

Pastors' attitudes towards Biblical exhortations in church based ministry

Purpose: To survey pastors graduating Bible adherent seminaries to assess if they currently maintain Biblical exhortations or support extra Biblical attitudes in their church.

Methods: We surveyed graduates of three seminaries (Master's, Denver and Westminster) currently pastoring a church. Questions were based on exhortations derived from Scripture or frequently accepted attitudes within the church but not directly found in the Bible.

Results: This survey was sent to 1085 pastors of whom 200 responded (18%). There was a statistical difference between the responses for each of the four questions directed towards the church member's attitudes towards: one another, the church body and leaders, their speech and the outside community ($P < 0.0001$). For each of the four questions the mean scores for Biblical exhortations were higher than extra Biblical attitudes ($P < 0.0001$).

Conclusions: This study showed that individuals trained in seminaries teaching Biblical principles continue to hold to those principles once they become pastors.

Results

This survey was sent to 1085 pastors of whom 201 responded, but one respondent was excluded for not completing any of the questions. Of the 200 pastors (18%) included in the study, the background characteristics are shown in Table 1. Most of the respondents were from the West (42%), pastored a congregation with <100 people (31%), were non-denominational (56%), attended The Master's Seminary (58%), pastored their church >20 years (30%) and held the position of head pastor (71%). The results of the survey questions are shown in Table 2. There was a statistical difference between Biblical exhortations and extra-Biblical attitudes from the pooled responses for each of the four questions directed towards the church member's attitudes towards: one another, the church body and leaders, their speech and the outside community ($P < 0.0001$). For each of the four questions together the mean scores for Biblical exhortations was 2.7 compared to 1.1 for extra Biblical attitudes ($P < 0.0001$). In addition, for each of the four questions the mean percent of respondents who stated that Biblical exhortations were generally important to very important was 96% compared to 33% for extra Biblical attitudes ($P < 0.0001$). When Biblical exhortation responses and extra Biblical attitude responses were averaged together and compared to demographics (geographic location, church attendance, denomination, seminary, years pastored a church and position) there was not a significant difference for any parameter following the Bonferroni correction ($P = 0.02$, Table 3).

Table 1: Respondent characteristics (N = 200)

| Question | Choices | Responses | Percentage |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Geographical region | Northeast | 42 | 21 |
| | South | 30 | 15 |
| | Midwest | 45 | 23 |
| | West | 83 | 43 |
| Church attendance | <100 | 62 | 31 |
| | 100-200 | 56 | 28 |
| | 200-500 | 38 | 19 |
| | 500-1000 | 21 | 11 |
| | >1000 | 23 | 12 |
| Denomination | Non-denominational | 113 | 57 |
| | Southern Baptist | 14 | 7 |
| | Conservative Baptist | 10 | 5 |
| | Evangelical Free Church of America | 10 | 5 |
| | Presbyterian Church in America | 8 | 4 |
| | Baptist General Conference (Converge) | 6 | 3 |
| | Baptist | 5 | 3 |
| | Evangelical Covenant Church | 5 | 3 |
| | Other (incidence less than 5) | 29 | 15 |

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|-------------------------|----------------------------------|-----|----|
| Seminary | The Master's Seminary | 115 | 58 |
| | Denver Seminary | 23 | 12 |
| | Westminster Theological Seminary | 13 | 7 |
| | Other (incidence less than 5) | 49 | 25 |
| Years pastored a church | 1-5 | 42 | 21 |
| | 6-10 | 42 | 21 |
| | 11-20 | 56 | 28 |
| | >20 | 60 | 30 |
| Position | Head pastor | 142 | 71 |
| | Executive pastor | 7 | 4 |
| | Associate pastor | 39 | 20 |
| | Youth ministries pastor | 6 | 3 |
| | Worship pastor | 2 | 1 |
| | Other (incidence less than 5) | 4 | 2 |

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