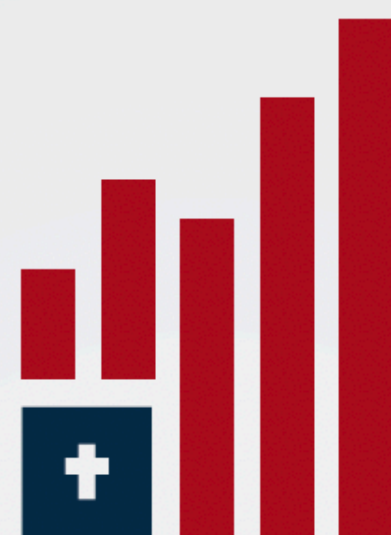


TIPS FOR INCREASING BIBLE ENGAGEMENT

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**KIDS, STUDENTS, AND  
FAMILIES IN THE WORD**

**OUR CHALLENGE**



# State of the Bible

## USA 2022

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RESEARCH FROM AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

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[SOTB.RESEARCH.BIBLE](https://SOTB.RESEARCH.BIBLE)

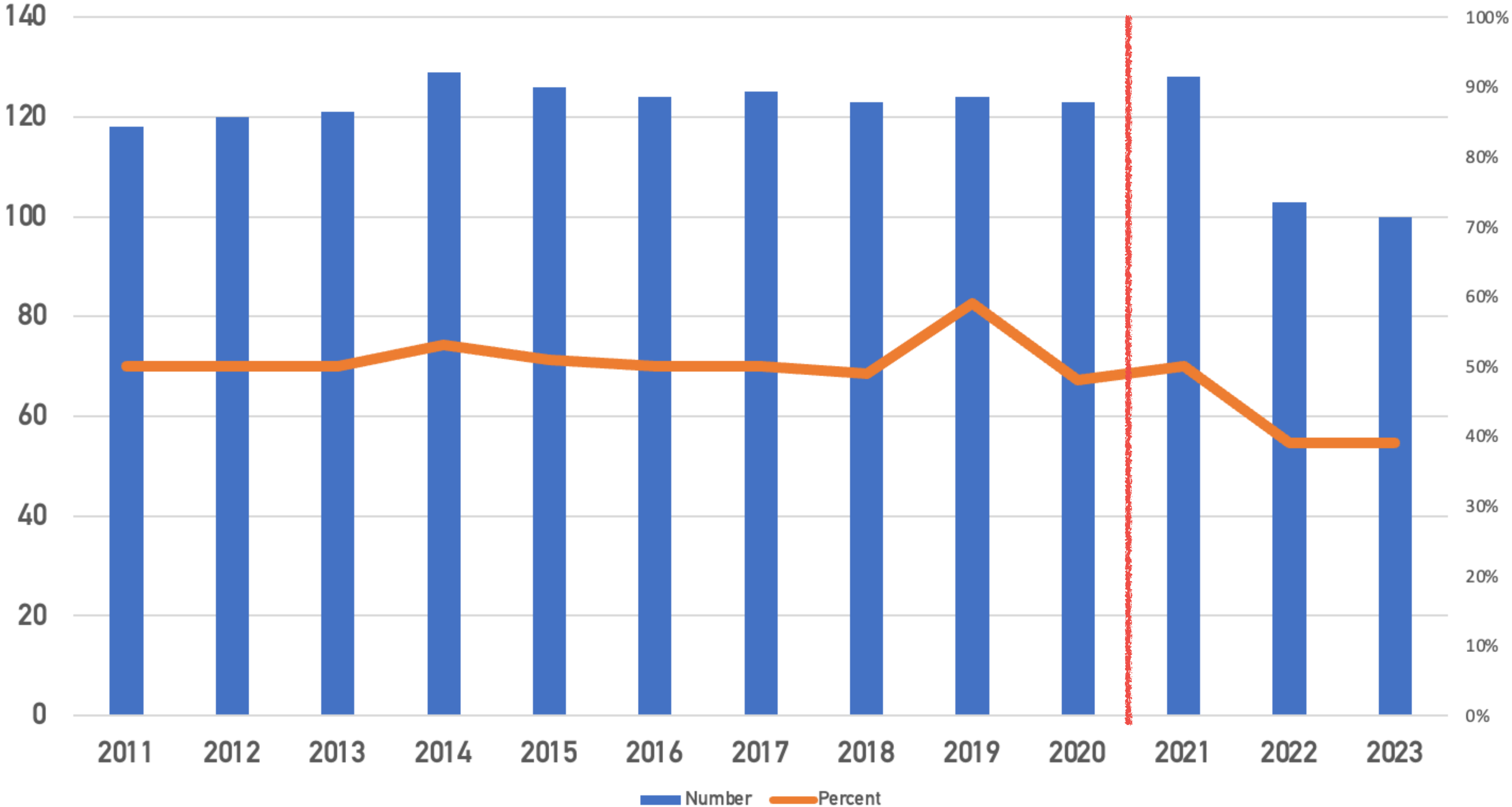
[THOMASNELSONBIBLES.COM/  
D6BIBLEENGAGEMENT](https://THOMASNELSONBIBLES.COM/D6BIBLEENGAGEMENT)

## CHALLENGE 1

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# DECEASING ENGAGEMENT

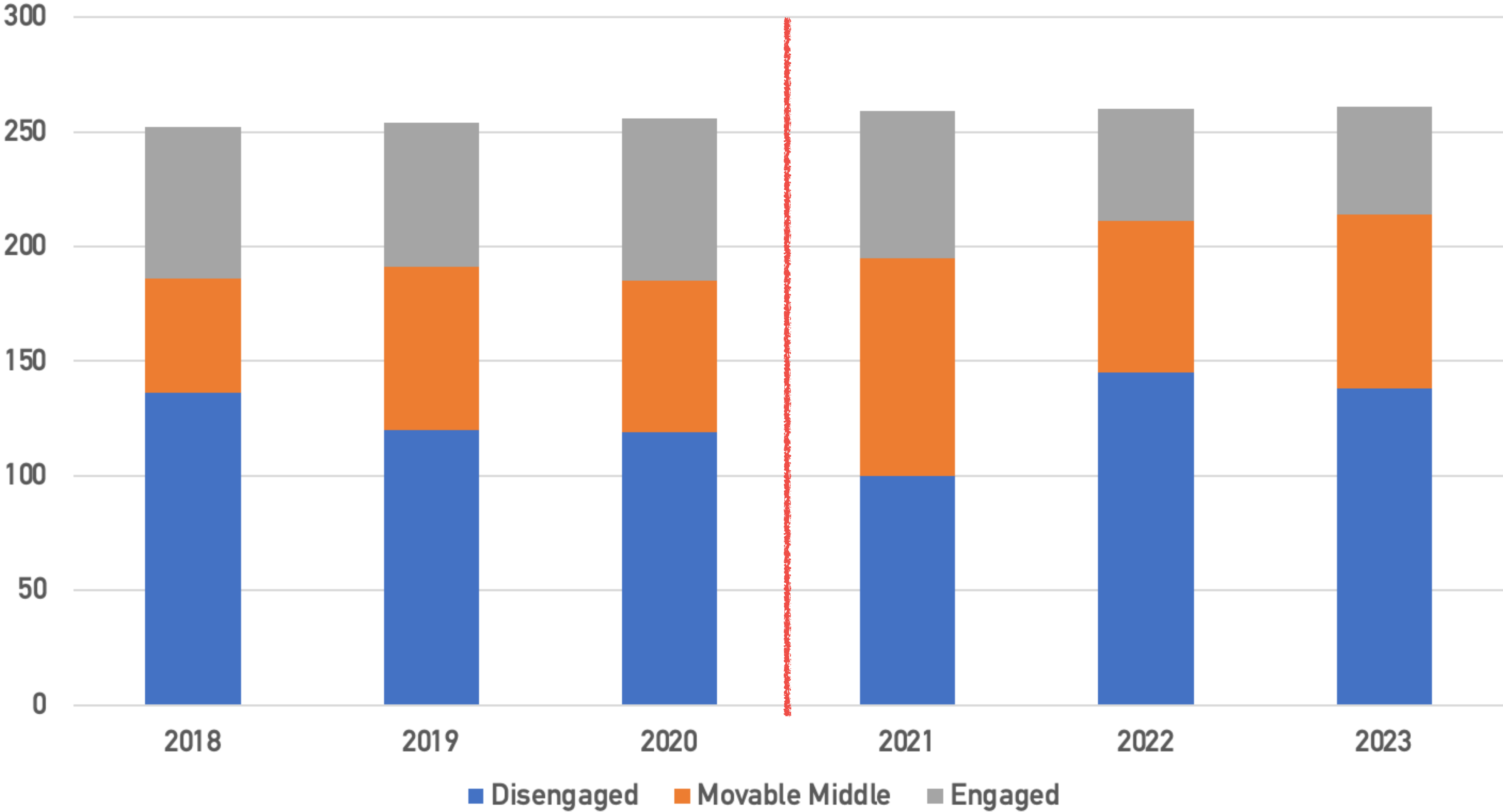
# ADULT BIBLE USERS



118 million  
50%

100 million  
39%

# SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT



20%

22%

58%

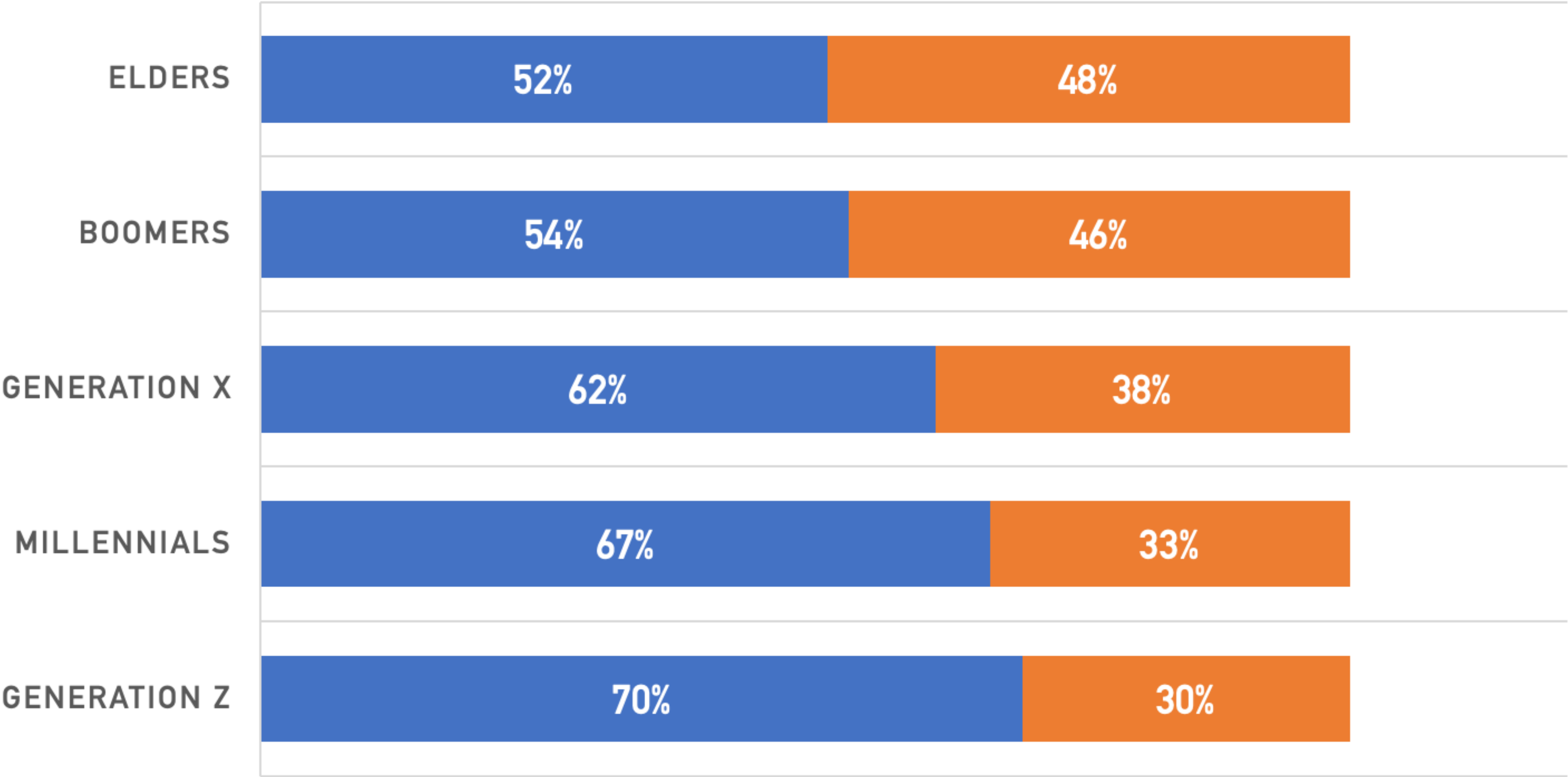
18%

29%

53%

# 2023 BIBLE USERS BY GENERATION

■ Not a User   ■ Bible User





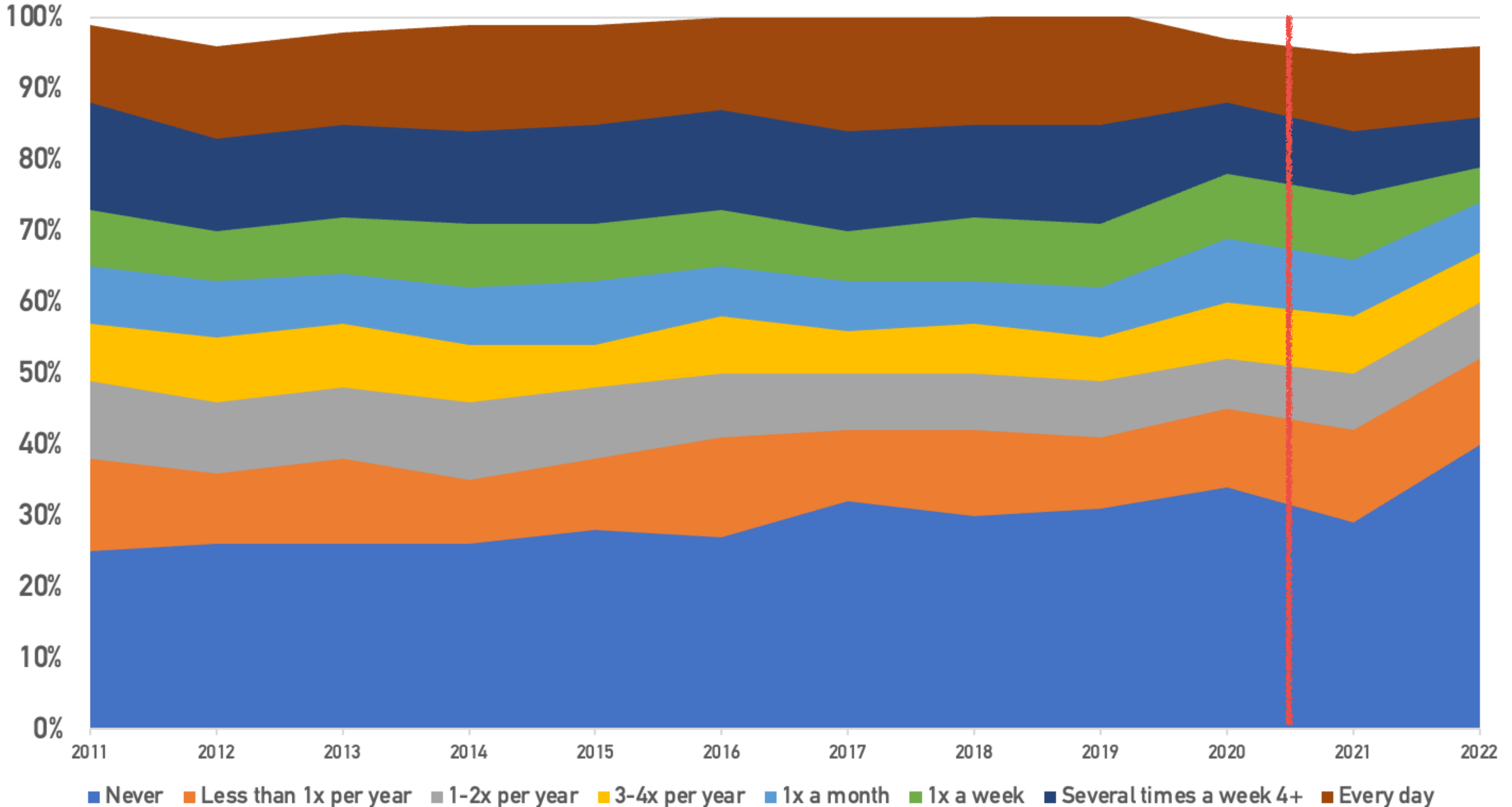
## CHALLENGE 2

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# DECEASING FREQUENCY



# FREQUENCY OF BIBLE READING



4+

26%

4+

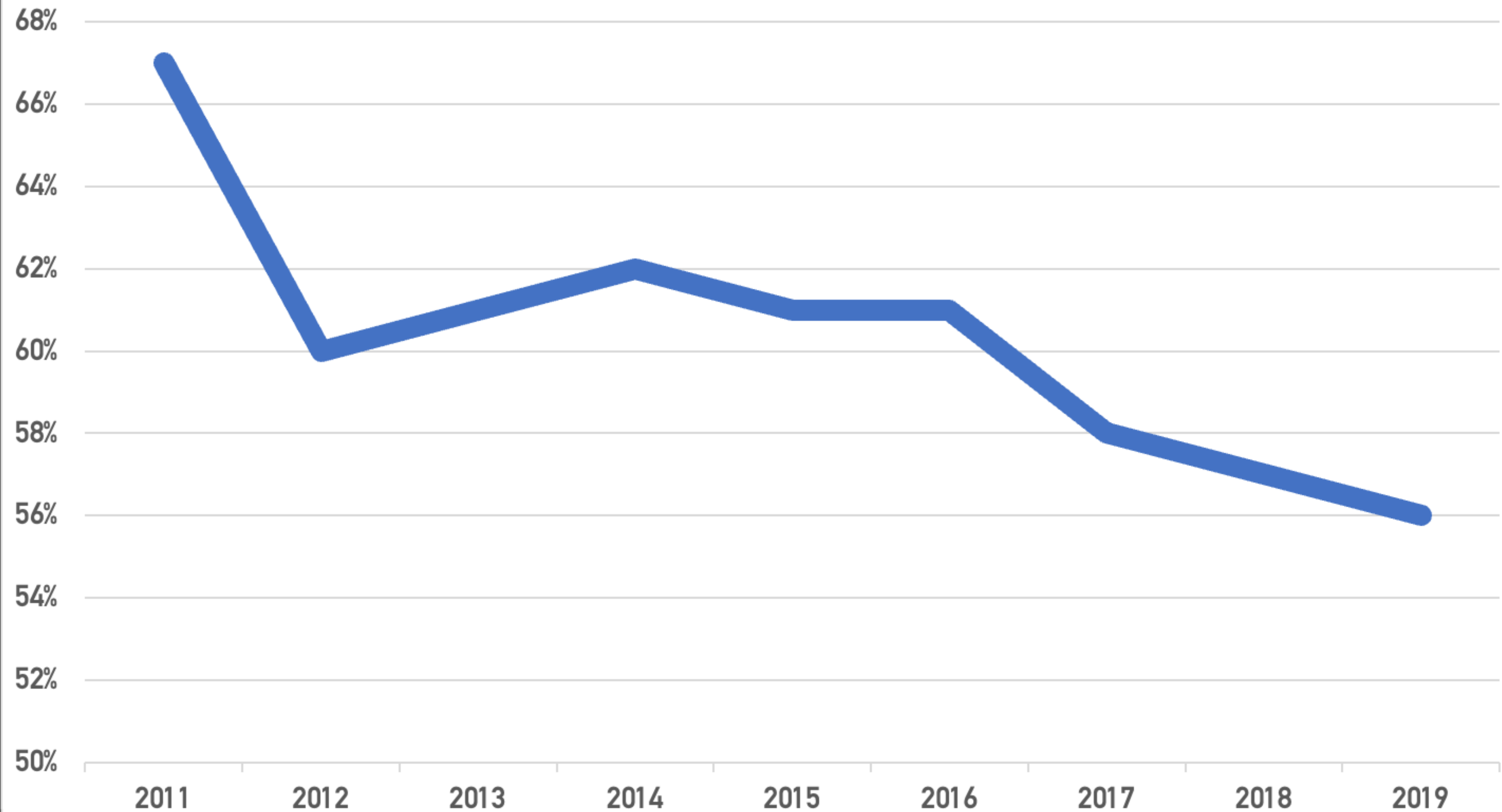
17%

## CHALLENGE 3

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# DECEASING DESIRE

## THOSE WHO WISH THEY READ THE BIBLE MORE



67%

56%

## CHALLENGE 4

---

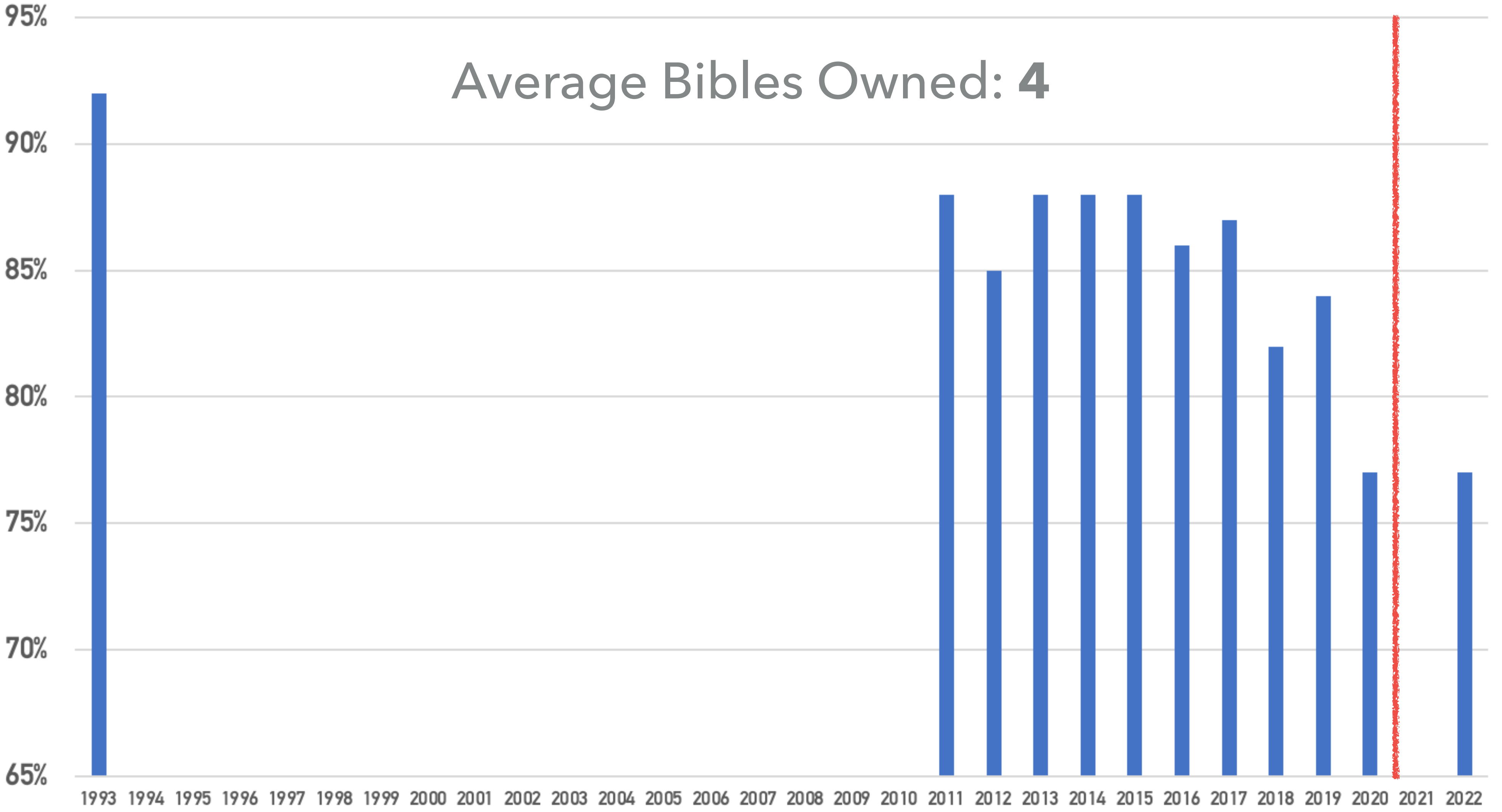
# DECEASING OWNERSHIP

# PERCENTAGE OF U.S. HOMES THAT OWN A BIBLE

Average Bibles Owned: 4

92%

77%



OUR GOAL

## CONSISTENT BIBLE ENGAGEMENT

- ▶ Bible engagement is the **#1 predictor of spiritual health**. (Lifeway Research)
- ▶ This is what the **Bible says** about itself...



**FOR THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING AND ACTIVE AND  
SHARPER THAN ANY DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD,  
PIERCING EVEN TO THE POINT OF DIVIDING SOUL  
FROM SPIRIT, AND JOINTS FROM MARROW; IT IS ABLE  
TO JUDGE THE DESIRES AND THOUGHTS OF THE HEART.**

**Hebrews 4:12** (NET)

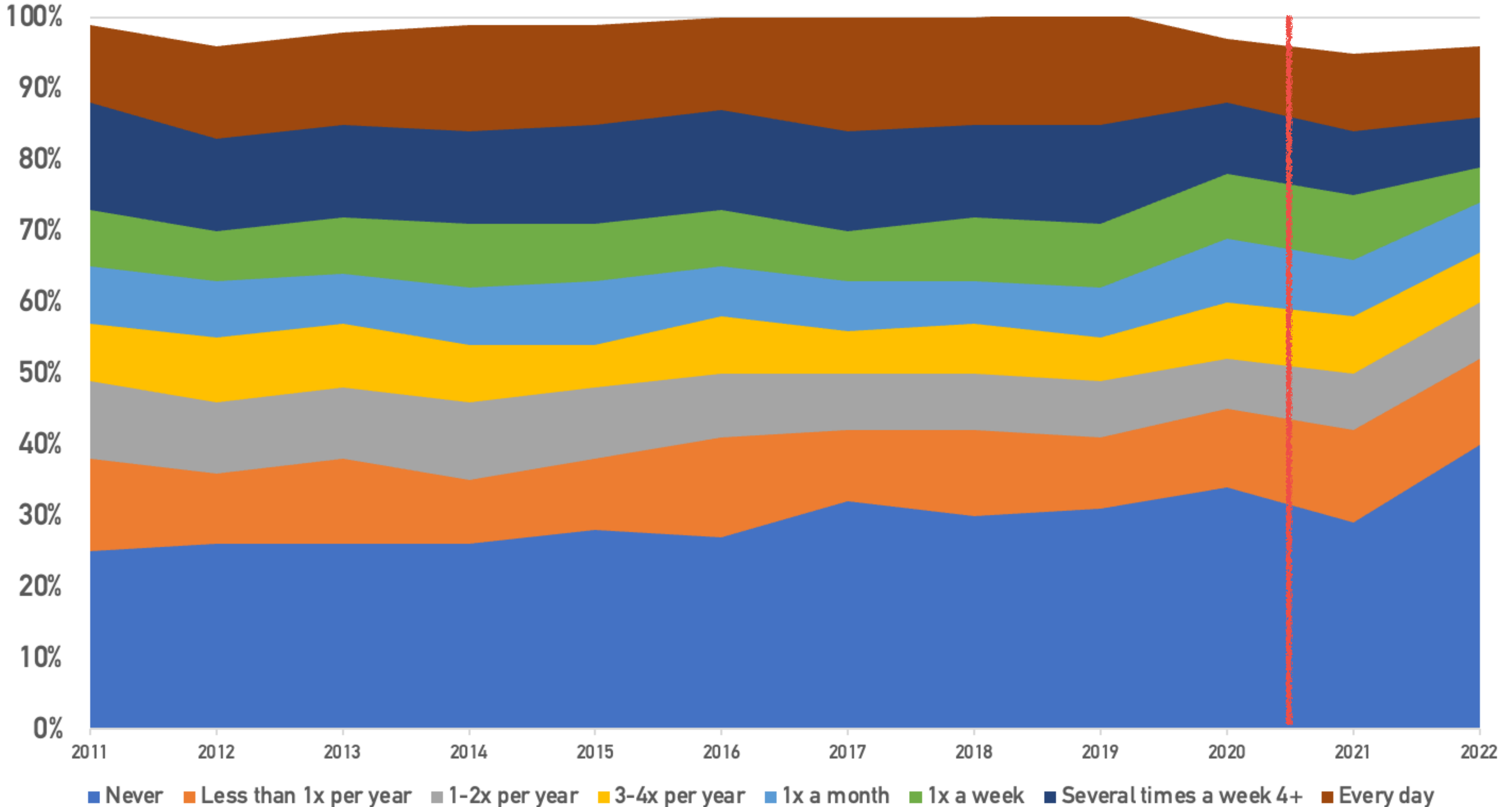
**THE LAW OF THE LORD IS PERFECT  
AND PRESERVES ONE'S LIFE.**

**Psalm 19:7** (NET)

## CONSISTENT BIBLE ENGAGEMENT

- ▶ Bible engagement is the **#1 predictor of spiritual health**. (Lifeway Research)
- ▶ This is what the **Bible says** about itself...
- ▶ Engaging with the Bible **4+ times a week** is essential. (The Center of Bible Engagement)
- ▶ Engaging **1-2 times** a week has a **negligible** effect in some areas.
- ▶ Engaging **3 times** a week is **barely better** than not engaging at all. It could create the feeling of being a "good Christian."

# FREQUENCY OF BIBLE READING



4+

26%

4+

17%

**OUR RESPONSE**

TIP 1

---

**ACKNOWLEDGE REALITY**

# WE CAN DISMISS OR ARGUE WITH WHERE PEOPLE ARE OR ACKNOWLEDGE IT

- ▶ We live in the tension between what **should be** and **what is**.
- ▶ How do we respond when we see the **causes for declining engagement**?



# CAUSE FOR BIBLE ENGAGEMENT DECREASE (2014–2017)

Too **busy** with life's responsibilities (job, family, etc.) **49%**

---

**Difficult experience** in my life caused me to doubt my faith  
(or God / Bible) **16%**

---

Had a **significant change** in my life (loss of job, death of a  
loved one, etc.) **15%**

---

Decided to **leave the church** altogether **13%**

---

Became an **atheist or agnostic** **12%**

---

Saw how reading the Bible made very **little difference** in  
the life of someone I know **8%**

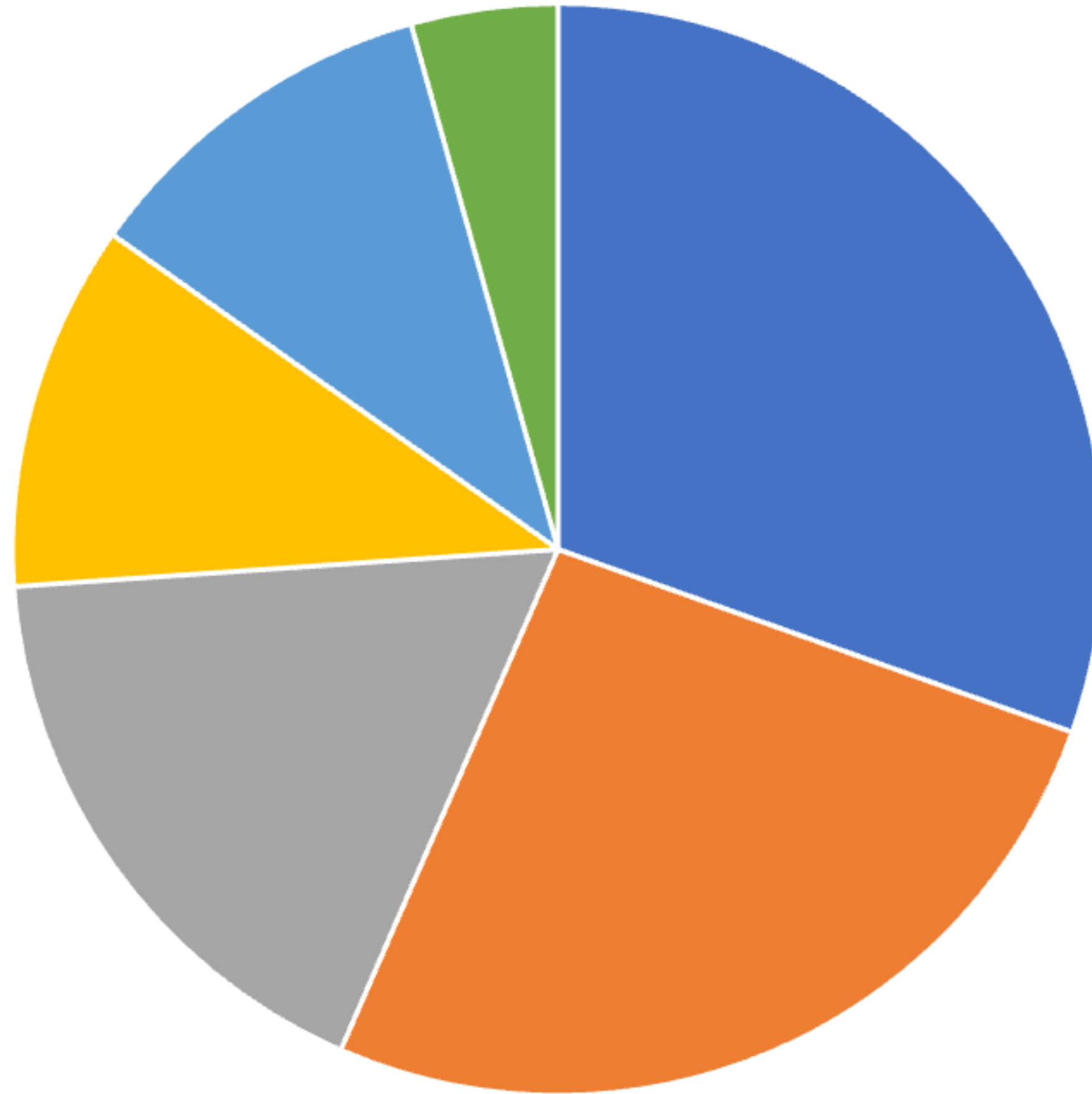
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Converted to **another faith** **4%**

## WE CAN DISMISS OR ARGUE WITH WHERE PEOPLE ARE OR ACKNOWLEDGE IT

- ▶ We live in the tension between what **should be** and **what is**.
- ▶ How do we respond when we see the **causes for declining engagement**?
- ▶ Do we see these as **"excuses" to be shamed** or **"reasons" to explore**?
- ▶ How do we respond when we see **unfavorable emotional experiences** while reading the Bible?

## UNFAVORABLE EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED WHILE READING THE BIBLE



■ Confused ■ Overwhelmed ■ Doubtful ■ Bored ■ Discouraged ■ Convicted/Guilty/Sinful/Judged

## WE CAN DISMISS OR ARGUE WITH WHERE PEOPLE ARE OR ACKNOWLEDGE IT

- ▶ We live in the tension between what **should be** and **what is**.
- ▶ How do we respond when we see the **causes for declining engagement**?
- ▶ Do we see these as **"excuses" to be shamed** or **"reasons" to explore**?
- ▶ How do we respond when we see **unfavorable emotional experiences** while reading the Bible?
- ▶ Do we see these as **invalid emotions to shun** or **valid emotions to consider**?
- ▶ Basically, are we **guides** to our kids, students, and families, or **police**?

TIP 2

---

**THINK INDIVIDUALLY**

## THIS IS NOT A ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL PROBLEM TO SOLVE

- ▶ Our kids, students, and families are:
  - ▶ Engaging at different **levels** (engaged, movable middle, disengaged).
  - ▶ Engaging at different **frequencies** (daily to not at all).
  - ▶ Are **underengaged or disengaged** for different reasons.
  - ▶ Are **engaged** for different reasons.
  - ▶ Are **wired differently**. Some may need a “boot in the backside” while others need a “pat on the back.”

TIP 3

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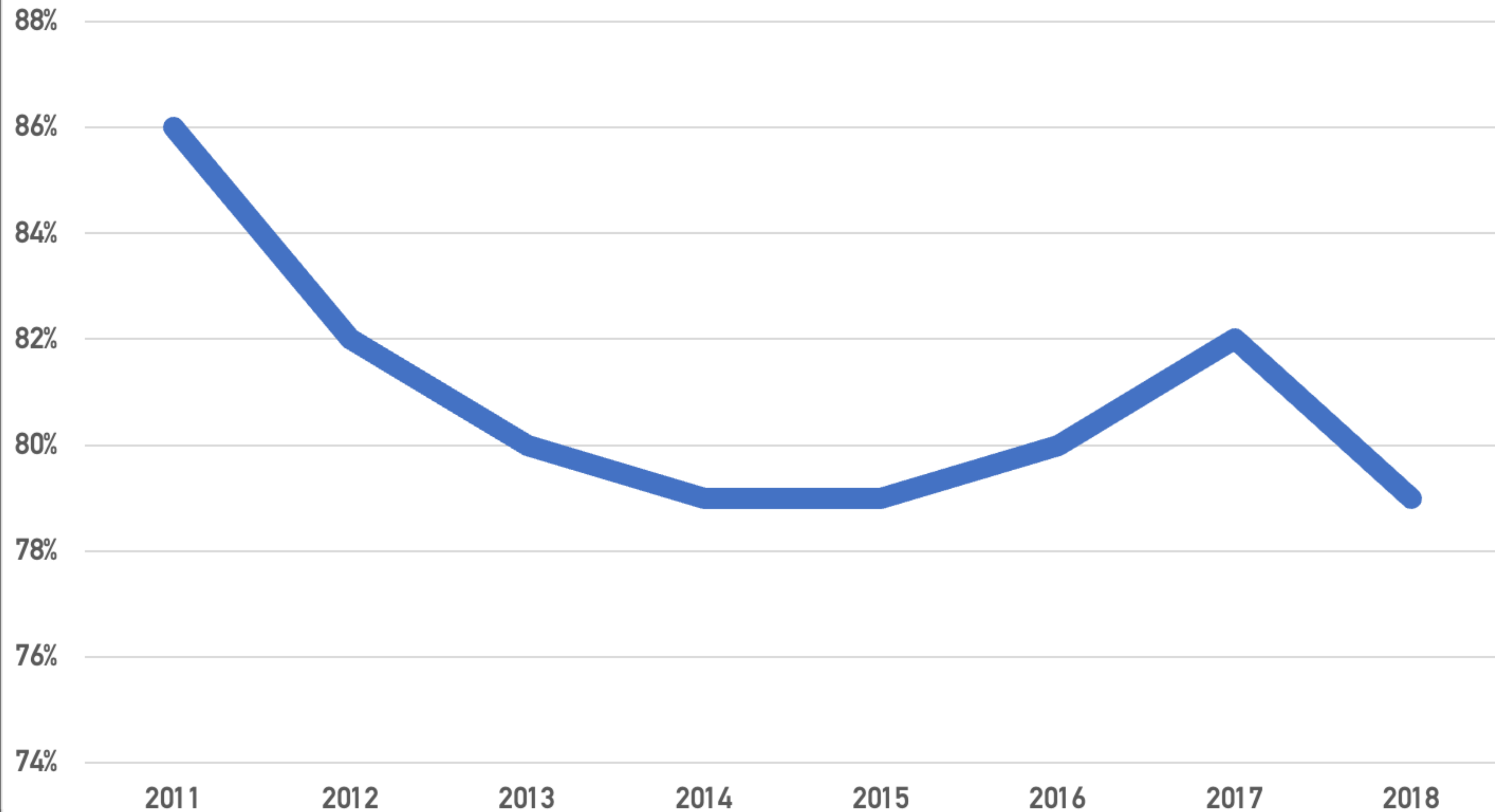
**AIM FOR THE HEART**



## CULTIVATE A LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD

- ▶ We do what we **love**.
- ▶ We protect what we **value**.
- ▶ This is, perhaps, the **true disease** we need to cure, the other data is merely a symptom.

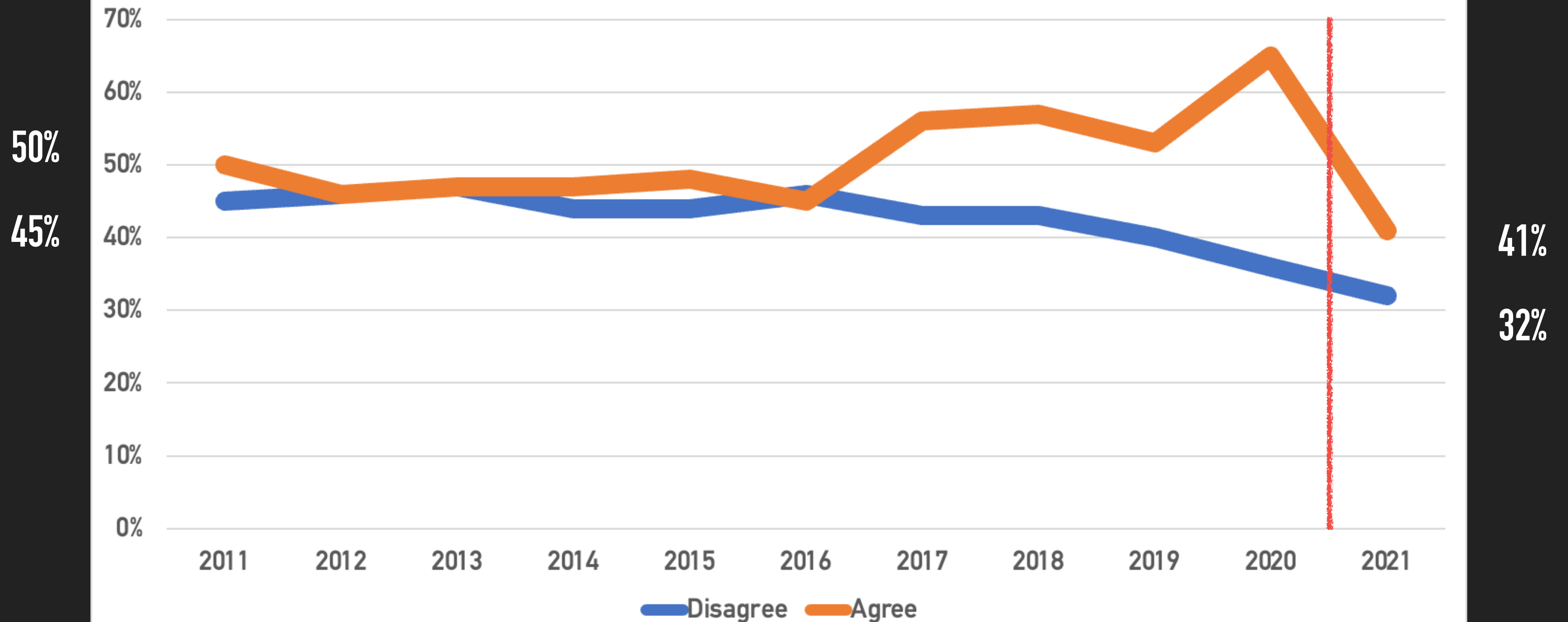
## THE BIBLE IS "SACRED" OR "HOLY"



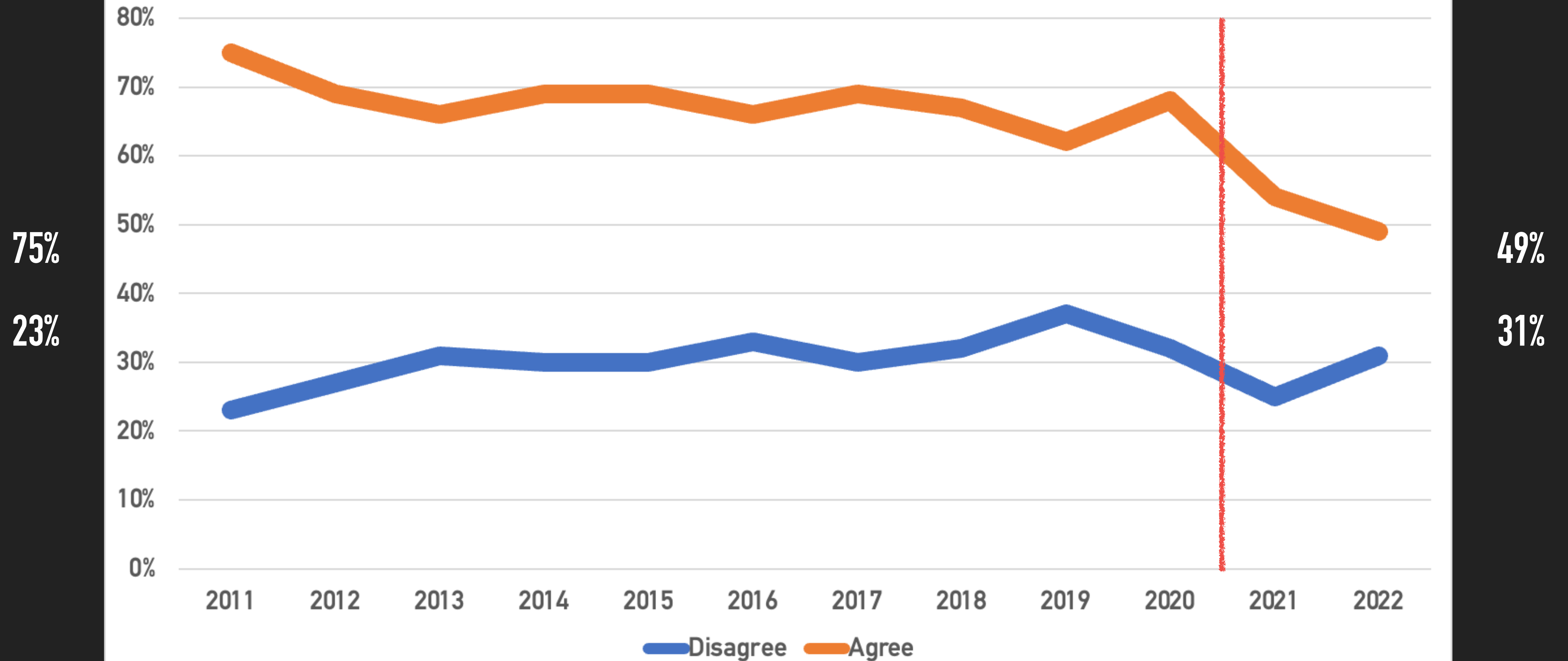
86%

79%

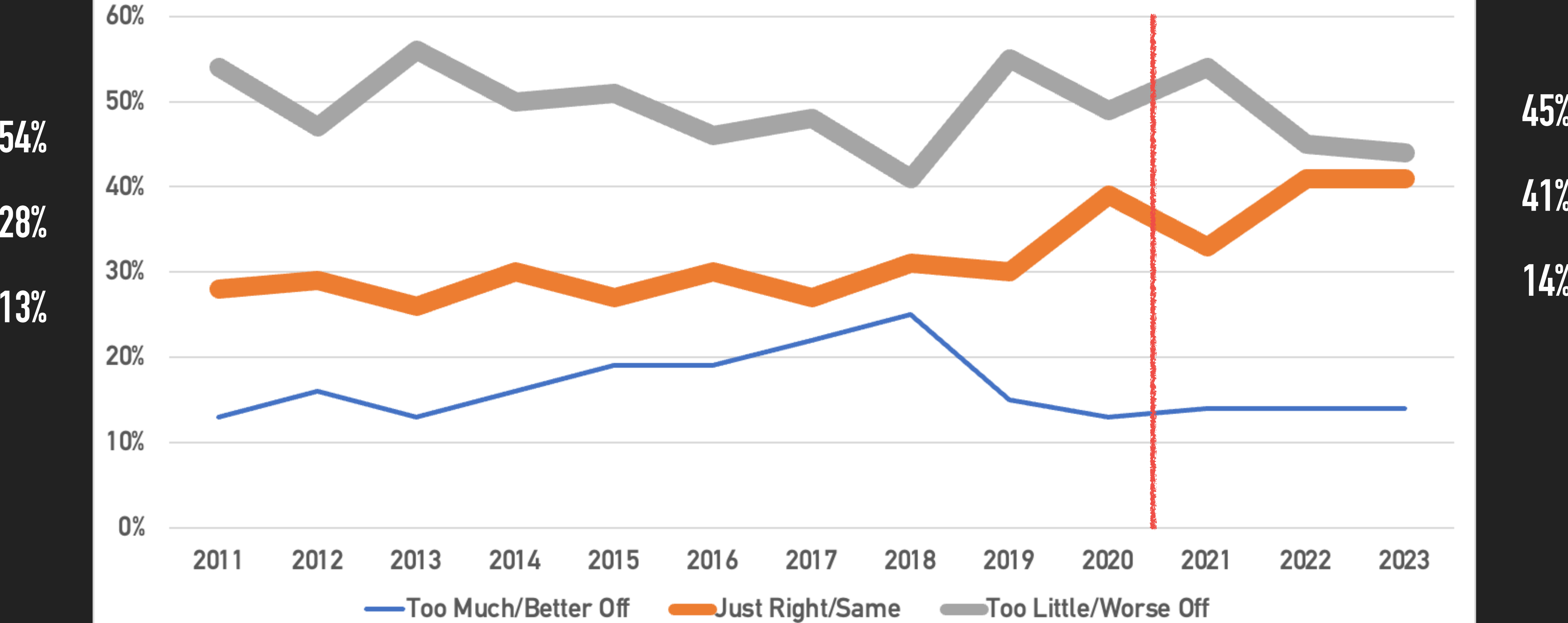
# THE BIBLE, KORAN, AND BOOK OF MORMON ARE ALL DIFFERENT EXPRESSIONS OF THE SAME SPIRITUAL TRUTH



## THE BIBLE CONTAINS EVERYTHING NEEDED TO LIVE A MEANINGFUL LIFE



HOW MUCH INFLUENCE DOES THE BIBLE HAVE / WHAT  
WOULD THE EFFECT ON THE COUNTRY BE WITHOUT  
THE BIBLE



## CULTIVATE A LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD

- ▶ We do what we **love**.
- ▶ We protect what we **value**.
- ▶ This is, perhaps, the **true disease** we need to cure, the other data is merely a symptom.
- ▶ We need to **hold and teach a proper perspective** of what the Bible is, and we need to **proclaim and model how much of a gift** it is.

# PRIMARY REASON FOR READING THE BIBLE

It brings me closer to God

51%

It helps me discern God's will for my life

17%

I need comfort

14%

I have a problem I need to solve or decision to make

13%

It tells me about the nature of God

10%

It shows me how to treat others

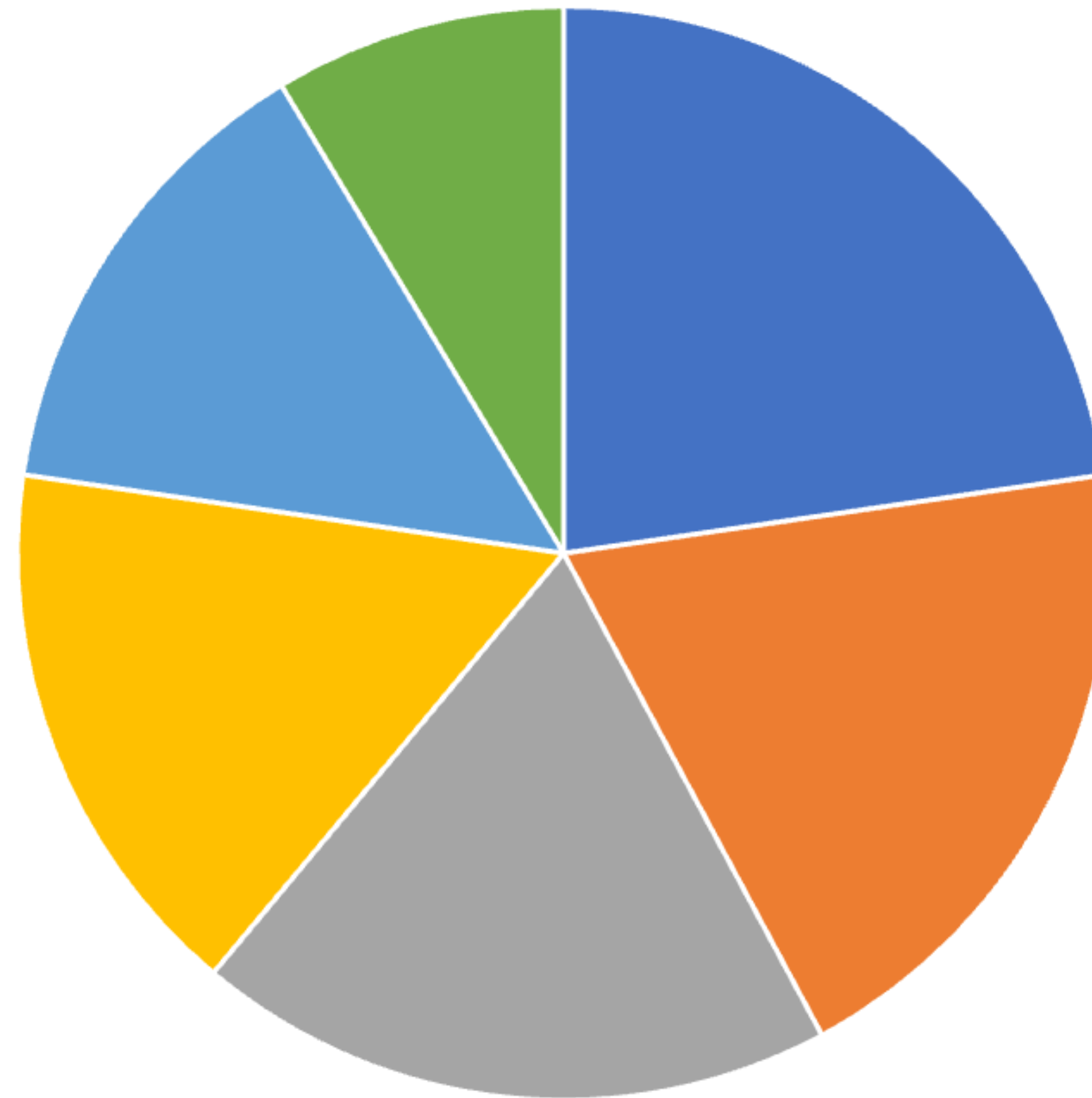
5%

I know I'm supposed to

5%



## FAVORABLE EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED WHILE READING THE BIBLE



■ Peaceful ■ Encouraged/Inspired ■ Hopeful ■ Sense of Direction ■ Happy ■ Intrigued

## CULTIVATE A LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD

- ▶ We do what we **love**.
- ▶ We protect what we **value**.
- ▶ This is, perhaps, the **true disease** we need to cure, the other data is merely a symptom.
- ▶ We need to **hold and teach a proper perspective** of what the Bible is, and we need to **proclaim and model how much of a gift** it is.
- ▶ Bible engagement is not an **academic endeavor**; it is a **glorious feast for the soul**.
- ▶ This may **feel utilitarian**, but it should not be. The Bible itself tells us that reading it benefits our lives...

**YOUR WORD IS A LAMP TO WALK BY,  
AND A LIGHT TO ILLUMINE MY PATH.**

**Psalm 119:105** (NET)

**EVERY SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED BY GOD AND USEFUL  
FOR TEACHING, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, AND  
FOR TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, THAT THE PERSON  
DEDICATED TO GOD MAY BE CAPABLE AND EQUIPPED  
FOR EVERY GOOD WORK.**

**2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NET)**

TIP 4

---

**OFFER SMALL STEPS**

## BIBLE ENGAGEMENT IS AN ASPECT OF DISCIPLESHIP / SANCTIFICATION

- ▶ Christ does **not expect babies to eat steak**, and neither should we.
- ▶ Why are **gyms packed** in January and empty in February?

DISENGAGED ➡ MOVEABLE MIDDLE ➡ ENGAGED

NEVER → 1x WEEK → 2-3x WEEK → 4x WEEK → DAILY



## PROVIDE READING PLANS AT A VARIETY OF LEVELS

- ▶ Read through the **Bible in a year**
- ▶ Read through the **NT in a year**
- ▶ **90-day, 60-day, and 30-day** plans
  - ▶ Pentateuch; Gospels; Paul's letters; Psalms; John's writings
- ▶ **2-3x a week** plans (e.g., Bible in 2-3 years)
- ▶ **1x a week** plans (e.g., background of preaching text)

## FIND NATURAL CONNECTIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT

- ▶ At home, read the **book being preached** at church
- ▶ **Reading plan podcasts** with hosts discussing and explaining readings
- ▶ **Seasonal** readings (e.g., Easter, Advent)

Gen	4	2 Sam	2.25	Esth	0.5	Ezek	4.25	Hab	0.25
Ex	3.5	2 Sam	2.5	Job	2.25	Dan	1.25	Zeph	0.25
Lev	2.5	Ruth	2	Ps	5.75	Hos	0.5	Hag	0.25
Num	3.5	1 Kin	2.5	Prov	2	Joel	0.25	Zech	0.75
Deut	2.75	2 Kin	2.5	Eccl	0.75	Amos	0.5	Mal	0.25
Josh	2	1 Chr	2.5	Song	0.5	Obad	0.1		
Judg	2	2 Chr	2.75	Is	4.5	Jon	0.25		
Ruth	0.25	Ezra	0.75	Jer	4.75	Mic	0.5		
1 Sam	2.75	Neh	1	Lam	0.25	Nah	0.25		

Matt	2.75	1 Cor	1.25	1 Thes	0.25	Heb	1	3 John	0.1
Mark	1.75	2 Cor	0.75	2 Thes	0.25	James	0.25	Jude	0.1
Luke	3	Gal	0.5	1 Tim	0.25	1 Pet	0.25	Rev	1.5
John	2.5	Eph	0.5	2 Tim	0.25	2 Pet	0.25		
Acts	3	Phil	0.25	Titus	0.1	1 John	0.25		
Rom	1.25	Col	0.25	Philem	0.1	2 John	0.1		

## PROVIDE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP LEVELS

- ▶ **Level 1:** Re-read Sunday's Bible text and pray
- ▶ **Level 2:** Re-read Sunday's Bible text, ask **2 questions**, and pray
- ▶ **Level 3:** Re-read Sunday's Bible text plus the **rest of the passage**, ask 2 questions, and pray
- ▶ **Level 4:** Re-read Sunday's Bible text plus the rest of the passage, ask 2 questions, and pray AND **do a separate reading**

TIP 5

---

**BE A PROBLEM-SOLVER**

# MOST SIGNIFICANT FRUSTRATION ABOUT READING THE BIBLE

I never seem to have enough **time** to use it **26%**

---

I find the **language** difficult to relate to **12%**

---

I don't know where to **start** **12%**

---

I don't feel that **excited** about using it **10%**

---

I don't understand the **background** or history of the Bible **7%**

---

I think the stories are **confusing** **5%**

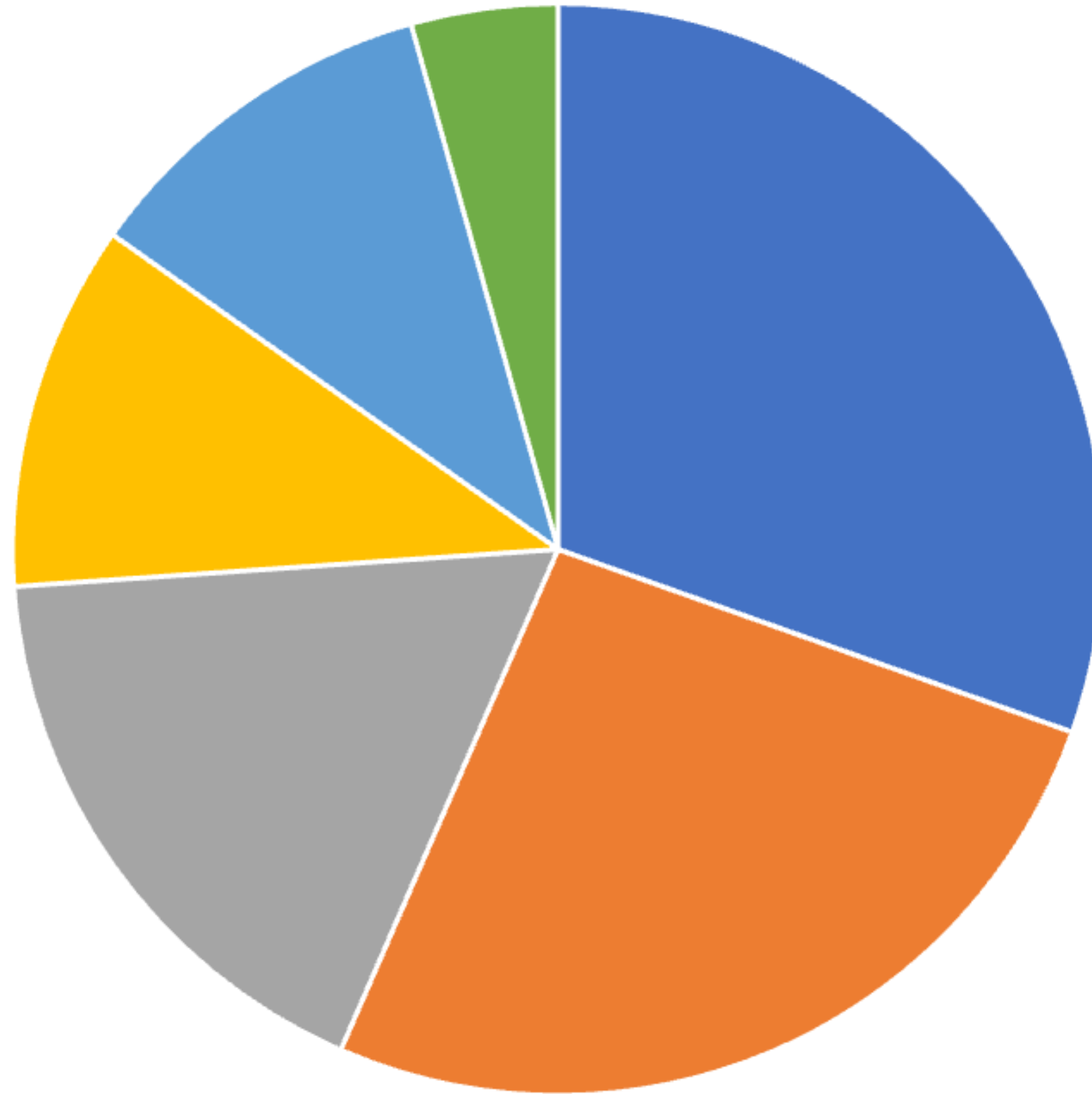
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I believe the **layout is difficult** to navigate **5%**

---

I can **never find** the stories or verses I am looking for **4%**

## UNFAVORABLE EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED WHILE READING THE BIBLE



■ Confused ■ Overwhelmed ■ Doubtful ■ Bored ■ Discouraged ■ Convicted/Guilty/Sinful/Judged



# COVER THE BIBLE BASICS

- ▶ Part of **workshops, conferences, and trainings**.
  - ▶ Inspiration, transmission, and translation basics
  - ▶ English translation options
  - ▶ Chapter and verse designations
  - ▶ Cross references and translator notes
  - ▶ Genres, sections, etc.
  - ▶ How to read the Bible (e.g., Proverbs v. Mark v. Revelation)
- ▶ **Weave** into teaching/preaching when possible (especially with kids)
- ▶ How to **choose a Bible**, features to look for, etc. (have Bibles on hand to show).

## EXPLAIN THE BIBLE CONTENT

- ▶ The **point** of the Bible...

**YOU STUDY THE SCRIPTURES THOROUGHLY BECAUSE  
YOU THINK IN THEM YOU POSSESS ETERNAL LIFE, AND  
IT IS THESE SAME SCRIPTURES THAT TESTIFY ABOUT  
ME, BUT YOU ARE NOT WILLING TO COME TO ME SO  
THAT YOU MAY HAVE LIFE.**

**John 5:39–40** (NET)

# EXPLAIN THE BIBLE CONTENT

- ▶ The **point** of the Bible: Jesus.
- ▶ The **story** are of the Bible.
- ▶ The **history** and **culture** of the Bible and between the testaments.
- ▶ The key **people**, **places**, and **events** of the Bible.
- ▶ The key **themes** in the Bible.
- ▶ The **vocabulary** of the Bible.

## PROVIDE BIBLE RESOURCES

- ▶ Reading **plans**
- ▶ **Study** Bibles, **devotional** Bibles, **reference** Bibles
- ▶ **Commentaries, dictionaries**
- ▶ **Harmonies**
- ▶ **Online** Bibles with search features

TIP 6

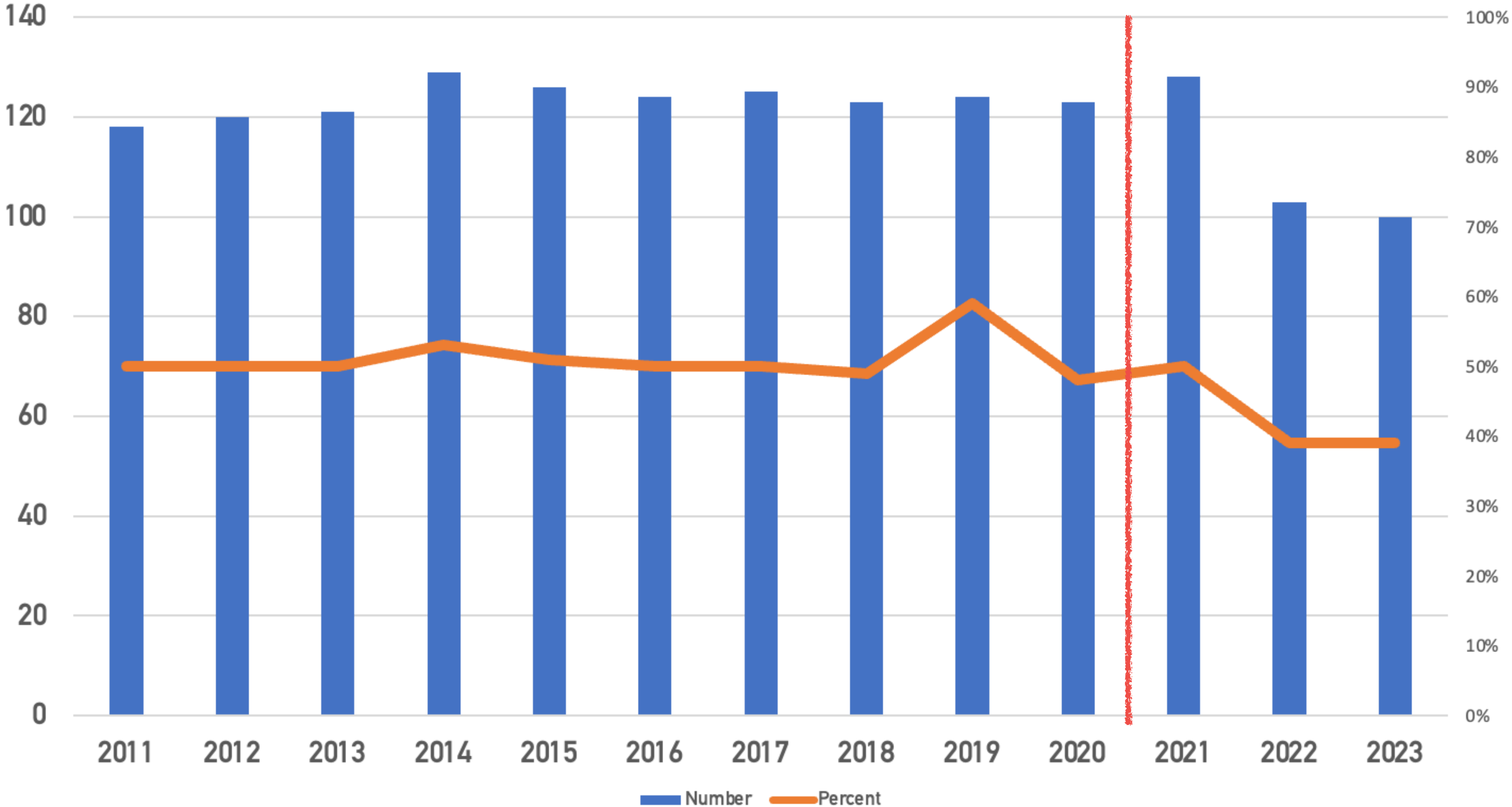
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**DISCIPLE YOUR FAMILIES ON HOW TO  
SUFFER WELL**

## SOMETHING “BROKE” BECAUSE OF COVID

- ▶ Covid, it seems, **drove people** toward the Bible.
- ▶ Searching for **hope and comfort**, perhaps.
- ▶ But then...

# ADULT BIBLE USERS

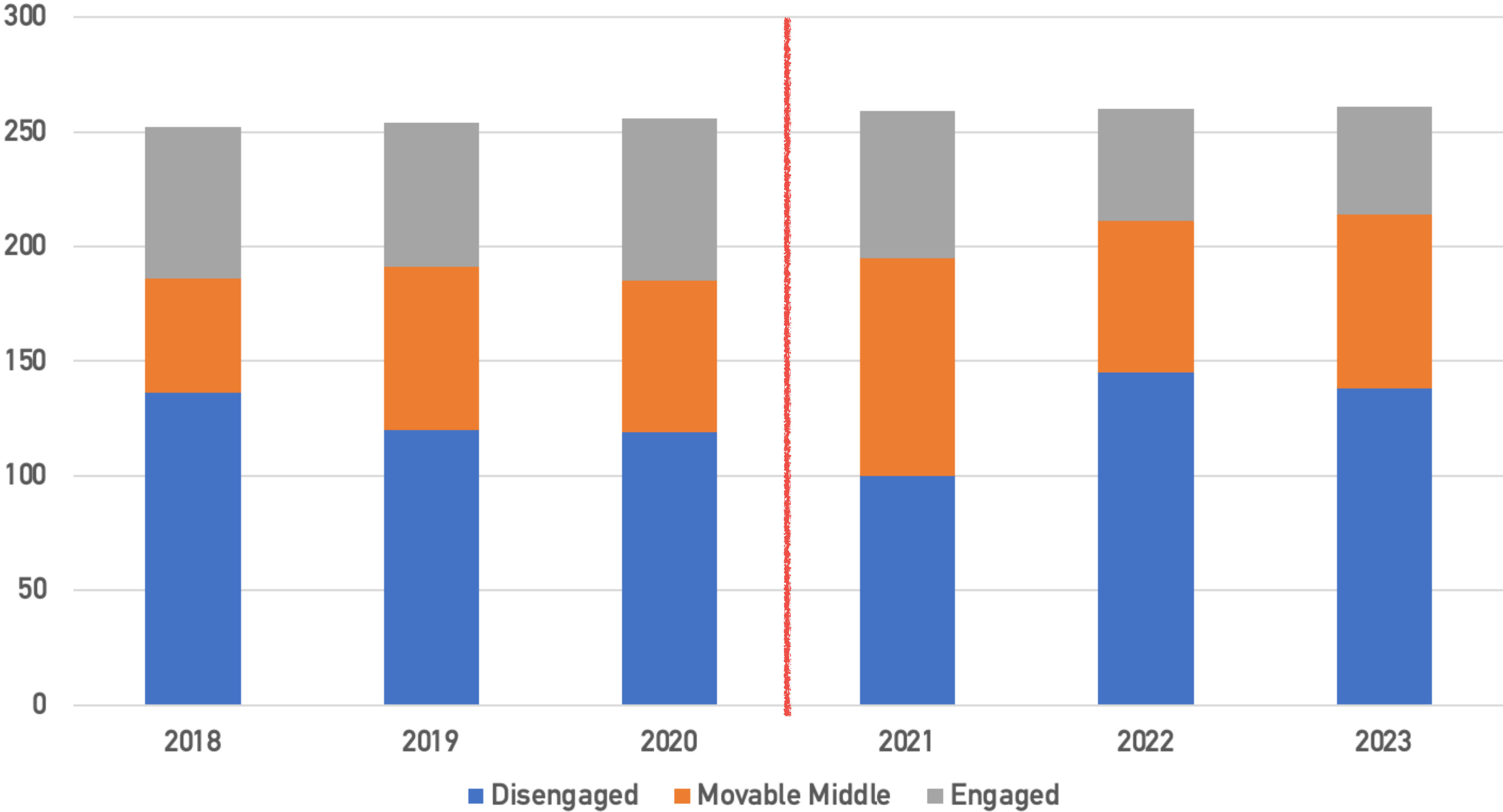


118 million  
50%

100 million  
39%



# SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT



20%

22%

58%

18%

29%

53%

## SOMETHING “BROKE” BECAUSE OF COVID

- ▶ Covid, it seems, **drove people** toward the Bible.
- ▶ Searching for **hope and comfort**, perhaps.
- ▶ But then the numbers dropped, not to what they were but **even lower**.
- ▶ It seems that people had the **right inclination**, but **did not know** how to find what was truly **there all along**.
- ▶ Like the **scribes** in John 5, people, it seems, looked for hope and comfort **without looking for them from and through Christ**.

# CAUSE FOR BIBLE ENGAGEMENT INCREASE (2014–2017)

Came to **understand** it as an important part of my faith journey **59%**

---

**Difficult experience** in my life caused me to search the Bible for direction / answers **33%**

---

Significant **change in my life** (marriage, birth of a child, etc.) **19%**

---

**Downloaded** the Bible onto my phone / tablet **19%**

---

Saw how the **Bible changed someone** I know for the better **16%**

---

Went to a **church** where the Bible became more accessible to me **14%**

---

Someone I know **asked me** to read the Bible with them **13%**

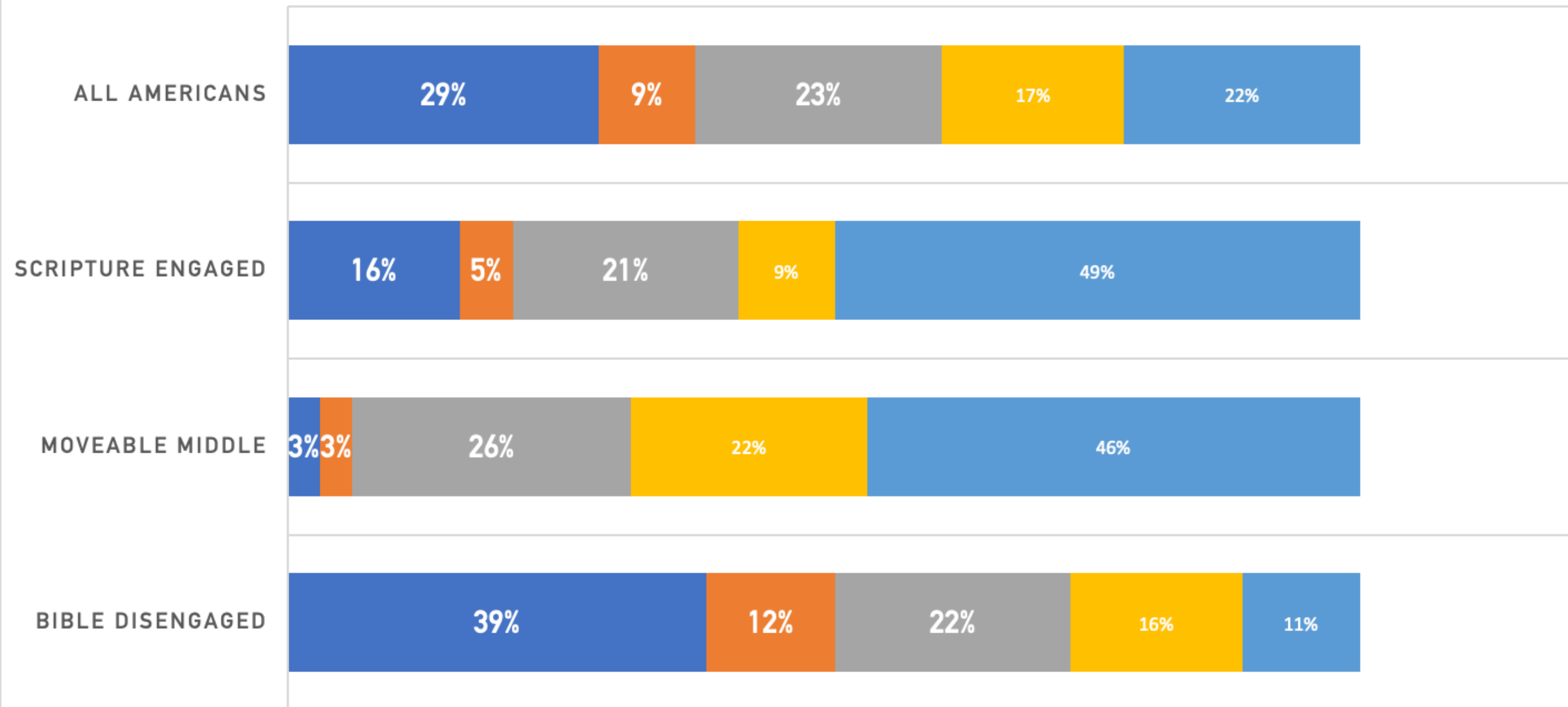
TIP 7

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**THERE IS AMPLE REASON  
TO BE OPTIMISTIC**

# 71% OF AMERICANS ARE CURIOUS ABOUT THE BIBLE AND/OR JESUS

■ Not Curious at All ■ A Little Curious ■ Somewhat Curious ■ Very Curious ■ Extremely Curious



**SO SHALL MY WORD BE THAT GOES FORTH FROM MY MOUTH; IT SHALL NOT RETURN TO ME VOID, BUT IT SHALL ACCOMPLISH WHAT I PLEASE, AND IT SHALL PROSPER IN THE THING FOR WHICH I SENT IT.**

**Isaiah 55:11** (NKJV)

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