

Most Protestant pastors think Bush, Palin are Christians but not Obama

by [Adelle M. Banks](#)

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WASHINGTON (RNS) The vast majority of Protestant pastors think former President George W. Bush is a Christian, but less than half think President Obama is, a new LifeWay Research survey shows.

Three-quarters of Protestant pastors surveyed called Bush a Christian, followed by 66 percent who included former Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin in the Christian fold. Just 41 percent said they believe Obama is a Christian.

About a quarter of pastors surveyed -- 27 -- percent said conservative broadcaster Glenn Beck, a Mormon, is a Christian. Oprah Winfrey came in last of the five personalities mentioned in the survey, with only 19 percent calling her a Christian.

"Most Americans consider themselves Christian and, for many of them, the 'Oprahfication' of American spirituality has been a good thing," said Ed Stetzer, president of the Southern Baptist-affiliated research group. "Yet, the overwhelming majority of Protestant pastors don't view Oprah as a Christian."

Stetzer said the responses may indicate that Protestant pastors are more particular than other people when considering who is and is not a Christian. For some pastors, being "Christian" is synonymous with being "born again" or "evangelical," he said.

"Using their standard, the majority would not agree that President Obama is a Christian, though he is a mainline Protestant," Stetzer said. "And it is likely that Glenn Beck's Mormonism, widely viewed by Protestants as a different religion rather than a different Christian denomination, probably caused many to indicate he is not a Christian."

The results are based on telephone interviews with Protestant pastors Oct. 7-14 and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.