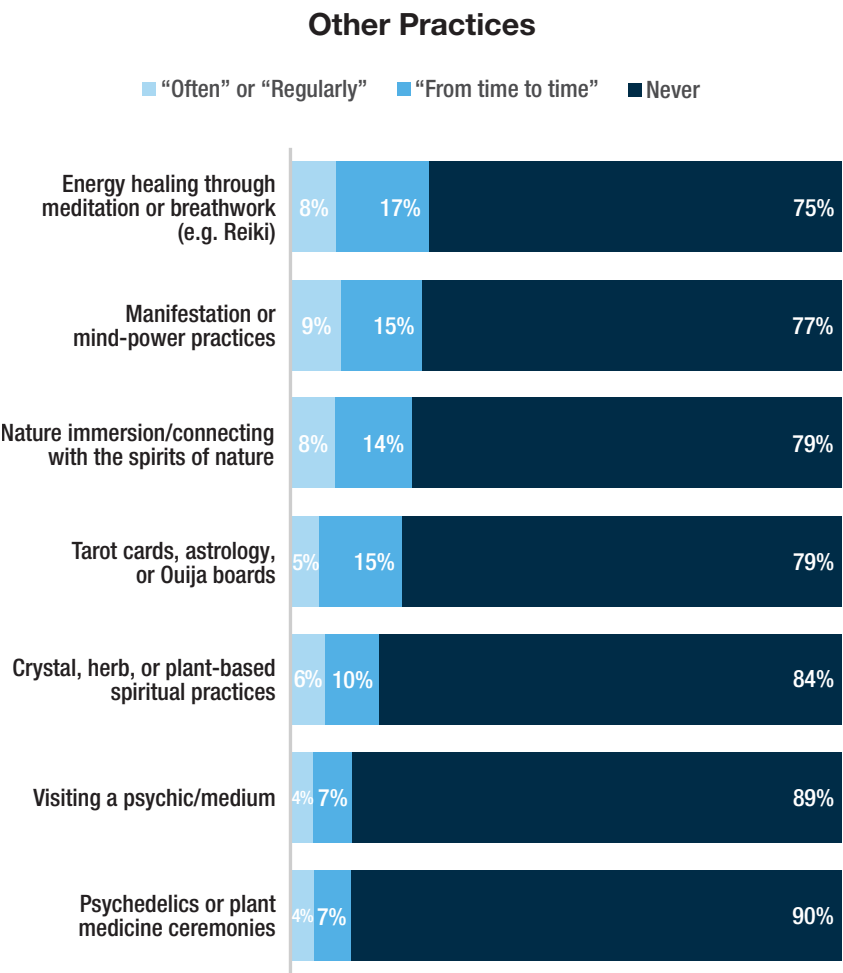


More than three-quarters of them (74%) identify prayer as the most helpful practice. The second-most-chosen response (36%) might seem unfamiliar to some readers, while obvious to others: *declaring the authority of Christ over the attack*. The gospels show Jesus casting out evil spirits and giving that authority to his disciples (Luke 10:17–19); some faith traditions apply that to modern situations. One-quarter of the respondents (24%) choose “praise and worship music” as their support method for such attacks.

We at American Bible Society would love to bolster the last-place response: *Meditating on or quoting Scripture* (15%). We’ll just point out that, during his own temptation, Jesus replied to the devil’s three challenges by citing Scripture each time (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

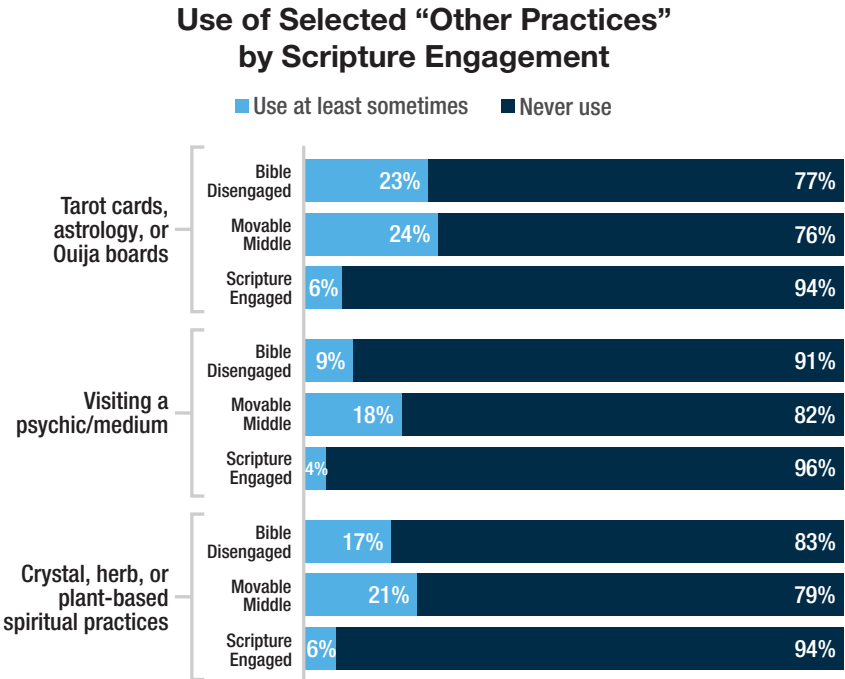
OTHER SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

People have found multiple ways to attempt connection with supernatural forces. We identified a number of specific practices that might be considered mystical or spiritual, but outside the activity of mainstream religions—including Tarot, astrology, psychics, crystals, and energy healing. We asked specifically whether Americans “currently used or participated in” these practices.



On each of the practices, fewer than one in ten said they “often” or “regularly” participated. But there was another substantial group, in each case, that turned to these practices “from time to time.” One in four Americans (25%) said they used “energy healing through meditation or breathwork (e.g. Reiki)” at least occasionally. That was the most-used practice on our list. The lowest participation level (10% at least occasionally) appeared with “psychedelics or plant medicine ceremonies.”

Comparing demographic groups, we find women more likely to participate in most of these practices (except psychedelics). Black Americans are more likely than White or Hispanic Americans. The youngest two generations (Gen Z and Millennials) turn to these practices more than their elders.



Perhaps most fascinating are the Scripture Engagement numbers. As you might expect, the Scripture Engaged are almost unanimous in their rejection of these practices, probably because of biblical warnings against such activity. But roughly one-fifth of the Movable Middle participate in these things at least “from time to time.” With most of these practices, the Movable Middle is *more likely than the Bible Disengaged* to participate.

We recognize that about four-fifths of them say they “never” engage with these alternative spiritual practices, but we’re also intrigued by the fact that the largest group of participants comes from this group, the Movable Middle, which has *some* interaction with Scripture but not a strong commitment to it. These numbers suggest a genuine spiritual hunger on their part, but a hunger that some try to fill with horoscopes and crystals and such—and sometimes with the Bible.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Imagine a Venn diagram with three overlapping circles. Let’s name them Daily Life, the Bible, and the Supernatural. For each person, these overlap in different ways, in different degrees. We would propose that all three come together in what we call Scripture Engagement. We recognize God’s supernatural presence in the teachings and accounts of the Bible, and we apply that to our daily lives.

But some of our neighbors live out their days in the Daily Life circle, with no place for the Bible and no interaction with the supernatural. The vast majority of Americans have nothing to do with the alternative mystical practices we reported on. Where will they turn once they see the limits of Daily Life and the spiritual realities beyond?

Others develop a hunger for the supernatural, or a fascination with those things they can't explain. They might be attracted to activities that explore the supernatural because it gives them a sense of control in their daily lives—or they long for a relationship with God.

There may be some Christians who get so caught up in the lure of the supernatural that they stop engaging with Scripture and its wisdom, or they study the Bible in a way that squeezes the supernatural stuff out of it. Explain away the miracles, and what's left?

If you're involved in Christian ministry, you're probably dealing with people of all these types, and it might help to think about, or even talk about, how their different circles overlap. Will you need to open up the possibility of a God whose ways are beyond our ways? Will you need to anchor someone's worship experiences in biblical teaching? Will you need to demonstrate how the wisdom of Scripture can guide and enrich our everyday lives? ■

GHOSTS, DEMONS, AND ANSWERED PRAYER

Two-thirds of Americans believe in a spiritual world beyond the natural one. Most Americans are not that far from a biblical understanding of the supernatural. In this episode, we talk with Billy Hallowell and Jarrod Anderson from CBN's *Investigating the Supernatural* to dig into what the data reveals—and what it means for the church.

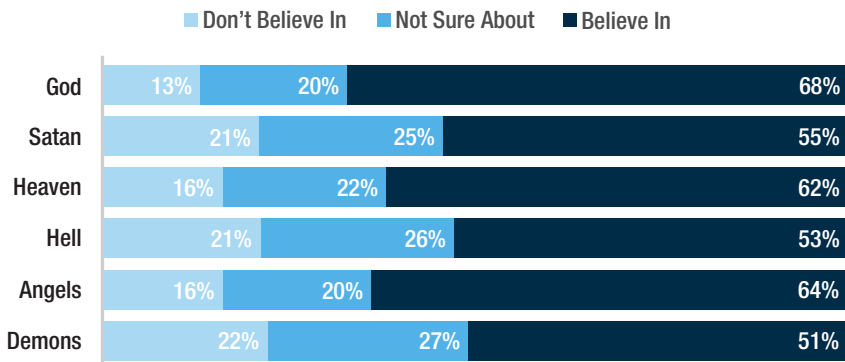


**COMING
SOON**



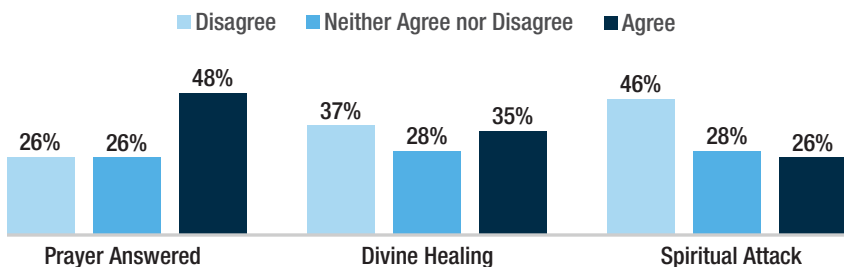
Supernatural Entities

2 in 3 Americans believe there are spiritual beings that exist beyond the natural world.



Supernatural Experiences

For many, the supernatural is more than something they just believe in. It's something they've experienced.



Spiritual Attack

Only 15% of people who experience a spiritual attack turn to the Bible in time of need.

74%

Pray

36%

Declare the
authority of Christ

24%

Listen to praise and
worship music

15%

Meditate on or
quote Scripture