

Most Pastors May Be Committing This Sin, Study Suggests

New research shows that while 90 percent of pastors believe the Bible has much to say about today's pressing political and societal issues, fewer than 10 percent are talking about those issues from the pulpit.

Researcher George Barna spoke recently on American Family Radio's *Today's Issues* about his research project over the past two years, in which the Barna Group asked pastors across the country about their beliefs regarding the relevancy of Scripture to societal, moral and political issues, and the content of their sermons in light of their beliefs.

What he found was startling.

"When we ask them about all the key issues of the day, [90 percent of them are] telling us, 'Yes, the Bible speaks to every one of these issues,'" Barna told American Family Radio. "Then we ask them: 'Well, are you teaching your people what the Bible says about those issues?' and the numbers drop ... to less than 10 percent of pastors who say they will speak to it."

Sam Rohrer, president of the American Pastors Network, says that while it is clear that there is a disconnect between knowing the truth and preaching it, the real question is why. Avoiding the politically unpopular portions of Scripture is in some respects understandable from a human perspective. From God's perspective, however, it is sin.

"The reality is that most people, including pastors, wish to be comfortable and to avoid controversy," Rohrer said. "If the primary goal is to see people leave on Sunday morning feeling

good about themselves and feeling comfortable rather than seeing the holiness of God and the ugly reality of sin, then a pastor will answer to God for doing his own will rather than declaring God's will. The issues of the day that confront our nation must be dealt with from the pulpit if God's Word is to make a difference in people's lives and if the culture is to be impacted. This includes the areas of marriage and divorce, life and family, but it also includes the areas of honesty, servant leadership, following the Rule of Law, etc."

Barna added that many pastors are afraid to get involved in political issues because of the controversy it might create. And, he added, "Controversy keeps people from being in the seats, controversy keeps people from giving money, from attending programs."

He also found that when asked how they measure the success of their churches, most pastors look to five factors: "attendance, giving, number of programs, number of staff and square footage."

"The fact that so many pastors are more concerned with the size of their buildings and church bank accounts than with the condition of the souls they shepherd is without excuse," Rohrer continued. "By abdicating their responsibility as ministers of God to 'preach the Word' in favor of square footage, many pastors are, in essence, saying God's Word is not really authoritative. In reality, a pastor—or any person for that matter—who feels they have the right to pick and choose what portions of Scripture they will believe or teach, rather than preach the 'whole counsel of God' have in effect made themselves god."