

More Americans Find “Meaning in Life” Through Money than Faith

What makes your life meaningful?

For Christians the answer should be some variation of our faith in God. But if that’s your answer you are distinctly in the minority in the U.S.

The Pew Research Center [conducted two separate surveys](#), one that included an open-ended question asking Americans to describe in their own words what makes their lives feel meaningful, fulfilling, or satisfying, and another that gave respondents an opportunity to describe the myriad things they find meaningful, (i.e., faith and family, pets, travel, music, etc.).

In the open-ended question, Americans are mostly likely to say family is an important source of meaning (40 percent), and in the closed-ended question they’re most likely to report they find “a great deal” of meaning in spending time with family (69 percent).

About a third (34 percent) said they found meaning in their careers and almost a fourth (23 percent) find meaning in finances and money.

Only one in five (20 percent) said their religious faith was the most important source of meaning and only about one in three (36 percent) said it gave them “a great deal” of meaning.

In the open-ended survey evangelical Protestants are the group mostly likely to mention religion-related topics in the open-ended question (43 percent). Among members of the historically

black Protestant tradition, 32 percent mention faith and spirituality, as do 18 percent of mainline Protestants, and 16 percent of Catholics.

In the closed-ended survey evangelicals are also the most likely (65 percent) to say it provides “a great deal” of meaning in their lives. Among members of the historically black Protestant tradition, 62 percent say it provides “a great deal” of meaning, as do 41 percent of Catholics, and 39 percent of mainline Protestants.

In the closed-ended survey mainline Protestants are the most likely to say family is the most important source of meaning (54 percent), as do half of Catholics (50 percent), a third of all members of the historically black Protestant tradition (37 percent), and a third of evangelicals (31 percent).

Americans who identify as conservative or very conservative are more likely to find meaning in religion (30 percent and 38 percent), while Americans who identify as liberal or very liberal more likely to find meaning in creativity and social causes (14 percent and 30 percent). Americans who identify as conservative or very conservative are more likely than others to say they find “a great deal” of meaning in their religious faith (62 percent and 50 percent), while those who are liberal or very liberal are more likely than conservatives to say they find a great deal of meaning in arts and crafts and social or political causes (30 percent and 34 percent).

Liberal Americans are also more likely than conservatives to say that social or political causes provide them with “a great deal” of meaning (19 percent versus 10 percent). And among those identifying as “very liberal,” three-in-ten (30 percent) say they find a great deal of meaning in social or political causes, almost three times the rate seen in the general public.

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