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For Immediate Release

Survey Says: Conservative Pastors Don't Always Preach What They Practice

June 10, 2013 While an overwhelming majority of theologically-conservative pastors believe that the Bible speaks directly to the morality of current issues challenging the nation, only a minority preach on these issues from the pulpit, according to a recent survey by the Center for the Study of American Culture and Faith.

The survey among 401 theologically-conservative pastors revealed that almost all of the pastors (97%) believe that the Bible provides principles that relate to the morality of abortion. Nearly the same proportion (95%) says the scriptures offer moral principles related to same-sex marriage. More than nine out of ten (92%) argue that the Bible describes principles regarding the morality of environmental care. About seven out of ten (71%) say that there are moral principles related to immigration policy in God's Word.

Church-goers do not often hear sermons about Biblical moral principles, however. In 2012 – an ideologically-charged election year in which the four issues in question were in the forefront of political discussions – none of those four issues was preached on by even half of the theologically-conservative pastors.

The survey found that, of the four issues, abortion was most often the subject of a sermon in a theologically-conservative church in 2012. Overall, 42% of the surveyed pastors preached about abortion, which was higher than the numbers who preached about same-sex marriage (36%), environmental care (21%), or immigration issues (10%).

In 2013, even fewer pastors plan to preach on these four issues. While 42% of those pastors preached on abortion in 2012, pastors' responses suggest that the figure is likely to drop to 34% in 2013. Same-sex marriage was taught about from 36% of these pulpits in 2012, but will likely drop to 26% in 2013. The frequency of preaching about environmental care is expected to drop almost by half (from 21% to 12%). Only immigration is anticipated to hold steady (10% in 2012, 10% planned in 2013).

Bill Dallas, CEO of the Center for the Study of American Culture and Faith, commented that “church-goers look to their religious leaders for guidance on the critical moral issues of the day. It is important that pastors recognize their responsibility to clarify the biblical principles that should inform both public policy and personal responsibility on these matters. Without such guidance, the mass media takes the lead on providing the worldview that shapes cultural choices, producing lowest common denominator lifestyles and spineless leadership.”

Methodology

The survey among pastors of Protestant churches was conducted by The Center for the Study of American Culture and Faith during February 2013 among a nationally representative sample of 401 theologically-conservative pastors. The estimated maximum amount of sampling error associated with that sample is ± 5.0 percentage points.

About the Center for the Study of American Culture and Faith

The Center for the Study of American Culture and Faith regularly conducts surveys on issues of national importance for the purpose of helping to educate the public about the impact that culture and faith have on elections.

The Center for the Study of American Culture and Faith is a division of United in Purpose Education, a 501c3 whose mission is to promote traditional Judeo-Christian principles in American society through values education, research, voter outreach, marketing strategies, and technology tools.

More information about the Center for the Study of American Culture and Faith and its work can be found at www.culturefaith.com