

The Word of God, For the People of God: Examining the Impact of the Bible on Personal Policy Preferences

by

Connor Lloyd Hughes

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Approved by:

Adam Newmark, Ph.D., Thesis Director

Randall Reed, Ph.D., Second Reader

Ellen Key, Ph.D., Departmental Honors Director

Jefford Vahlbusch, Ph.D., Dean, The Honors College

Abstract

For Christians, the Bible represents a unique document that contains holy messaging about how they should live their life. However, the connection between biblical messages and personal policy preferences is unclear. This research utilizes a unique survey-embedded experiment to discover how a liberal Bible message can impact personal policy preferences. Ultimately, I conclude that exposure to a liberal Bible message does not show more liberal differences in policy perspectives relative to a control passage amongst Christians. Similarly, I also conclude that Christians exposed to a liberal Bible message do not demonstrate statistically more liberal policy preferences relative to Christians exposed to a control passage across a spectrum of religiosity and political involvement.

Introduction

In terms of the most influential piece of literature in the world, particularly in regard to Western society, the Christian Bible stands out dramatically. The Guinness World Records identifies the Bible as the best-selling book of all time, while a YouGov poll conducted in 2014 identified the Bible as the most influential book of all time (Best Selling Book; Wyatt 2014). It is undeniable that the Bible and Christianity have a tremendous impact on the culture of the world, particularly in the United States, as over 70 percent of Americans use some form of the Bible as their holy book (Religious Landscape Study). Therefore, we should expect that Christianity and the Bible are so integrated into American society that the messages and themes present in Christianity find themselves in supposedly secular institutions, including the U.S. government and the political realm. Additionally, while not as prevalent as previous times in history, around 30 percent of Americans take the Bible as the inerrant word of God, meaning that they believe in biblical literalism (Religious Landscape Study). The word of God is a powerful authority to believers, particularly in lieu of more active forms of communication, even if they do not believe that every element in the Bible should be taken literally. Therefore, it is important to understand how the Bible integrates into other elements of people's lives, namely, political policy preferences. Given the potential for political decisions to impact the lives of citizens, it is important to understand individual's policy preferences, since, in the aggregate, it can affect their own and their communities' livelihoods. This project explores the extent to which the Bible can shape policy preferences. Ultimately, understanding the politics of a group requires understanding

their culture, and American politics simply cannot be told without coming to an understanding of the role of religion within American Politics.

Review of Literature

Public Opinion Development Public opinion has long been a subject of examination within political science, particularly in how people come to hold their beliefs. In examining the process by which people's policy preferences are changed, how people form said preferences in the first place is an important component. In Converse's (1964) magnum opus, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," he argued against the thesis that people use complicated ideological systems in determining political beliefs; rather, very few people are true ideologues, and the plurality of people hold opinions based off their ideas on whether the stance helps or hurts a group to which they belong. It is important to note a component of these groups can include religion.

In 1992, Zaller asserted that through the Receive-Accept-Sample (RAS) Model, people take cues from elites who disseminate policy stances, and depending on individual's level of partisanship and interest in politics, such policy cues are taken differently (Markus 1994). In Zaller's (1992) RAS model, the higher the level of attention, the quicker the individual will react to changes in elite discourse, while the higher the level of partisanship, the better the individual will filter out information that doesn't fit with their existing partisan biases. This is very similar to Festinger's (1957) conception of cognitive dissonance – when people encounter new information that is contrary to existing beliefs, it creates a sensation of discomfort, and they will work to reduce said discomfort by attempting to work the new

information into their beliefs or by negatively reacting or attacking the legitimacy of the new information (Lashley 2009). However, Zaller's (1992) model shows how elites play a pivotal role in forming public opinion through distributing the new information (Markus 1994).

In more recent research, scholars proposed a cascading model where elites frame an issue and modify the frame based on the public reaction (Chong and Druckman 2007; Entman 2004). In contrast, Druckman (2001) suggests that the public does not implicitly trust all elites – instead, the public only listens to elites that they trust. Further, when discussing how public opinion is changed, Payne (2001) and Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson (1997) note that successful framing relies upon relating the issue at hand to something the framer already knows the recipient of the frame agrees or disagrees with contingent upon the desired outcome. Hetherington (2014) posits that framing is a process of building off other already held frames rather than generalizing existing frames to fit the present need – the process makes things more complex rather than an attempt at simplification. However, there is currently a literal gap on whether texts, particularly spiritual texts, can serve as a form of elites in which people receive their cues for public opinion, as the current literature focuses on human elites, such as politicians, journalists, etc. (Zaller 1992).

Party Identification An important component of knowing someone's political policy preferences is party identification (Campbell et al. 1960; Gerber, Huber, and Washington 2010). Jennings and Niemi (1974) establish that party identification is highly influenced by parental party identification at a unintentional level, meaning that parents do not intend to influence their children's party affiliation, but still retain influence through indirect actions.

Jennings and Niemi (1974) and Campbell et al. (1960) also establish that party identification is a relatively permanent lens through which people examine politics.

However, the concept of stable partisan identification has evolved to allow for more flexibility – Key (1966) and Downs (1957) argue that partisan attachment is more fluid and affected by events in people’s lives, particularly among those who do not identify as strong partisans. Downs’ (1957) and Key’s (1966) views have been reinforced by modern scholarship, as Tucker, Montgomery, and Smith (2018) argue that partisanship changes at an individual level over time, primarily in relation to their current view on the political parties and the president. Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2002) argue that variation in partisan identification over time is primarily due to researchers not accounting for random survey response variation over time. Meanwhile, MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson (1989) posit that in the aggregate, partisanship changes as a function of the economy. Hershey (2017) notes that other institutions influence early partisan attachments; in particular, religion and formal education can influence party affiliation, though schools try to be nonpartisan. Additionally, religion rarely enforces partisan beliefs that are not backed by the parents of the individual, causing a potential endogeneity issue (Hershey 2017).

The Rise and Fall of Biblical Literalism In the larger scale of religious history, biblical literalism, the belief that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, is a relatively new phenomenon. Biblical literalism emerged largely as a reaction to modernity and the rise of science and industrialization in the late 19th century (Armstrong 2001). In essence, as scientific discovery and rationalism became seen as the primary way to obtain knowledge regarding the world, religious figures feared that the Bible would be seen as untrue or false

by scientific standards, and thus they reacted by claiming that the Bible was scientifically and literally true – every event described was interpreted as factually correct (Armstrong 2001). Previous methods of interpreting the Bible in a metaphorical manner largely fell out of use, particularly in Evangelical Christian communities (Armstrong 2001).

Since 1964, The American National Election Studies (ANES) has conducted survey research on the American population on the subject of biblical literalism through the use of two different questions, the first used from 1964-1990, while the second was used from 1990-2016 (American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File; Leege, Kellstedt, and Wald 1990). From 1964 until 1990, belief in biblical literalism was around 50 percent. Since then, biblical literalism has dropped into the low 30's in 2016, though it is unclear how much of the variation between the years is due to question wording and changes in provided answer choices (American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File). The 1964-1990 measure stated, "Here are four statements about the Bible and I'd like you to tell me which is closest to your own view," with the following options: "The Bible is the Word of God and all it says is true," "The Bible was written by men but inspired by God, but contains some human errors," "The Bible is a good book because it was written by wise men, but God had nothing to do with it," "The Bible was written by men who lived so long ago that it is worth very little today," and an "other, specify" category (American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File; Leege, Kellstedt, and Wald 1990 35). The measure used in the 1990-2016 ANES stated the following, "Which of these statements come closest to describing your feelings about the Bible?" with the following answer choices: "the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word," "The Bible is the word of

God but not everything in it should be taken literally word for word," "The Bible is a book written by men and is not the word of God," and the "other, don't know" category; as seen here, the wording of the questions significantly changed and the 1990-2016 option offered one less option than the 1964-1990 option (American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File; Leege, Kellstedt, and Wald 1990 35). The change in question wording from 1990 to the present is largely due to the recommendations of Leege, Kellstedt, and Wald (1990) in their report on the NES. From 1964 to 1990, the belief in biblical literalism oscillated around 50 percent support, reaching a relative high in 1968 followed by a relative drop in 1980 to just above 45 percent, though slightly ticking back up towards 50 percent until 1990 (American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File). Meanwhile the measure that started use in 1990 recorded an initial level of support for biblical literalism at 45 percent - following 1990, there was a relatively steady decline in the belief in biblical literalism until the low point in 2016 with just above 30 percent support (American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File).

One potential explanation for the decline in biblical literalism is the decline in religious beliefs overall. Brauer (2018) argues that the decline in religion in the United States is largely a generational trend because younger people are less religious overall than older generations, while others (Hout and Fischer 2014; Putnam and Campbell 2012; Butler, Wacker, and Balmer 2008; Hout 2016) point to the politics and actions of right-wing, religious groups and the Catholic Church, which are the cause behind the overall change in American religion, primarily through people viewing their actions as distasteful. Stroope (2011) directly points out that higher levels of education reduced the likelihood of

individuals to believe in biblical literalism, thus explaining why belief in biblical literalism is on the decline while education rates rise, culminating in 2018 with the United States Census Bureau releasing an article entitled, “U.S. Population More Educated Than Ever Before,” (Schmidt 2018). In 2017, Gallup polls recorded that only 24 percent of Americans believe the Bible is the literal word of God and meant to be taken word-for-word, while in 2019, Pew found that 31 percent maintain beliefs in biblical literalism (Saad 2017; Fahmy 2019).

Conservatism and Evangelicalism According to public opinion data, 85 percent of conservatives today identify as Christian, while 52 percent of liberals identify as such (Religious Landscape Study). The presidential election cycle of 1980 was one of the first national attempts by the Republican Party to use religious messages, as Ronald Reagan frequently invoked Matthew 5’s passage about the shining city on a hill - “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden” - to simultaneously channel American exceptionalism and religious rhetoric (Matthew 5:14; Silk 2010 34-35). Williams (2010) points to an earlier date for the evangelical association with the Republican Party, arguing that the Democrats’ willingness to nominate a Catholic presidential candidate in 1920 laid the foundation for evangelical Democrats to leave the Party in the 1940-60’s over civil rights and biblical literalism, resulting in an alliance with the Republican Party (Krabbendam 2011). In the 1970’s, evangelicals, such as Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority movement, began to gain power within the Republican party, resulting in the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 on a platform largely influenced by evangelicals advocating for “Judeo-Christian values” (Williams 2010; Silk 2010 34). Changing the focus from a historical analysis, Djupe and Calfano (2013) concluded that modern Republican politicians will use coded religious

messages, such as a hymn or a parable, to get support from evangelicals, as well as using religious rhetoric in general to unite the Republican Party (O'Connell 2015). From a theoretical standpoint, Belcher, Fandetti, and Cole (2004) concluded that evangelicalism is incompatible with the liberal social welfare state, primarily due to evangelical's insistence on the sinful nature of humanity as a reason to deny individual rights that are advocated for by modern liberalism, thus pigeonholing evangelicals with conservatism. In essence, there is substantial history and philosophy linking conservatism and the Republican Party to evangelicals; however, there is a lack of scholarship on liberal elements of Christianity as well as potential liberal uses of the Bible in politics.

“Doing” Religion Defining religion is not an easy task nor is it the focus of this paper.

However, it is important to provide some clarity on what is meant by religion, particularly in relation to what it means to be an evangelical Christian. Within the realm of political science, religion is often thought of as simply an identity (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Hershey 2017; Williams 2010). However, sociologists often go beyond simply defining religion as an identity through arguing it is also an action. Smith et al. (1998) argue that religion serves as an identity that causes actions, i.e., because you identify as a member of a religious group, you take part in certain actions, while Avishai (2008) argues that the actions shape identity in becoming more in line with the expectations of said religion (e.g. someone volunteers at the homeless shelter because they think it is the Christian thing to do).

Regardless of the relationship of which comes first sequentially, it is important to keep in mind that action(s) are a major part of religion. In particular, Kelly (2014) notes the importance of taking actions thought to be in line with God's will among evangelical

Christians. Further, Kelly (2014) points out that the actions evangelical Christians take strengthens their identity, while their identity shapes the actions that they carry out; in other words, evangelical identity and the actions they take are “mutually reinforcing” (419).

The Church and Politics Despite the notion of the separation of church and state, researchers have long been interested in the role of religion in politics, as well as vice versa. In the landmark work *The Impact of Churches on Political Behavior: An Empirical Study*, Gilbert (1993) concluded through conducting over 2,100 interviews at over 173 Christian churches that the institution of the church itself has an impact on churchgoer’s voting preferences and members of church communities impact how other people vote (Davis 1995). One area with significant research in American politics and religion is the role of the clergy in communicating political messages. Paul Djupe and Christopher Gilbert (2003) conclude that Lutheran, Episcopal, and majority minority congregations’ clergy sometimes take on politically prophetic roles; that is, churches whose denomination make up a small percentage of the local community take on more of a politically active role in advocating for a seat at the table for political decisions (Crawford 2004). Djupe and Calfano (2013) concluded through the use of experiments that clergy can influence their congregation on environmental issues when stating their opinion and how they came to their decision religiously; additionally, clergy can have an impact on their congregation’s opinion on foreign interventions (O’Connell 2015). Recently, through the use of a survey-embedded experiment, Wallsten and Nteta (2016) concluded that pastor discourse was able to change congregational opinion on immigration among Methodists, Southern Baptists, and Evangelical Lutherans. Within their experiment, Wallsten and Nteta (2016) included Bible

passages within their treatments of what the pastors said – this muddles their conclusion a bit, as it is unclear whether the Bible verse is causing the opinion shift or the rest of the pastor’s message. Essentially, there is a potential observational equivalence problem: the pastor’s rhetoric could cause the change in people’s opinions, or it could be the Bible passage the pastor included in the speech, or the combination of an accepted authority figure citing an accepted source. Therefore, there is a gap in the current literature relative to isolating the exact role of the Bible.

The Role of the Religious Community in Politics Political scientists are not only interested in religious individuals, but the role religious communities play in politics. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) identify religious institutions in America as serving a mobilization role that is usually reserved for labor unions in European countries; as such, the more conservative nature of religious institutions affects the type of voices heard by politicians. Additionally, churches can serve as a training ground to acquire political skills, to meet people who are involved politically, as well as an opportunity for leaders to motivate political activity; this is especially the case for children raised in the church, as it increases the likelihood of exposure to said political factors (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Additionally, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) find that among adults, requests for political activity are more likely to occur in church than any other supposed non-political institution. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) find that church-goers will defer to their denomination’s preferred presidential candidate when they dislike both candidates or like their denomination’s preferred candidate over the other candidate in a general election. Additionally, if the religious person likes both candidates, they are slightly more likely to

defer to their denomination's preferred candidate, while if they disagree with their denomination's nominee but like the other nominee, 21 percent will still vote for their denomination's candidate (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954 225-227). Further, Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) found that less politically involved Catholics deferred to their groups' opinion on political matters, meaning the more politically sophisticated a Catholic is, the less of an effect their religion has on their brand of politics. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) also found that the longer and the greater level of involvement a person has with their church, regardless of denomination, the stronger they move to their church's preferred political party, which is reflected in their vote choice.

As the literature review shows, there is a fair amount of research on religion in politics; however, it is by no means comprehensive. Largely, most of the research focuses on the impact of the clergy on the congregation—similar research on Biblical interpretation in political science is nonexistent, nor is there a great deal of research on the congregation members themselves. Therefore, this research project will examine how people handle a liberal Bible passage in regard to social policy preferences. This project will also serve as a test of the extent of biblical literalism in regards to politics. Prior research reflects that the more religious a person is, the more they vote for the interest of their religion (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954). Meanwhile, as people become more organically involved in politics outside the church, the less influence the church has on their vote (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954). However, this research is over 70 years old – it is important to test their findings to see how the most religious and the most politically involved compare to their less involved compatriots.

Theory

As established in the literature review, it is clear that elites play an important role in opinion formation and maintenance, but it is unclear as to the extent of who or what can qualify as an “elite,” as the literature is limited to evaluating specific people (Zaller 1992; Chong and Druckman 2004; Druckman 2001). Wallsten and Nteta’s (2016) survey-embedded experiment regarding the influence of clergy rhetoric included specific references to the Bible, but it is unclear what role the Bible specifically played in shaping people’s policy preferences. Therefore, in expanding on the work regarding the influence of elites in opinion formation, this paper explores if a non-anthropological unit can act as elites that form public opinion. This forms the basis of Hypothesis 1a and 1b, which is stated below:

Hypothesis 1a: When Christians are exposed to a biblical text with a liberal political message, their opinion will be more liberal relative to Christians who are not exposed to a biblical text.

Hypothesis 1b: When Evangelicals are exposed to a biblical text with a liberal political message, their opinion will be more liberal than Evangelicals who are not exposed to a biblical text.

When Christians are exposed to said biblical text, the primed information will cause cognitive dissonance in people with opposite political beliefs relative to the message in the Bible, as described in Festinger (1957) and Lashley (2009). Similarly, I expect that Evangelical Christians who receive the text will respond more in the direction of the political message than those who do not receive the text, though not to the same extent as regular Christians since Evangelicals are more conservative on average. People who already agree with the text will be further encouraged to express their opinion more strongly than without

the primed information. When Christians experience cognitive dissonance, that is, their political beliefs disagree with their religious beliefs, they will naturally look to reduce and mitigate said dissonance as much as possible – in this instance, I expect people to reduce the dissonance in the direction of the biblical information. This is based on the expectation that in Christians' recognition of the Bible as foundational to their identity. Religion, particularly for Christians and especially Evangelical Christians, is something actively done rather than a one-time event (Kelly 2014; Avishai 2008; Smith et al. 1998), for the religious practice must be maintained to receive the end incentive – therefore, I expect Christians and evangelical Christians to a lesser extent to attempt to structure their survey responses in such a way to maintain consistency with their religious doctrine to achieve their end goal of heaven.

Further, working under the assumption that the Bible can serve as an elite message, it remains unclear whether the conceptualization of the Bible or the message itself that serves as the cue. Djupe and Calfano (2013) established the importance of the messenger, as this also plays a role. However, it is unclear if the message itself serves as the cue, or the idea that the message comes from the Bible, a form of higher authority. I intend to test this through Hypothesis 2, which is posited below:

Hypothesis 2: When Christians are exposed to a biblical text with a liberal political message, their opinion will be more liberal relative to Christians who are exposed to the same text but not described as from the Bible.

This is due to the expectation that the Bible serves as a cue for Christians, as elaborated above, and said cue will provide greater attention to the message of the passage than without the biblical cue. This is in line with Kelly's (2014) work that Christians constantly work to be more in line with the conception of what an ideal Christian person

would do. This will also test the earlier theory that the Bible itself serves as the cue – Christians will regard the message without the Bible identifier as just political in nature, thus not paying attention as much as a message with a dual religious and political meaning. This also assumes a lack of biblical literacy among the general population of Christians that they will not be able to identify the Bible passage as such without the Bible label. Essentially, while the message will be important to the overall reaction, I posit that the bible label matters as well in acting as an elite authority.

Based on Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954), I explore several important hypotheses. First, Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) imply a hierarchy of identity – some people view religion as a more important identity, while others view political affiliation as a more important identity. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) establish that as a person becomes more religious, the religious denomination has a greater influence over their political opinions; therefore, I hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3a: When exposed to a biblical text with a political message, more religious people will be more in line with the political leanings of the text relative to less religious people.

Hypothesis 3b: When exposed to a biblical text with a political message, more religious Christians will be more in line with the political leanings of the text relative to less religious non-Christians.

This is primarily due to the expectation that people who are more religious will be more inclined to follow biblical doctrines as close as possible – people will then shift their political opinions to match their religious beliefs. For people who are extremely religious, their religious identity serves as something that must be constantly maintained. I define religiosity in terms of the dedication and amount of time the respondent spends in conducting or

participating in a religious act. Therefore, we would expect people with large amounts of dedication to their religion to work into their maintenance process an “update” of other identities, including political identities, to match the new religious information. This fits with Zaller’s (1992) RAS model and Festinger’s (1957) model of cognitive dissonance - people will work to reduce cognitive dissonance in processing the new information given via the vignette treatment. Hypothesis 3b works as a natural extension of Hypothesis 3a: I expect greater alignment amongst Christians due to using a Christian text. Similarly, Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) provide evidence that as people become more politically sophisticated, they will experience less influence from their religious affiliation; this forms the basis of my fourth and final hypothesis, which is shown below:

Hypothesis 4: When a person is exposed to biblical text with a political message, the more politically sophisticated individuals will be less in line with the text than those who are less politically sophisticated.

This serves as the inverse of the previous hypothesis – instead of the religious identity serving as the guiding framework, the political identity of the individual serves as the overarching umbrella identity. Therefore, when new political information is exposed to the politically sophisticated, the fact the information is also religious in nature will be of little consequence, as what matters is whether the idea fits into their overarching political identity in the first place.

Research Design

For this project, I build off the work done by Wallsten and Nteta (2016) in the use of a survey-embedded experiment. The survey-embedded experiment model will combine the classic internal validity of a regular experiment with the external validity of a traditional

experiment, thus adding to the overall quality of the research project. The specific text of the survey can be found in Appendix A of this document. In terms of administration of the survey, I used the platform Qualtrics to administer the survey online. All survey questions are either taken from Pew's Religious Landscape survey, the 2016 American National Election Studies Time Series Study, Qualtrics suggested demographic questions, questions from my prior academic work in consultation with Dr. Newmark, or original questions - each questions' origin is noted in the Appendix. Some questions' wording and responses were slightly modified to better capture certain beliefs of the respondent. The survey was administered to a convenience sample of undergraduate students at Appalachian State University in the spring semester of 2020. Invitations to take the survey were sent out via email from participating professors. Depending on the professor, extra credit was offered upon completion of the survey. Four hundred and forty-eight students at least partially completed the survey with 380 fully complete responses.

Ten professors at Appalachian State University agreed to send out the survey to their students via email - the respondents came from political science, religious studies, philosophy, or geology courses. At the beginning of the survey, the respondents were informed that I am a researcher from Appalachian State University, that the survey is about the interaction of various demographic groups, religion, pop culture, and politics, how all responses are completely confidential, and to please select the best answer choice that describes themselves. Additionally, there was a brief paragraph describing how students can receive extra credit in their classes for completing the survey. The first question dealt with their religious identification. If the participant answers as "Protestant," they will receive a

follow-up question asking if they consider themselves Evangelical. Next, a short text was shown that says the next section discusses religious practice and beliefs and tells them to select the answer that best represents their actions or beliefs. This set of questions dealt with matters such as if they consider themselves a born-again Christian and how often they attend religious services. Additionally, I asked a question about biblical literalism. This subset of questions is randomized to eliminate question ordering effects. Following the questions on religiosity, I gave the respondents a short block of text that tells them the next question is about political involvement, and that they should select the answer that best represents their actions or beliefs. I then asked a quick matrix-style question regarding their level of political involvement. Next, I administered the experimental component of the survey; in this instance, a short bit of directions were provided to tell the respondent to carefully read the passage and where it comes from is specified in the first sentence. Respondents were given one of three excerpts. The first excerpt states the following: “The following passages are from the Bible. James 2:14-17: ‘What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warm and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.’ Luke 3:11: ‘Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.’” The first excerpt contains two English Standard Version (ESV) Bible verses with a liberal message that relates to taking care of the poor and wealth inequality. The second excerpt is the following: “The following passages are local sayings. What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has

faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warm and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.” The second excerpt is the exact same text as the first excerpt, but it classifies the passage as a local saying instead and does not include where the passages came from in the Bible. Finally, for a control, the third excerpt serves as a control and is a passage from a CNN story regarding cell phone-related injuries (please refer to the Appendix for exact wording).

To add a distractor, respondents were then asked to watch a short video from America’s Funniest Home Videos on “Hilarious Birthday Fails,” followed by two quick questions regarding the video. The distractor largely helps to avoid measurement error in overestimating the effect of the treatment by directly asking policy preferences after the treatment. In particular, this was also done to avoid structuring answers by people in the Bible passage treatment, as it could be too obvious to the respondent that we were looking to measure the effect of the Bible on political preferences.

Next, respondents were given instructions that the following set of questions deals with political policy preferences. The participants were asked in a randomized order a set of eight social policy preferences questions. The subjects of these questions concerned the minimum wage, government spending on healthcare for the poor, income inequality, affirmative action, federal spending on welfare, federal spending on aid to the poor, paid parental leave, and immigration policy. Finally, the last set of survey questions collected

demographic information. I included a question concerning the year of birth taken from the Qualtrics generic demographic survey question database. The validity of the questions asked throughout the survey should be relatively high, given their use by other polling organizations and that I am using them to measure the same outcomes, just on different populations, using a different method.

In order to clearly articulate my independent variables, I created an operationalization table via Table 1. Table 1 lists the concept, what question applies to the concept, and how the concept is coded. For specific question wording, please reference the Appendix. For this project, my dependent variables are all related to specific policy questions. To determine if the set of items are related to one another, I calculated a Cronbach's alpha score. The questions display a relatively high Cronbach's alpha score of 0.87, indicating that they explore relatively similar moods regarding public policy. However, I evaluate each item individually to capture a larger degree of uniqueness per question area, as it would be interesting to explore where my hypotheses are particularly applicable. All dependent variables are coded so that higher numerical values indicate more liberal stances and ask the respondent on their relative stance on the subject mentioned. Dependent variables are displayed in Table 2 below. For particular question wording, please refer to the Appendix.

Table 1. Operationalization of Concepts for Independent Variables

Name of Concept	Definition of Concept	Applicable Question(s)	Coding of Concept
Vignette	Refers to a short block of text given to respondent. 3 options: Bible passage, local saying, or control.	“vignette” variable	0: Control vignette 1: Local Saying vignette 2: Bible Vignette
Religious Identification	Refers to the religious identity of the respondent	Q2: religious identification	1-7 scale. Nominal variable.
Evangelical Identity	Refers to whether the respondent identifies as an Evangelical.	Q53: Evangelical identity	1-2 scale. Dummy variable. 1 is Evangelical, 2 is not
Religiosity	The extent of how important religion is to the daily life of the respondent	Q6 (religious service attendance) Q9 (Biblical literalism) Q14 (discussion of faith with non-believers) Q12 (how often they read scripture) Q11 (how often they pray) Q67 (discussion of faith with believers)	1. Index of Q6, Q14, Q12, Q11, and Q67. Scored 0-23. 0-7 low religiosity, 8-15 medium religiosity, 16-23 high religiosity. 2. Q9 0-3, lower numbers indicate less religious answer
Political Involvement	The extent to which the respondent engages in the political realm	Q69_1 (protest attendance) Q69_2 (signed a petition) Q69_3 (worked for a campaign) Q69_4 (political post on social media)	Index of Q69_1, Q69_2, Q69_3, Q69_4. Scored 0-4. 0-1 low political involvement, 2 medium political involvement, 3-4 high political involvement.
Ideology	Belief system used to assess how the world should be in terms of political and policy outcomes	Q43 (Ideology sliding scale)	1-7 scale. 1, 2, 3 coded as liberal, 4 as moderate, 5, 6, 7, coded as conservative.

Table 2. Operationalization of Concepts for Dependent Variables

Name of Variable	Classification of Variable	Coding of Concept
Minimum Wage (Q25)	Ordinal	0-3
Government Spending on Healthcare Insurance for Those Without Insurance (Q26)	Ordinal, Likert scale	0-4
Government Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	Ordinal, Likert scale	0-4
Affirmative Action (Q30)	Ordinal, Likert scale	0-4
Aid to Poor (Q58)	Ordinal, Likert scale	0-4
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	Ordinal, Likert scale	0-4
Immigration (Q35)	Ordinal	0-3
Welfare Spending (Q31)	Ordinal, Likert scale	0-4

After the survey was conducted, I ran several statistical analyses. In particular, I used difference of means tests and confidence intervals to compare the responses on the different social policy questions to the vignette they received, thus testing whether the vignettes had an effect on social policy preferences. I utilized the religiosity index and the biblical literalism question to determine if the Bible passages had a greater impact on the more religious subjects relative to those who were less religious. Further, my political involvement matrix was used to evaluate how the vignettes affected responses across levels of political sophistication.

Analysis

Data were collected from 448 students who at least partially completed the survey with 380 fully complete responses. Approximately 31.51 percent of respondents received the control vignette, 33.56 percent the local saying vignette, and 34.93 percent received the Bible passage vignette. In terms of religious identification, 34.92 percent of respondents identified as Protestant, 9.98 percent as Catholic, 2.04 percent as Jewish, 17.91 percent as agnostic, 10.88 percent as atheist, and 24.26 percent as something else. Non-Christians are included within the analysis of this survey when comparing across all responses given. Of people who identified as Protestant, 47.71 percent identified as Evangelical. Approximately 52.39 percent of respondents were liberal, 17.18 percent moderate, and 30.42 percent conservative. Table 3 displays the average scores on the policy questions using the mean and also displays the standard deviation.

As seen in Table 3, there was some variation across questions. Paid parental leave received highly liberal answers, while affirmative action received relatively less liberal responses. The immigration question was also relatively less liberal, though it is important to keep in mind that there were fewer answer categories for the immigration question relative to the others outside of minimum wage. Overall, however, it appears that the liberal overrepresentation carries over to the policy responses and is not limited to self-identification.

Table 3. Average Score on Policy Questions

Question	Mean Score (Closest Category)	Standard Deviation
Minimum Wage (Q25)	2.64 (Raised) (N=382)	0.61
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	2.99 (Slightly increase) (N=382)	1.06
Gov't Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	2.54 (Slightly favor) (N=381)	1.30
Affirmative Action (Q30)	2.00 (Neither favor nor oppose) (N=382)	1.17
Aid to Poor (Q58)	2.91 (Slightly increase) (N=377)	0.96
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	3.63 (Strongly favor) (N=376)	0.70
Immigration (Q35)	1.86 (Allow to remain if they meet certain requirements) (N=377)	0.86
Welfare Spending (Q31)	2.60 (Slightly increase) (N=377)	1.11

N=*n* displays the number of observations for the specified question

Before I analyzed the data to test my hypotheses, I checked the relative effects of each treatment, as seen in Table 4. Table 4 displays the average score and 95 percent confidence interval among all respondents on the policy preference questions. Higher scores indicate more liberal policy preferences.

Table 4. Mean Score on Policy Questions by Vignette

Mean Score	Bible Vignette	Local Saying Vignette	Control Vignette
Minimum Wage (Q25)	2.66 (2.56, 2.77) N=133	2.60 (2.49, 2.71) N=127	2.65 (2.55, 2.75) N=122
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	2.89 (2.72, 3.07) N=133	3.11 (2.94, 3.29) N=127	2.98 (2.79, 3.18) N=122
Gov't Reduction of income inequality (Q28)	2.48 (2.25, 2.70) N=132	2.57 (2.34, 2.79) N=127	2.59 (2.36, 2.82) N=122
Affirmative Action (Q30)	1.95 (1.75, 2.15) N=133	2.09 (1.88, 2.29) N=127	1.96 (1.75, 2.17) N=122
Aid to Poor (Q58)	2.91 (2.75, 3.07) N=132	2.95 (2.79, 3.11) N=124	2.88 (2.69, 3.06) N=121
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	3.62 (3.49, 3.75) N=132	3.68 (3.56, 3.80) N=123	3.59 (3.47, 3.71) N=121
Immigration (Q35)	1.87 (1.73, 2.02) N=132	1.74 (1.58, 1.90) N=124	1.97 (1.82, 2.12) N=121
Welfare Spending (Q31)	2.50 (2.31, 2.69) N=132	2.63 (2.44, 2.82) N=124	2.67 (2.47, 2.87) N=121

Numbers in parentheses represent the 95 percent confidence interval for the value above it. N= represents the number of observations in the cell.

As Table 4 shows, all mean values for each question by vignette lie within the 95 percent confidence interval of one another, indicating a lack of uniqueness between vignettes.

Chi-squared tests of independence confirm that in the aggregate, the treatment vignettes had relatively no effect on the preferred policy preferences of the respondents.

Table 4's findings are somewhat expected: only 44.9 percent of the population polled identified as Christian, and non-Christians could have been negatively affected by the use of a Christian biblical text, thus muting group sentiment in the aggregate; therefore, Table 4's inclusion of non-Christians affects the measurable outcomes. Table 5 provides a more specific breakdown by each policy question asked to see if particular questions were more affected by the vignettes amongst Christians only, including both Protestants and Roman Catholics. This determines the answer to Hypothesis 1a, Hypothesis 1b, and Hypothesis 2.

First, Table 5 serves as a clear rejection of Hypothesis 1, which stated that Christians exposed to a liberal Bible passage will respond more liberally relative to Christians who did not receive the liberal bible passage. As seen here, the control vignette and the Bible vignette's mean response always lies within one another's 95 percent confidence interval. Overall, it should be noted that a chi-square test of independence indicates that the vignette received and answer given for each policy question was statistically independent. However, there appears to be a somewhat noticeable trend that might be affecting the tests of statistical significance. As already articulated, the Bible treatment and the control treatment appear statistically independent. However, this is not the case in all questions for the local saying treatment. Outside of the immigration question, there is a noticeable visual trend when reading from right to left: the control mean is followed by a higher local saying mean, then the Bible passage vignette mean score declines back to about the mean of the control vignette. This appears to be especially the case for questions related directly to government spending.

Table 5. Mean Score on Policy Questions by Vignette for Christians

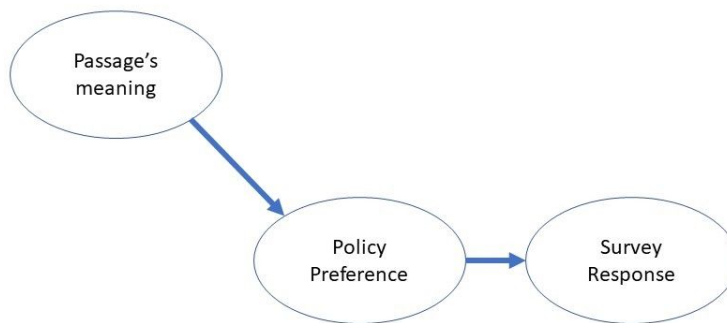
Mean Index Score	Bible Vignette	Local Saying Vignette	Control Vignette
Minimum Wage (Q25)	2.49 (2.31, 2.67)	2.56 (2.42, 2.70)	2.52 (2.34, 2.70)
Number of Observations	N=65	N=59	N=46
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	2.54* (2.27, 2.81)	3.05* (2.77, 3.33)	2.61 (2.23, 2.99)
Number of Observations	N=65	N=59	N=46
Gov't Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	2.12* (1.79, 2.45)	2.53* (2.17, 2.88)	2.04 (1.62, 2.46)
Number of Observations	N=65	N=59	N=46
Affirmative Action (Q30)	1.92 (1.63, 2.21)	2.17 (1.86, 2.48)	1.89 (1.54, 2.24)
Number of Observations	N=65	N=59	N=46
Aid to Poor (Q58)	2.67* (2.46, 2.89)	2.93* (2.70, 3.16)	2.65 (2.33, 2.98)
Number of Observations	N=64	N=59	N=46
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	3.47* (3.25, 3.69)	3.71* (3.56, 3.86)	3.50 (3.30, 3.70)
Number of Observations	N=64	N=59	N=46
Immigration (Q35)	1.73 (1.53, 1.94)	1.66 (1.42, 1.90)	1.83 (1.56, 2.09)
Number of Observations	N=64	N=59	N=46
Welfare Spending (Q31)	2.14* (1.87, 2.41)	2.54 (2.28, 2.81)	2.33 (1.97, 2.68)
Number of Observations	N=64	N=59	N=46

Note that hypothesis tests are directional. When comparing the control and the local saying vignettes, the alternative hypothesis states that the local saying hypothesis average should be higher than the control hypothesis, while when comparing the local saying hypothesis to the Bible hypothesis, the alternative hypothesis expects that the Bible hypothesis average will be lower than the local saying average. Numbers in parentheses represent the 95 percent confidence interval for the value above it. * in the local saying vignette category indicates statistical significance at the $p < .10$ level between the local saying and control groups. * in the Bible vignette category indicates statistical significance at the $p < .10$ level between the local saying and Bible groups.

Theoretically, Hypothesis 1a might have been flawed, given the understanding posited in the data. Hypothesis 1a worked under the assumption that the passage's message

would impact one's understanding of the Bible and Christianity, which would in turn impact policy preferences. Policy preferences are affected by other factors, but Figure 1 simplifies the model below:

Figure 1. Model for Hypothesis 1a, 1b, and 2.



However, it appears that the Bible cue itself has its own effect on the policy preferences of an individual. However, this model does not fit the data. Rather, just the cue of “the Bible” appears to have a conservative influence over the policy preferences of the individual. I refer to this as the dual-variable model. The dual variable model largely explains why the chi-squared test of independence would fail to recognize a statistically dependent relationship, as there appears to be two variables involved: the passage used itself and the Bible cue, and in this case, they mitigate each other: the liberal bible passage's effect is muted by the Bible cue for the people who received the Bible vignette. Therefore, the competing variables minimize the effect of one another, and in this instance, cause the Bible vignette respondents to resemble the control vignette respondents. First, for the dual variable

model to fit, the local saying passage must be statistically significant in a positive manner from the control passage - this confirms the effect of the local saying passage, as the local saying vignette was more liberal in nature. Next, the local saying passage must be statistically significant from the Bible passage: that is, the Bible passage must be smaller and statistically significant than the local saying vignette, as the dual variable model projects that the Bible cue would exert a conservative pressure on the respondents' policy preferences.

Referring back to Table 5, I reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the control and local saying group in the areas of government spending on healthcare insurance, government reducing income inequality, and paid parental leave ($p < 0.05$). Further, from the questions specified, I reject the null that there is no difference between the average local saying vignette response and the average bible vignette response for government spending on healthcare insurance and paid parental leave ($p < 0.05$). Government reduction of income inequality is also significantly different at the $p < 0.10$ level. Federal spending on welfare also has a statistically significant difference between the local saying vignette and the Bible vignette ($p < 0.05$), while government spending on aid to the poor is also statistically different at the $p < 0.10$ level. The affirmative action question approaches statistical significance at the $p < 0.10$ level but is not quite statistically different between the local saying and Bible vignette. Therefore, it appears that in certain issue-specific categories, namely government spending on health insurance, government's role in reducing income inequality, and establishing paid parental leave, the dual variable model is in play. Additionally, welfare spending and aid to the poor, maintain statistically different relationships between the local saying vignette and the Bible passage vignette. From

a substantive significance perspective, it should be understood that the differences between the vignettes is fairly substantial among the statistically significant relationships. The government spending on health insurance question has a half-category difference between the mean response between the Bible vignette group and the local saying group. Amongst the statistically significant relationships between the local saying and bible passage groups, there is a 0.364 average gap, indicating that the bible passage group on average is 36.4 percent of one category less liberal. While this is not massive, it is enough to be considered substantially different between the local saying and bible passage groups. Similarly, among the statistically significant groups between the control and the local saying passage, there is a 0.38 category gap.

To further evaluate the dual-variable model specified in earlier, it is important to examine sub-groups of Christians, particularly Protestants and Evangelicals, to see if the trend is more sect-specific. Table 6 highlights the Protestant average and 95 percent confidence interval while Table 7 does the same for solely Evangelicals. Note that the Protestant average naturally includes Evangelicals.

Table 6. Mean Score on Policy Questions by Vignette among Protestants

Mean Index Score	Bible Vignette	Local Saying Vignette	Control Vignette
Minimum Wage (Q25)	2.48 (2.29, 2.67)	2.56 (2.41, 2.70)	2.54 (2.37, 2.71)
Number of Observations	N=52	N=45	N=35
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	2.46* (2.16, 2.76)	2.89 (2.55, 3.22)	2.54 (2.10, 2.98)
Number of Observations	N=52	N=45	N=35
Gov't Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	2.23 (1.88, 2.58)	2.31 (1.89, 2.73)	1.97 (1.50, 2.44)
Number of Observations	N=52	N=45	N=35
Affirmative Action (Q30)	1.83 (1.51, 2.15)	2.04 (1.69, 2.40)	1.83 (1.41, 2.25)
Number of Observations	N=52	N=45	N=35
Aid to Poor (Q58)	2.65 (2.41, 2.89)	2.76 (2.49, 3.02)	2.60 (2.23, 2.97)
Number of Observations	N=51	N=45	N=35
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	3.55 (3.35, 3.75)	3.71* (3.55, 3.87)	3.49 (3.25, 3.72)
Number of Observations	N=51	N=45	N=35
Immigration (Q35)	1.75 (1.52, 1.97)	1.51 (1.23, 1.79)	1.83 (1.54, 2.12)
Number of Observations	N=51	N=45	N=35
Welfare Spending (Q31)	2.12 (1.83, 2.40)	2.33 (2.03, 2.64)	2.26 (1.86, 2.66)
Number of Observations	N=51	N=45	N=35

Note that hypothesis tests are directional. When comparing the control and the local saying vignettes, the alternative hypothesis states that the local saying hypothesis average should be higher than the control hypothesis, while when comparing the local saying hypothesis to the Bible hypothesis, the alternative hypothesis expects that the Bible hypothesis average will be lower than the local saying average. Numbers in parentheses represent the 95 percent confidence interval for the value above it. * in the local saying vignette category indicates statistical significance at the $p < .10$ level between the local saying and control groups. * in the Bible vignette category indicates statistical significance at the $p < .10$ level between the local saying and Bible groups.

Table 7. Mean Score on Policy Questions by Vignette among Evangelicals

Mean Index Score	Bible Vignette	Local Saying Vignette	Control Vignette
Minimum Wage (Q25)	2.29* (2.01, 2.57)	2.60* (2.40, 2.80)	2.27 (1.99, 2.55)
Number of Observations	N=24	N=25	N=11
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	2.13* (1.69, 2.56)	2.64* (2.11, 3.17)	2.00 (1.15, 2.85)
Number of Observations	N=24	N=25	N=11
Gov't Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	1.88 (1.42, 2.33)	2.28* (1.72, 2.84)	1.18 (0.43, 1.94)
Number of Observations	N=24	N=25	N=11
Affirmative Action (Q30)	1.46* (1.06, 1.86)	2.08 (1.62, 2.54)	1.64 (0.81, 2.46)
Number of Observations	N=24	N=25	N=11
Aid to Poor (Q58)	2.50 (2.18, 2.82)	2.68* (2.32, 3.04)	2.09 (1.41, 2.78)
Number of Observations	N=24	N=25	N=11
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	3.42* (3.01, 3.73)	3.76* (3.55, 3.97)	3.27 (2.88, 3.66)
Number of Observations	N=24	N=25	N=11
Immigration (Q35)	1.67 (1.31, 2.02)	1.36 (1.02, 1.70)	1.45 (0.96, 1.95)
Number of Observations	N=24	N=25	N=11
Welfare Spending (Q31)	1.79* (1.45, 2.13)	2.16 (1.72, 2.60)	1.73 (0.91, 2.54)
Number of Observations	N=24	N=25	N=11

Note that hypothesis tests are directional. When comparing the control and the local saying vignettes, the alternative hypothesis states that the local saying hypothesis average should be higher than the control hypothesis, while when comparing the local saying hypothesis to the Bible hypothesis, the alternative hypothesis expects that the Bible hypothesis average will be lower than the local saying average. Numbers in parentheses represent the 95 percent confidence interval for the value above it. * in the local saying vignette category indicates statistical significance at the $p < .10$ level between the local saying and control groups. * in the Bible vignette category indicates statistical significance at the $p < .10$ level between the local saying and Bible groups.

First, it should be noted that as I restricted the size of the groups evaluated, the standard error drastically increased, thus limiting the overall statistical evaluation of the data present. For example, there were only 60 individuals in the dataset who completed the policy

questions and classified themselves as Evangelical. The most general takeaway is that the overall trend elaborated on in the dual variable model is continued amongst both Protestants and Evangelicals - higher scores among the local saying respondents relative to the control followed by a lower score amongst those receiving the Bible vignette outside of the immigration question.

For Protestants, paid parental leave is statistically different between the control and local saying vignette in the expected direction at the $p < 0.10$ level. Additionally, the government paying for health insurance question is extremely close to statistical significance at the $p < 0.10$ level. When flipped to analyze the difference between local saying vignette and the bible passage, only the health insurance question obtains statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ level, though paid parental leave is relatively close to the $p < 0.10$ level. Again, these findings are largely a byproduct of a limited sample size more than anything else. Further, these findings lack substantive significance, given the relative closeness of all the mean scores per question and vignette.

Amongst an extremely numerically limited Evangelical respondent group, there is more evidence of a statistically important relationship between vignette received and policy preference. Questions on the minimum wage, government spending on health insurance, government-led reduction of income inequality, federal spending on aid to the poor, and paid parental leave demonstrate that there is a difference in the expected direction between the control and local saying vignette at the $p < 0.10$ level at the minimum. Similarly, the minimum wage, government spending on health insurance, affirmative action, paid parental leave, and federal spending on welfare questions all demonstrate statistical difference between the local

saying and the Bible vignette in the expected direction at a bare minimum of the $p < 0.10$ level. Overall, Table 7 presents evidence that the dual variable model applies more to Evangelicals than general Protestants; however, similar to the Table 6, limited respondents in each category inhibit the overall relevance of this finding. These differences are also substantial; among all questions with the right direction of the relationship, as the immigration question appears to be capturing something else, there is a .39 point gap between the Bible passage and local saying gap on average in 4 and 5 category questions. The gap between the control and the local saying passage for all the questions except the immigration question is .57, indicating a massive difference between the control and the local saying passage.

One problem with the comparison in Table 6 and Table 7 is that the groups involved, Evangelicals and Protestants, are not mutually exclusive. Everyone who identified as an Evangelical is also classified as a Protestant. Table 8 compares non-Evangelical Protestants to Evangelicals via mean differences. Negative mean difference scores indicate that Evangelicals are more conservative than non-Evangelical Protestants on average. Table 8 is somewhat limited in its usefulness by small sample size and a relatively large standard error. The Evangelicals yield consistently more conservative answers except for the local saying group for the minimum wage and affirmative action questions. Interestingly, outside of the affirmative action question, the control vignette mean difference is always more conservative than the Bible passage, providing a slight bit of evidence that among evangelicals, the Bible slightly reduced their conservative leanings in a non-substantial manner. Overall, it is hard to

take anything substantial away from Table 8. Each question has at least 2 categories that are not statistically different from zero, largely due to an increasingly tiny sample size.

Table 8. Difference in Mean Score on Policy Questions by Vignette

Difference of Mean Score (Evangelical - non-Evangelical Protestant)	Bible Vignette	Local Saying Vignette	Control Vignette
Minimum Wage (Q25)	-0.35 ^a (-0.73, 0.03)	0.10 ^a (-0.21, 0.41)	-0.39 (-0.75, -0.04)
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	-0.63 (-1.22, -0.03)	-0.56 ^a (-1.23, 0.11)	-0.79 ^a (-1.74, 0.16)
Gov't Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	-0.66 ^a (-1.35, 0.03)	-0.07 ^a (-0.94, 0.80)	-1.15 (-2.12, -0.18)
Affirmative Action (Q30)	-0.68 (-1.31, -0.06)	0.08 ^a (-0.66, 0.82)	-0.28 ^a (-1.21, 0.65)
Aid to Poor (Q58)	-0.28 ^a (-0.77, 0.21)	-0.17 ^a (-0.72, 0.38)	-0.74 ^a (-1.54, 0.06)
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	-0.25 ^a (-0.66, 0.16)	0.11 ^a (-0.22, 0.44)	-0.31 ^a (-0.83, 0.21)
Immigration (Q35)	-0.15 ^a (-0.60, 0.30)	-0.34 ^a (-0.91, 0.23)	-0.55 ^a (-1.16, 0.07)
Welfare Spending (Q31)	-0.62 (-1.18, -0.55)	-0.39 ^a (-1.02, 0.24)	-0.77 ^a (-1.63, 0.08)

^a indicates that the result is not statistically different from zero. Numbers in parentheses represent the 95 percent confidence interval for the value above it.

Overall, with regards to Hypothesis 1a, Hypothesis 1b, and Hypothesis 2, the data provided a sound rejection of all three theories. Hypothesis 1a's theory that Christians who received the Bible passage would be more liberal than those in the control group was soundly rejected via Table 5, as it found that the Bible passage vignette mean score was very similar to the control vignette. Similarly, among Evangelicals, the Bible passage vignette mean score rarely was more liberal than the control vignette, much less in a statistically significant manner, therefore rejecting Hypothesis 1b. Hypothesis 2 was firmly rejected as well: overall,

except for the immigration question, the Christians who received the Bible passage were more conservative on average than the local saying passage group. In the process of testing these hypotheses, I discovered a new potential theory that the Bible acts as a conservative cue that can override the effect of a message. I provided statistical evidence, particularly among evangelicals, that the Bible serves as a conservative cue even if the message is inherently liberal. Further, we saw that the message given does matter, given the differences between the control group and the local saying vignette. While my hypotheses were firmly rejected, the data provide a more interesting and nuanced picture between the interplay of the Bible cue and the message, more than previously hypothesized.

Next, I addressed Hypothesis 3a, which stated the following: when exposed to a biblical text with a political message, more religious people will be more in line with the political leanings of the text relative to less religious people. To analyze this hypothesis, I first created a religiosity index, which consisted of questions on how often the respondent attended religious services, how often they talk about their faith with non-believers, how often they talk about faith with believers, how often they read scripture, and how often they pray, as asked via Q6, Q11, Q12, Q14, and Q67. This index has a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.8595, indicating a substantial intercorrelation of items testing the same concept of religiosity. Notably, I left off Q9, which addressed biblical literalism - when included in the index, the Cronbach's alpha score dropped to 0.1333. The religiosity index had a range of scores from 0 to 23, with 0 being the least religious and 23 being the most religious. I classified people as highly religious if they score a 16 or above on the index, medium religiosity if they scored between a 8 and a 15, and as low religiosity if it was below a 7. The

results are displayed in Table 9 below for respondents who received the Bible treatment. If Hypothesis 3 is correct, people with higher religiosity scores should hold higher values, hence, more liberal views, on each question than people who are less religious.

From a visual standpoint, a clear trend emerges in Table 9: people with low and medium levels of religiosity are roughly the same across questions. However, contrary to Hypothesis 3, the most religious consistently hold the most conservative responses. When comparing average mean differences by religiosity category, there are clear substantial differences: there is a 0.68 gap between the low religiosity and the high religiosity people, while there is an almost 0.56 gap between the medium religiosity and the high religiosity folks. Outside of the immigration question, all differences by question and statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level or lower. Table 10 compares across the religiosity index for people who received the Bible treatment and are Christians.

Table 9. Mean Score and Statistical Significance on Policy Questions by Religiosity, Bible Treatment Condition Only

Mean Index Score	Low Religiosity	Medium Religiosity	High Religiosity
Minimum Wage (Q25)	2.84* (2.72, 2.97)	2.81* (2.70, 2.93)	2.28 (2.02, 2.53)
Number of Observations	N=45	N=48	N=40
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	3.31* (3.05, 3.57)	3.06* (2.80, 3.33)	2.23 (1.89, 2.56)
Number of Observations	N=45	N=48	N=40
Gov't Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	2.73* (2.36, 3.09)	2.65* (2.27, 3.02)	2.00 (1.58, 2.41)
Number of Observations	N=44	N=48	N=40
Affirmative Action (Q30)	2.36* (2.01, 2.70)	1.96* (1.64, 2.28)	1.48 (1.13, 1.82)
Number of Observations	N=45	N=48	N=40
Aid to Poor (Q58)	3.09* (2.82, 3.36)	3.06* (2.83, 3.29)	2.53 (2.22, 2.83)
Number of Observations	N=44	N=48	N=40
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	3.77* (3.59, 3.95)	3.71* (3.54, 3.87)	3.35 (3.04, 3.66)
Number of Observations	N=44	N=48	N=40
Immigration (Q35)	2.02* (1.77, 2.28)	1.90 (1.65, 2.14)	1.68 (1.42, 1.93)
Number of Observations	N=44	N=48	N=40
Welfare Spending (Q31)	2.77* (2.45, 3.10)	2.75* (2.48, 3.02)	1.90 (1.53, 2.27)
Number of Observations	N=44	N=48	N=40

Numbers in parentheses represent the 95 percent confidence interval for the value above it. A * beside the low religiosity score indicates a statistically different test between people with low religiosity and high religiosity at the $p < 0.10$ level with a one-tailed t-test, with the alternative hypothesis being that the highly religious maintain less liberal views. a * beside the medium religiosity category indicates that for that particular question, a one-tailed t-test between the medium religiosity respondents and the high religiosity respondents is statistically significant at the $p < 0.10$ level, with the alternative hypothesis stating that the highly religious will have less liberal policy scores on average.

Table 10. Mean Score and Statistical Significance on Policy Questions by Religiosity, Bible Treatment Condition Only Among Christians

Mean Index Score	Low Religiosity	Medium Religiosity	High Religiosity
Minimum Wage (Q25)	2.80* (2.53, 3.07)	2.78* (2.61, 2.96)	2.19 (1.88, 2.49)
Number of Observations	N=10	N=23	N=32
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	3.20* (2.70, 3.70)	2.74* (2.30, 3.18)	2.19 (1.79, 2.58)
Number of Observations	N=10	N=23	N=32
Gov't Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	1.70 (0.91, 2.49)	2.52* (1.96, 3.08)	1.97 (1.50, 2.44)
Number of Observations	N=10	N=23	N=32
Affirmative Action (Q30)	2.80* (2.08, 3.52)	2.09* (1.59, 2.59)	1.53 (1.16, 1.90)
Number of Observations	N=10	N=23	N=32
Aid to Poor (Q58)	2.78 (2.22, 3.33)	2.87* (2.53, 3.21)	2.50 (2.18, 2.82)
Number of Observations	N=9	N=23	N=32
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	3.67* (3.20, 4.14)	3.70* (3.46, 3.93)	3.25 (2.87, 3.63)
Number of Observations	N=9	N=23	N=32
Immigration (Q35)	1.89 (1.37, 2.41)	1.74 (1.36, 2.12)	1.69 (1.41, 1.96)
Number of Observations	N=9	N=23	N=32
Welfare Spending (Q31)	2.33 (1.59, 3.08)	2.43* (2.02, 2.85)	1.88 (1.48, 2.27)
Number of Observations	N=9	N=23	N=32

Numbers in parentheses represent the 95 percent confidence interval for the value above it. A * beside the low religiosity score indicates a statistically different test between people with low religiosity and high religiosity at the $p < 0.10$ level with a one-tailed t-test, with the alternative hypothesis being that the highly religious maintain less liberal views. a * beside the medium religiosity category indicates that for that particular question, a one-tailed t-test between the medium religiosity respondents and the high religiosity respondents is statistically significant at the $p < 0.10$ level, with the alternative hypothesis stating that the highly religious will have less liberal policy scores on average.

Table 10 enforces the general trend of Table 9; however, claims of statistical significance are reduced, primarily due to working with a relatively small number of observations. Immigration is not statistically significant at all, while aid to the poor and

government reduction of income inequality produce conflicting results. However, taken cumulatively, highly religious Christians seem to favor more conservative opinions than less religious Christians.

There is a potential problem within this comparison, however: Table 9 and Table 10 do not control for ideological identity. It is possible that people who are more religious are just more conservative, thus causing the more conservative responses. Table 11, which is positioned on the next page, performs the same exercises as Table 9, but only among conservatives to control for ideological identity.

As seen from Table 11, it appears that ideology plays a role in religiosity, given that Table 11 findings are largely within the 95 percent confidence interval of one another, though this is probably more so an artifact of a limited sample. In terms of a general trend, however, highly religious individuals give more conservative answers than their peers. Interestingly, it appears that the medium-level religious individuals are the most liberal. Table 11 should not be taken as a cumulative rejection of the trend established in Table 9 linking higher religiosity with more conservative policy preferences, as Table 11 suffers from relatively few observations: 43 for all questions outside of question 28, which had 42 observations. Next, I examined religiosity's impact amongst self-identified liberals who received the Bible treatment in Table 12 for a final test of Hypothesis 3.

Table 11. Mean Score on Policy Questions by Religiosity, Bible Treatment Condition and Conservative Only

Mean Index Score	Low Religiosity	Medium Religiosity	High Religiosity
Minimum Wage (Q25)	2.44 (1.96, 2.93)	2.55 (2.23, 2.86)	2.04 (1.65, 2.43)
Number of Observations	N=9	N=11	N=23
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	2.11 (1.59, 2.64)	2.45 (1.77, 3.14)	1.83 (1.43, 2.22)
Number of Observations	N=9	N=11	N=23
Gov't Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	1.75 (0.62, 2.88)	1.82 (1.01, 2.63)	1.35 (0.90, 1.80)
Number of Observations	N=8	N=11	N=23
Affirmative Action (Q30)	1.56 (0.72, 2.39)	1.73 (1.00, 2.45)	1.26 (0.82, 1.70)
Number of Observations	N=9	N=11	N=23
Aid to Poor (Q58)	1.89 (1.48, 2.29)	2.55 (1.98, 3.11)	2.13 (1.72, 2.54)
Number of Observations	N=9	N=11	N=23
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	3.33 (2.75, 3.92)	3.64 (3.23, 4.05)	3.04 (2.56, 3.53)
Number of Observations	N=9	N=11	N=23
Immigration (Q35)	1.00 (0.33, 1.67)	1.00 (0.53, 1.47)	1.35 (0.98, 1.72)
Number of Observations	N=9	N=11	N=23
Welfare Spending (Q31)	1.22 (0.57, 1.88)	2.00 (1.46, 2.54)	1.43 (0.93, 1.94)
Number of Observations	N=9	N=11	N=23

Numbers in parentheses represent the 95 percent confidence interval for the value above it.

Table 12. Mean Score on Policy Questions by Religiosity, Bible Treatment Condition and Liberal Only

Mean Index Score	Low Religiosity	Medium Religiosity	High Religiosity
Minimum Wage (Q25)	2.96 (2.88, 3.04)	2.96 (2.88, 3.04)	2.88 (2.62, 3.13)
Number of Observations	N=26	N=25	N=8
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	3.88 (3.76, 4.01)	3.56 (3.33, 3.79)	3.00 (2.00, 4.00)
Number of Observations	N=26	N=25	N=8
Gov't Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	3.35 (3.05, 3.64)	3.20 (2.77, 3.63)	3.50 (3.12, 3.88)
Number of Observations	N=26	N=25	N=8
Affirmative Action (Q30)	2.50 (2.04, 2.96)	2.36 (1.91, 2.81)	1.88 (1.08, 2.67)
Number of Observations	N=26	N=25	N=8
Aid to Poor (Q58)	3.62 (3.42, 3.81)	3.44 (3.18, 3.70)	3.34 (3.01, 3.74)
Number of Observations	N=26	N=25	N=8
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	4.00 (N/A)	3.84 (3.65, 4.03)	4.00 (N/A)
Number of Observations	N=26	N=25	N=8
Immigration (Q35)	2.38 (2.16, 2.61)	2.16 (1.84, 2.48)	2.25 (1.92, 2.58)
Number of Observations	N=26	N=25	N=8
Welfare Spending (Q31)	3.38 (3.13, 3.63)	3.32 (3.07, 3.57)	2.75 (2.25, 3.25)
Number of Observations	N=26	N=25	N=8

Numbers in parentheses represent the 95 percent confidence interval for the value above it.

As seen in Table 12, Hypothesis 3a is soundly rejected among liberals as well. The highly religious category is often within the 95 percent confidence interval of the other categories. The question on government spending on healthcare insurance and affirmative action at the

highest religiosity level possess an average score not in the confidence intervals of the other levels of religiosity; however, it is the opposite direction forecast by Hypothesis 3a. Taken cumulatively, it appears that higher levels of religiosity does not necessarily mean more compliance with the political message of a religious text.

As noted earlier, the biblical literalism question did not fit with the religiosity index. However, this could be a potential measure of religiosity for only Christians given the lack of relevance to other groups. Table 13 offers a quick examination of that theory. For Hypothesis 3a's purposes, outside of the affirmative action question, the results for the biblical literalism analysis do not go in the correct direction nor do they meet a level of statistical significance. Taken together, the results of the analysis conducted on Hypothesis 3a leads me to firmly reject the notion that more religious people will be affected at a greater level by the political leanings of a religious text.

Table 13. Mean Score on Policy Preferences for Christians by Biblical Literalism, Bible Passage Only

Mean Index Score	Non-Biblical Literalists	Biblical Literalists
Minimum Wage (Q25)	2.53 (2.32, 2.73)	2.38 (2.01, 2.74)
Number of Observations	N=55	N=8
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	2.58 (2.28, 2.89)	2.25 (1.52, 2.98)
Number of Observations	N=55	N=8
Gov't Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	2.15 (1.78, 2.51)	1.75 (0.84, 2.66)
Number of Observations	N=55	N=8
Affirmative Action (Q30)	1.93 (1.60, 2.25)	2.00 (1.16, 2.84)
Number of Observations	N=55	N=8
Aid to Poor (Q58)	2.67 (2.43, 2.90)	2.63 (1.88, 3.37)
Number of Observations	N=54	N=8
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	3.48 (3.24, 3.73)	3.25 (2.62, 3.88)
Number of Observations	N=54	N=8
Immigration (Q35)	1.80 (1.58, 2.01)	1.38 (0.63, 2.12)
Number of Observations	N=54	N=8
Welfare Spending (Q31)	2.12 (1.86, 2.47)	1.75 (1.12, 2.38)
Number of Observations	N=54	N=8

Note that all numbers in parentheses represent the 95 percent confidence interval.

Hypothesis 3b aims to compare Christians and non-Christians across the spectrum of religiosity. It is expected that Christians will be more liberal than non-Christians, as represented by more liberal scores, particularly at higher levels of religiosity, in building off the assumptions of Hypothesis 3a. To compare these groups, I measured the mean

differences between Christians and non-Christians across the scale of religiosity on all policy questions. Negative scores indicate that non-Christians were more liberal, while positive scores indicate that Christians are more liberal. Table 14 indicates the results below:

Table 14. Difference in Mean Score on Policy Questions by Religiosity, Christians to Non-Christians

Difference of Mean Score (Christian-non Christian)	Low Religiosity	Medium Religiosity	High Religiosity
Minimum Wage (Q25)	-0.20 ^a (-0.47, 0.07)	-0.06 ^a (-0.22, 0.10)	-0.12 ^a (-0.41, 0.17)
Number of Observations	N=(27-123)	N=(67-63)	N=(76-26)
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	-0.39 (-0.76, -0.01)	-0.18 ^a (-0.51, 0.16)	-0.13 ^a (-0.67, 0.40)
Number of Observations	N=(27-123)	N=(67-63)	N=(76-26)
Gov't Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	-0.87 (-1.36, -0.37)	-0.35 ^a (-0.79, 0.09)	0.11 ^a (-0.51, 0.72)
Number of Observations	N=(27-122)	N=(67-63)	N=(76-26)
Affirmative Action (Q30)	-0.01 ^a (-0.50, -0.49)	0.31 ^a (-0.07, 0.69)	0.23 ^a (-0.33, 0.78)
Number of Observations	N=(27-123)	N=(67-63)	N=(76-26)
Aid to Poor (Q58)	-0.43 (-0.83, -0.04)	-0.18 ^a (-0.48, 0.12)	0.23 ^a (-0.22, 0.68)
Number of Observations	N=(26-121)	N=(67-61)	N=(76-26)
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	-0.09 ^a (-0.39, -.21)	-0.08 ^a (-0.26, 0.10)	0.01 ^a (-0.38, 0.40)
Number of Observations	N=(26-121)	N=(67-60)	N=(76-26)
Immigration (Q35)	-0.24 ^a (-0.59, 0.11)	-0.10 ^a (-0.40, 0.20)	0.14 ^a (-0.25, 0.53)
Number of Observations	N=(26-121)	N=(67-61)	N=(76-26)
Welfare Spending (Q31)	-0.50 (-0.93, -0.06)	-0.31 ^a (-0.64, 0.03)	0.15 ^a (-0.37, 0.68)
Number of Observations	N=(26-121)	N=(67-61)	N=(76-26)

n^a indicates that the result is not statistically different from zero. Numbers in parentheses represent the 95 percent confidence interval for the value above it. The number of observations is presented in the format N=(*a*-*b*), where *a* indicates Christians and *b* indicates non-Christians.

Table 14 produced fascinating but statistically insignificant results. From a trend perspective, outside of the affirmative action question, as religiosity increased, the gap between Christians and non-Christians decreased; that is, in the aggregate, Christians were more liberal than their non-Christian peers as they became more religious. In particular, it is notable how in six of eight questions, highly religious Christians had a higher average score than highly religious non-Christians. However, Table 14 struggles in that all but four results in the table are not statistically different from zero. Further, Table 14 does not test Hypothesis 3b, as it includes all people regardless of vignette received. Table 15 tests only among those who received the Bible passage vignette.

In Table 15, the trend established in Table 14 all but vanishes. Only the aid to the poor question reduces the gap in the manner observed in Table 14. Except for the affirmative action question and the highly religious category of the immigration question, Christians are more conservative than their non-Christian peers on average. Further, all but two results are not statistically different from zero. This led me to conclude with confidence that amongst respondents receiving the Bible passage, Christians do not appear to be more liberal than non-Christians.

Table 15. Difference in Mean Score on Policy Questions by Religiosity, Christians to Non-Christians, Bible Vignette Only

Difference of Mean Score (Christian-non Christian)	Low Religiosity	Medium Religiosity	High Religiosity
Minimum Wage (Q25)	-0.06 ^a (-0.37, 0.25)	-0.06 ^a (-0.29, 0.17)	-0.44 ^a (-1.08, 0.21)
Number of Observations	N=(10-35)	N=(23-25)	N=(32-8)
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	-0.14 ^a (-0.78, 0.50)	-0.62 (-1.14, -0.10)	-0.19 ^a (-1.06, 0.68)
Number of Observations	N=(10-35)	N=(23-25)	N=(32-8)
Gov't Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	-1.33 (-2.13, -0.53)	-0.24 ^a (-1.01, 0.53)	-0.16 ^a (-1.24, 0.93)
Number of Observations	N=(10-34)	N=(23-25)	N=(32-8)
Affirmative Action (Q30)	0.57 ^a (-0.27, 1.41)	0.25 ^a (-0.40, 0.90)	0.28 ^a (-0.61, 1.18)
Number of Observations	N=(10-35)	N=(23-25)	N=(32-8)
Aid to Poor (Q58)	-0.39 ^a (-1.08, 0.29)	-0.37 ^a (-0.83, 0.09)	-0.13 ^a (-0.92, 0.67)
Number of Observations	N=(9-35)	N=(23-25)	N=(32-8)
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	-0.13 ^a (-0.59, 0.33)	-0.02 ^a (-0.37, 0.32)	-0.50 ^a (-1.29, -0.29)
Number of Observations	N=(9-35)	N=(23-25)	N=(32-8)
Immigration (Q35)	-0.17 ^a (-0.81, 0.48)	-0.30 ^a (-0.80, 0.19)	0.07 ^a (-0.61, 0.73)
Number of Observations	N=(9-35)	N=(23-25)	N=(32-8)
Welfare Spending (Q31)	-0.55 ^a (-1.37, 0.27)	-0.61 (-1.14, -0.07)	-0.13 ^a (-1.07, 0.82)
Number of Observations	N=(9-35)	N=(23-25)	N=(32-8)

n^a indicates that the result is not statistically different from zero. Numbers in parentheses represent the 95 percent confidence interval for the value above it. The number of observations is presented in the format N=(*a*-*b*), where *a* indicates Christians and *b* indicates non-Christians.

My final hypothesis, Hypothesis 4, posits that as people become more political, they will be less in line with the biblical message. To measure this, I created an index of political involvement. The index combined questions on whether the respondent had attended a march

or rally in the past year, signed a petition on a political issue, worked for a campaign or party, and if they posted something political on social media, all within the last year. Overall, the index has a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.70 when rounded to the nearest hundredth. I classified people as highly politically active if they score a 3 or above on the index, medium levels of political involvement if they scored a 2, and low levels of political involvement if they were at or below 1. This was on a 0-4 point scale. To measure this, I took the differences between the control vignette score and the Bible vignette score across questions. If Hypothesis 4 is supported, people with low political involvement should have the largest positive integer of the three groups, followed by the local saying vignette, and then the Bible vignette. According to Hypothesis 4, people with the highest level of political involvement should be the least in line with the vignettes, indicating a low, close to zero positive number. Negative numbers indicate a theoretical flaw, as that implies that the respondents were made more conservative by the Bible passage, which is not accounted for in Hypothesis 4. Table 16 presents the results of said analysis.

As seen in Table 16, the data do not support Hypothesis 4. Each question has at least one negative number, and half the time it is the highly politically involved with a negative number. More importantly, all 95 percent confidence intervals include zero, indicating that the net difference between groups is possibly zero, meaning the Bible passage vignette had no effect on respondent's political preferences. However, it should be noted that there was an extremely limited sample size for this exercise with groups often numbering in the 20's. Additionally, this could also be impacted by the message itself: in this case, the message was inherently liberal. Table 17 offers the same comparison as Table 16, but only among liberals.

Table 16. Difference in Mean Score on Policy Questions by Political Involvement

Difference of Mean Score (Bible-Control)	Low Political Involvement	Medium Political Involvement	High Political Involvement
Minimum Wage (Q25)	0.10 ^a (-0.10, 0.30)	-0.10 ^a (-0.34, 0.15)	-0.09 ^a (-0.44, 0.27)
Number of Observations	N=(86-70)	N=(29-28)	N=(18-22)
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	-0.08 ^a (-0.42, 0.26)	0.06 ^a (-0.47, 0.59)	-0.11 ^a (-0.74, 0.51)
Number of Observations	N=(86-70)	N=(29-28)	N=(18-22)
Gov't Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	-0.07 ^a (-0.48, 0.34)	-0.07 ^a (-0.69, 0.55)	-0.06 ^a (-0.84, 0.72)
Number of Observations	N=(85-70)	N=(29-28)	N=(18-22)
Affirmative Action (Q30)	-0.10 ^a (-0.44, 0.25)	0.24 ^a (-0.45, 0.93)	0.11 ^a (-0.53, 0.75)
Number of Observations	N=(86-70)	N=(29-28)	N=(18-22)
Aid to Poor (Q58)	0.02 ^a (-0.27, 0.31)	-0.04 ^a (-0.56, 0.49)	0.38 ^a (-0.23, 0.99)
Number of Observations	N=(86-69)	N=(28-28)	N=(18-22)
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	0.02 ^a (-0.22, 0.26)	0.21 ^a (-0.05, 0.48)	-0.04 ^a (-0.51, 0.43)
Number of Observations	N=(86-69)	N=(28-28)	N=(18-22)
Immigration (Q35)	-0.13 ^a (-0.40, 0.13)	-0.14 ^a (-0.57, 0.28)	0.32 ^a (-0.21, 0.85)
Number of Observations	N=(86-69)	N=(28-28)	N=(18-22)
Welfare Spending (Q31)	-0.15 ^a (-0.48, 0.18)	-0.21 ^a (-0.79, 0.36)	0.13 ^a (-0.53, 0.78)
Number of Observations	N=(86-69)	N=(28-28)	N=(18-22)

n^a indicates that the result is not statistically different from zero. Numbers in parentheses represent the 95 percent confidence interval for the value above it. The number of observations is presented in the format N=(*a*-*b*), where *a* indicates respondents who received the Bible passage and their specified level of political involvement and *b* indicates respondents who received the control passage and their specified level of political involvement.

Table 17. Difference in Mean Score on Policy Questions by Political Involvement Among Liberals

Difference of Mean Score (Bible-Control)	Low Political Involvement	Medium Political Involvement	High Political Involvement
Minimum Wage (Q25)	0.24 ^a (-0.06, 0.54)	-0.01 ^a (-0.15, 0.14)	0.00 ^a (0.00, 0.00)
Number of Observations	N=(25-25)	N=(19-21)	N=(15-19)
Gov't Spending on Healthcare Insurance (Q26)	0.28 ^a (-0.17, 0.73)	0.06 ^a (-0.45, 0.56)	-0.06 ^a (-0.36, 0.25)
Number of Observations	N=(25-25)	N=(19-21)	N=(15-19)
Gov't Reduction of Income Inequality (Q28)	0.04 ^a (-0.56, 0.64)	-0.06 ^a (-0.47, 0.36)	0.01 ^a (-0.53, 0.54)
Number of Observations	N=(25-25)	N=(19-21)	N=(15-19)
Affirmative Action (Q30)	-0.28 ^a (-0.88, 0.32)	0.64 ^a (-0.15, 1.43)	0.04 ^a (-0.60, 0.67)
Number of Observations	N=(25-25)	N=(19-21)	N=(15-19)
Aid to Poor (Q58)	0.28 ^a (-0.18, 0.74)	0.00 ^a (-0.36, 0.36)	0.22 ^a (-0.15, 0.59)
Number of Observations	N=(25-25)	N=(19-21)	N=(15-19)
Paid Parental Leave (Q33)	0.36 ^a (0.05, 0.67)	0.13 ^a (-0.19, 0.45)	0.00 ^a (0.00, 0.00)
Number of Observations	N=(25-25)	N=(19-21)	N=(15-19)
Immigration (Q35)	-0.32 ^a (-0.74, 0.10)	-0.09 ^a (-0.49, 0.32)	0.26 ^a (-0.08, 0.60)
Number of Observations	N=(25-25)	N=(19-21)	N=(15-19)
Welfare Spending (Q31)	-0.04 ^a (-0.43, 0.35)	-0.02 ^a (-0.46, 0.42)	0.10 ^a (-0.24, 0.44)
Number of Observations	N=(25-25)	N=(19-21)	N=(15-19)

n^a indicates that the result is not statistically different from zero. Numbers in parentheses represent the 95 percent confidence interval for the value above it. The number of observations is presented in the format N=(*a*-*b*), where *a* indicates liberals who received the Bible passage and their specified level of political involvement and *b* indicates liberals who received the control passage and their specified level of political involvement.

Table 17 offers few definitive answers regarding the impact of ideology. Due to a small sample size, all results in Table 17 are indistinguishable from zero, therefore offering

reinforcing evidence from Table 16 that political involvement did not impact the interpretation of the Bible message. Unfortunately, a similar operation is not possible among conservatives due to extremely small sample size: for example, there were only two highly sophisticated conservatives that received the Bible treatment and three highly sophisticated conservatives that received the control passage, making meaningful statistical analysis impossible. However, taken cumulatively, I offer a significant amount of evidence against Hypothesis 4, which stated that the highly politically sophisticated would be less in line with the Bible passage relative to the less politically sophisticated via Table 16 and Table 17.

Limitations

Like all research, there are several limitations to the findings in this study. First, the research was conducted on a relatively small convenience sample of college students at a regional university, which makes the results less generalizable. For some comparisons, this made it especially tough to come to any firm conclusions given a relatively high standard error, particularly when I examined Evangelicals across vignettes of level of religiosity. However, if anything, this would undersell the actual effects of the Bible, given that younger generations tend to be less religious (Brauer 2018). The treatment categories also assume a lack of biblical literacy among the people taking the survey, and while they are not the most common verses cited in the Bible, it is possible that a casual Christian could recognize the “local saying” as a Bible verse, thus clouding the results of the research. However, this seems to be a relatively unlikely possibility, but it is something to be aware of, given I do not test for biblical literacy in this survey. To some extent, this research does not have a great deal of external validity – it is unlikely that a person would just pick up a copy of the Bible, turn to a

certain page, and their policy preferences are changed based on what they read. More often than not, the Bible verse will probably be presented in a similar method to Wallsten and Nteta's (2016) vignettes: via a preacher in a larger body of rhetoric. However, my research isolates the effect of the Bible, thus defining a variable rather than leaving it unknown.

To some extent, the results of the analysis to test Hypothesis 4 suggests that the vignettes did not really affect the outcomes of the personal policy preferences. However, the analysis in Hypothesis 4 was extremely limited due to sample size, and when analyzing Hypothesis 1a, 1b, and 2, Christians were affected by the vignettes in a statistically significant way. If the results hold true for Hypothesis 4 with a larger sample size, from a normative perspective, it is not a horrible thing that people's political beliefs are not changed by a quick exposure to a short reading.

Finally, the time period under which the survey research was conducted was beyond unusual: the data collection period took place during the COVID-19 crisis, thus introducing a whole host of potential complicating factors that influence the respondents' behavior – perhaps in the time of crisis, they have become more religious than they usually would be, thus clouding the results of the religiosity index and the overall data pattern. However, due to Appalachian State University moving all courses online for the near future, it is possible that overall response rates are higher than they would be if classes were still being conducted in person, given that this survey is conducted online as well; however, the opposite counterfactual is unfortunately not something I tested.

Conclusion

Overall, through this project, I have explained the relevant literature and contributed a tiny morsel to the scholarship on the intersection of religion and American politics. Zaller (1992) established the role of elites in public opinion development, and in building off of that model, I tested whether the Bible can act as its own form of elite message. I implemented Festinger's (1957) model of cognitive dissonance within my theoretical framework; ultimately, I feel I underestimated the respondents' willingness to dismiss the meaning of the political message when it conflicted with already-held beliefs. Wallsten and Nteta (2016) found that clergy using a Bible verse can influence the political opinions of their congregations; I directly isolated the effect of the Bible and eliminated the middle man. In isolating the effect of the Bible, I provided evidence that the role of the preacher is substantial in influencing peoples' policy preferences, a la Djupe and Calfano (2013). However, Wallsten and Nteta's (2016) work seems somewhat policy specific, as the topic of immigration was the only policy area that largely followed the pattern described in my theory. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee's (1954) implied hierarchy of identity model also feel short. Further, my theory was rejected in the face of the data: Christians nor Evangelicals did not become more liberal following exposure to a liberal Bible message, the Bible label does not appear to act as a cue to amplify the main ideas of a liberal message, the most religious are not affected more by a liberal Bible passage, nor are the most politically involved less affected by the Bible. However, in examining Hypothesis 1, 1.1, and 2, a potential new theory came to light, of which I offered evidence, particularly among

Evangelicals: it appears that people can be affected by a liberal message, but when the respondents are informed that the message is from the Bible, it appears that the Bible label itself acts as a independent conservative cue. In particular, this discovery warrants more explanation, particularly on a nationally representative sample.

At a minimum, this project poses questions and ideas for future research. In particular, this research utilized only two liberal Bible passages; it would be interesting to examine different Bible passages, including ones with a conservative message. Further, it would be intriguing to give people multiple Bible passages, particularly ones with conflicting ideologies in order to see how they handle the message. From a comparative perspective, this project can be replicated with other religions' holy texts in order to see differences between religious groups. Overall, at its core, the best thing a research project can do is provoke further inquiry - I believe that this project does just that, as with every question we ask and attempt to answer, the following engagement helps us understand the world and its processes a bit better each time.

Appendix 1: Survey Layout

1. Introduction Block: Thank you for your interest in this survey on the interaction of various demographics, religion, pop culture, and politics. This survey is for an honors thesis at Appalachian State University in both university honors and departmental honors. All answers will be kept completely confidential. This survey will take less than ten minutes. At the end of the survey, there is a link provided to enter information to receive extra credit for your class if offered by the recommending professor - these data are kept separately from the main survey data to ensure confidentiality. Please answer the questions in the manner that best describes you. Thank you for helping provide valuable data!
2. Religious Identification
 - a. Q2: Do you consider yourself Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, agnostic, an atheist, or something else? (modified ANES Question - more categories)
 - i. Protestant
 - ii. Roman Catholic
 - iii. Jewish
 - iv. Muslim
 - v. Agnostic
 - vi. Atheist
 - vii. Something else
 - b. (If Protestant is selected) Q53: Do you consider yourself Evangelical?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Not sure
3. Religiosity Index Part 1 (All questions randomized within block)
 - a. Introduction: The following questions deal with your religious beliefs. Please select the answer that best represents your actions or beliefs.
 - b. Q6: Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services? (Pew)
 - i. More than once a week
 - ii. Once a week
 - iii. Once or twice a month
 - iv. A few times a year
 - v. Seldom
 - vi. Never
 - c. Q9: Which of these statements comes closest to describing your feelings about the Bible? (modified ANES)
 - i. The Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word.
 - ii. The Bible is the word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally.
 - iii. The Bible is a book written by humans but inspired by God.

- iv. The Bible is a book written by humans and is not the word of God.
 - v. Other (Please Specify)
 - d. Q14: How often do you discuss your religious faith/beliefs with non-believers or people from other religious backgrounds? (modified Pew)
 - i. At least once a week
 - ii. Once or twice a month
 - iii. Several times a year
 - iv. Seldom
 - v. Never
- 4. Religiosity Index Part 2 (All questions randomized within the block)
 - a. Q12: How often do you read scripture outside of religious services? (Pew)
 - i. At least once a week
 - ii. Once or twice a month
 - iii. Several times a year
 - iv. Seldom
 - v. Never
 - b. Q11: People practice their religion in different ways. Outside of attending religious services, do you pray several times a day, once a day, a few times a week, once a week, a few times a month, seldom, or never? (Pew)
 - i. Several times a day
 - ii. Once a day
 - iii. A few times a week
 - iv. Once a week
 - v. A few times a month
 - vi. Seldom
 - vii. Never
 - c. Q67: How often do you discuss your religious faith/beliefs with people who share your religious beliefs? (modified Pew)
 - i. At least once a week
 - ii. Once or twice a month
 - iii. Several times a year
 - iv. Seldom
 - v. Never
- 5. Political Involvement Index
 - a. Introduction: Next you will be asked about your level of political involvement. Please select the answer choice that best represents your past actions.
 - b. In the past twelve (12) months, have you participated in the following activities? (ANES)
 - i. Q69_1: Attended a protest, march, demonstration, or rally
 - 1. Yes, have participated
 - 2. No, have not participated
 - ii. Q69_2: Signed a petition on a political issue (modified)
 - 1. Yes, have participated
 - 2. No, have not participated

- iii. Q69_3: Worked for a political campaign or party (original)
 - 1. Yes, have participated
 - 2. No, have not participated
 - iv. Q69_4: Made a political post on social media (original)
 - 1. Yes, have participated
 - 2. No, have not participated
- 6. Vignettes Block (all passages randomly assigned)
 - a. Introduction: Next, you will be presented with a short passage of text. The text's origin is specified in the first sentence of the text displayed. Please read the passage carefully.
 - b. The following passages are from the Bible. James 2:14-17: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." Luke 3:11: "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."
 - c. The following passages are local sayings. What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.
 - d. The following is a short excerpt from an online news story. Cell phones are a literal pain in the neck -- and face, eyes, nose, ears and head. A new study analyzing national emergency room data shows injuries to those areas of our bodies have risen "steeply" over the last 20 years. The study found most injuries occurred to people between the ages of 13 and 29 and were due to distracted driving, walking and texting with a cell phone. Cuts to the face and head were the most common injuries, followed by contusions -- bruising of the brain -- abrasions and internal organ injuries. Most people were treated and released instead of hospitalized. While these injuries may not appear to be of major concern, the study said, there can be long-term consequences. (CNN)
- 7. Video Distractor Block
 - a. Introduction: Please pay attention to the following video, as it is important for the following questions. Please make sure the sound on your device is on. If you are taking the survey on a mobile device, please rotate it horizontally.
 - b. Video - America's Funniest Home Videos: Hilarious Birthday Fails
 - c. In the first video segment shown, what was the main color of the cake frosting?
 - i. Brown
 - ii. White
 - iii. Black

- iv. Blue
 - d. How many times did a table collapse in the entire video?
 - i. Once
 - ii. Twice
 - iii. Three times
 - iv. Four times
8. Policy Index Block, Part 1 (All questions randomized within the block)
- a. Introduction: Next are a few questions on your political policy preferences. Please select the answer choice that most accurately describes your beliefs.
 - b. Q25: Should the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour be raised, kept the same, lowered, or eliminated? (ANES)
 - i. Raised
 - ii. Kept the same
 - iii. Lowered
 - iv. Eliminated
 - c. Q26: Do you favor an increase, decrease, or no change in government spending to provide health insurance to those who do not have it? (modified ANES)
 - i. Greatly increase
 - ii. Slightly increase
 - iii. No change
 - iv. Slightly decrease
 - v. Greatly decrease
 - d. Q28: Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose the government trying to reduce the difference in incomes between the richest and the poorest households? (ANES)
 - i. Strongly favor
 - ii. Slightly favor
 - iii. Neither favor nor oppose
 - iv. Slightly oppose
 - v. Strongly oppose
 - e. Q30: Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose allowing universities to increase the number of black students studying at their school by considering race along with other factors when choosing students? (ANES)
 - i. Strongly favor
 - ii. Slightly favor
 - iii. Neither favor nor oppose
 - iv. Slightly oppose
 - v. Strongly oppose
9. Policy Index Block, Part 2
- a. Q58: Should federal spending on aid to the poor be increased, decreased, or kept the same? (ANES)
 - i. Greatly increase federal spending on aid to the poor
 - ii. Slightly increase federal spending on aid to the poor
 - iii. Kept the same

- iv. Slightly decrease federal spending on aid to the poor
- v. Greatly decrease federal spending on aid to the poor
- b. Q33: Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose requiring employers to offer paid leave to parents of new children? (ANES)
 - i. Strongly favor paid parental leave
 - ii. Slightly favor paid parental leave
 - iii. Neither favor nor oppose paid parental leave
 - iv. Slightly oppose paid parental leave
 - v. Strongly oppose paid parental leave
- c. Q35: Which comes closest to your view about what government policy should be toward unauthorized immigrants now living in the United States? (ANES)
 - i. Make all unauthorized immigrants felons and send them back to their home country
 - ii. Have a guest worker program in order to work
 - iii. Allow to remain and eventually qualify for U.S. citizenship, if they meet certain requirements.
 - iv. Allow to remain and eventually qualify for U.S. citizenship without penalties.
- d. Q31: Should federal spending on welfare programs be increased, decreased, or kept the same? (ANES)
 - i. Greatly increase federal spending on welfare programs
 - ii. Slightly increase federal spending on welfare programs
 - iii. Kept the same
 - iv. Slightly decrease federal spending on welfare programs
 - v. Greatly decrease federal spending on welfare programs

10. Demographic Block

- a. The final section of this survey deals with demographic questions. Please select the answer choice that most accurately describes yourself. Again, all answers are kept confidential.
- b. Q39: With which of the following racial/ethnic categories do you primarily identify with (Check all that apply rather than single option) (Newmark)
 - i. White
 - ii. Black or African American
 - iii. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - iv. Asian
 - v. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - vi. Other (open response)
- c. Q41: With which gender do you primarily identify with? (Newmark)
 - i. Man
 - ii. Woman
 - iii. Not listed above (Please specify) (Open response)
 - iv. Prefer not to say
- d. Q43: Ideologically speaking, where would you place yourself ranging from extremely liberal (left) to extremely conservative (right)? (Newmark)
 - i. Slider scale 1-7, 1= extremely liberal, 7=extremely conservative

- e. Q45: Generally speaking, regardless of how you voted in the last election, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or an independent? (ANES)
 - i. Republican
 - ii. Democrat
 - iii. Independent
 - f. Q60: (If responded Democrat) Would you call yourself a strong or not very strong Democrat? (ANES)
 - i. Strong Democrat
 - ii. Not very strong Democrat
 - g. Q61: (If responded Republican) Would you call yourself a strong or not very strong Republican? (ANES)
 - i. Strong Republican
 - ii. Not very strong Republican
 - h. Q62: (If responded independent) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party? (ANES)
 - i. Closer to the Republican Party
 - ii. Neither
 - iii. Closer to the Democratic Party
 - i. Q44: What is your year of birth? (Qualtrics standard demographic question)
 - i. (Open response)
11. Closing message: Thank you for completing the main portion of the survey. If you are completing this survey for extra credit, please follow the link below. Please fill out the information for your professor to be notified that you completed the survey. Thank you so much for your valuable time and effort in participating in this survey. Extra Credit Form.

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