

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 5, 2013

**MEDIA CONTACT**

Marty King

(615) 251-2307 (o)

(615) 585-0033 (m)

[marty.king@lifeway.com](mailto:marty.king@lifeway.com)

## **Research: Spiritual Maturity Tied to Strong Doctrinal Beliefs**

*by Russ Rankin*

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** — Professing Christians progressing toward spiritual maturity will have a firmer grasp on important doctrinal positions, according to findings from LifeWay Research. However, plenty of churchgoers still struggle with basic truths about God, the Bible and salvation.

The LifeWay Research study on "Doctrinal Positions" shows that while 81 percent of churchgoers say "When you die, you will go to heaven because you have confessed your sins and accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior," 26 percent agree "If a person is sincerely seeking God, he/she can obtain eternal life through religions other than Christianity." Fifty-seven percent disagree.

"Consumers in America are accustomed to having endless combinations of choices for every want in life," said Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research. "Biblical truth is radical because it teaches that eternal life is a relationship with God through Jesus Christ alone."

Other responses given regarding beliefs about life after death include:

-- When you die, you will go to heaven because you have tried your best to be a good person and live a good life (selected by 7 percent of churchgoers).

-- You have no way of knowing what will happen when you die (5 percent of churchgoers).

-- When you die, you will go to heaven because God loves everyone and we will all be in heaven with Him (4 percent).

-- When you die, you will go to heaven because you have read the Bible, been involved in church, and tried to live as God wants you to live (2 percent).

-- There is no life after death (1 percent).

Churchgoers strongly hold to the accuracy of the Scriptures, the survey reveals. Eighty-two percent agree with the statement: "The Bible is the written word of God and is totally accurate in all that it teaches." Ten percent disagree and 8 percent neither agree nor disagree.

While the majority of churchgoers (75 percent) strongly hold the God of the Bible is not the same god worshiped in other world religions, 13 percent say the God of the Bible is no different from the gods or spiritual beings depicted by world religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. Another 12 percent neither agree nor disagree with the uniqueness of the God of the Bible.

The study also shows nearly two-thirds (71 percent) agree with the statement: "God is just and sin has to be punished." However, 13 percent of churchgoers disagree and 16 percent neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

The research found churchgoers responded better to the questions when engaged in activities including reading the Bible, participating in small groups or classes such as Sunday school, reading a book about what's in the Bible, confessing sins to God and asking for forgiveness, or going through a class or training group for new believers.

"If churches stopped to assess their congregation on these biblical truths, many would be surprised to find out how many are struggling with basic doctrinal issues," Stetzer said. "Every church has a different mix of mature disciples and spiritual infants who still need a diet of the basic gospel message. A discipleship process must help every person take the next step in his or her spiritual journey. Too many churchgoers are stuck on square one."

These findings on "Doctrinal Position" are part of the largest discipleship study of its kind. To learn more about the transformational discipleship research visit [LifeWayResearch.com](http://LifeWayResearch.com). The TDA is available at [TDA.LifeWay.com](http://TDA.LifeWay.com).

**Methodology:** *The survey of 2,930 American adults who attend a Protestant church once a month or more was conducted Oct. 14-22, 2011. A demographically balanced online panel was used for the interviewing. Respondents could respond in English, Spanish or French. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed  $\pm 1.8$  percent. Margins of error are higher in subgroups.*

###