

Pastors and Plagiarism-Sermon Prep or Sermon Theft?

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SPEAKERS

Host: David Wheaton, Program Director, Guest: Justin Peters, Interviewer of Ed Litton,

Sponsor: Samaritan Ministries, Ed Litton, JD Greer



Host: David Wheaton 00:07

Pastors and plagiarism, sermon prep, or sermon theft. That is a topic we'll discuss today right here on The Christian Worldview Radio Program where the mission is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to share the good news of Jesus Christ. The Christian Worldview is a nonprofit ministry. Thank you to our listeners for your encouragement and support, and also to our national sponsor Samaritan Ministries, who provide a biblical solution to healthcare. You can find out more about The Christian Worldview and Samaritan Ministries at our website, TheChristianWorldview.org. Now just days after our recent program on the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, which in part focused on the election of new president Pastor Ed Litton, in where he stands on various issues, it was revealed that Litton had for many years been plagiarizing sermons nearly word for word from immediate past SBC President, Pastor JD Greer, and that Littons church had removed over 140 sermons from their website. This story is receiving widespread coverage even in mainstream media outlets such as the New York Times. Now the dictionary definition of plagiarism is: The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own. Biblically speaking, plagiarism is stealing and is an egregious sin, particularly for a pastor and preacher of God's Word. While JD Greer says he gave Ed Litton permission to use his content, Litton never publicly credited Greer. That is blatant plagiarism. So far, Ed Litton has not resigned, and based on a recent

interview, doesn't seem inclined to do so. More troubling, there has not been a universal call from the SBC or evangelical leaders for him to step down. Our guest today on the program is Justin Peters. He's an evangelist, preacher and founder of Justin Peters Ministries. He joins us this weekend to discuss what is being called sermon gate. For if Christian leaders are now able to skirt past plagiarism, where does that leave their reputation and influence of the body of Christ? Now before we get to the interview with Justin, I want to play a soundbite of what this plagiarism sounds like from Ed Litton. You're going to hear a side by side comparison of JD Greer giving a sermon on Romans chapter eight, and then you'll hear that Ed Litton borrowed the content directly from JD Greer's sermon. You're not going to have trouble identifying the plagiarism. And there are lots of videos like this online. This is just one example of what has been taking place. The first voice here is Pastor JD Greer and then Pastor Ed Litton.



JD Greer 03:06

Alright, Romans chapter eight, which many people regard to be the greatest chapter in the Bible.



Ed Litton 03:11

As a matter of fact, the title of this morning's message is the greatest chapter in the Bible.



JD Greer 03:19

JOHN Piper says, "The greatest book in the world is the Bible. The greatest letter in that book is the book of Romans. The greatest chapter in that letter is Romans chapter eight. And I would add the greatest verse in chapter eight is verse one."



Ed Litton 03:33

As matter of fact, I love what John Piper said, he said, "The Bible is the greatest book, Romans is the greatest letter, chapter eight of Romans is the greatest chapter and chapter eight verse one is the greatest verse."



JD Greer 03:47

Let me ask you a simple logical question. When Jesus died on the cross, how many of your sins had you committed yet?



Ed Litton 03:55

Now let me just ask you a question on a practical logical note. How many sins did you commit when Jesus died on the cross?



Jesus death wiped out not only the presence of existing condemnation, he wiped out the possibility of future condemnation. And that means there is literally nothing that you could do right now that would make God love and accept you any more than he does. And nothing you could do that would make him love you any less.



Ed Litton 04:19

Jesus wiped out the present, the past, and the future condemnation that my sin brought upon me. Nothing you do will ever make God love you more. And nothing you do will ever make God love you less.



JD Greer 04:33

You need to let that sink in for a minute. Because when you do, that will free you from the performance trap.



Ed Litton 04:38

The Holy Spirit relieves us by the grace of God from a performance trap.



JD Greer 04:45

That then frees me from the pretending trap.



Ed Litton 04:48

The second thing is the Holy Spirit not only delivers from a performance trap, he delivers us from a pretending trap.



JD Greer 04:55

Joby Martin, a friend of mine, describes this kind of religious life like trying to hold a beach ball under water. If you've ever tried to do that, you know, you got to got to really

concentrate because the beach balls always trying to wriggle out and pop up.



Ed Litton 05:05

And it's like the guy standing in a pool on a beach ball. He doesn't want it to hit the surface. He doesn't want to come up. He's acting like it's not there. But it takes all kinds of concentration, all kinds of work. And it's always trying to make itself to the surface.



JD Greer 05:19

Romans 8:1 Therefore, therefore, he says, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Has there ever been a more powerful, therefore, in the entire history of the English language?



Ed Litton 05:32

Let's just read it again. There is therefore now. Has there ever been a greater therefore in the Bible?



JD Greer 05:40

How do I know that there is no condemnation for me? It is because I see the Spirit of God at work in me.



Ed Litton 05:46

You see, how can I know that I'm no longer under any kind of condemnation. The Spirit of God lives in you.



Host: David Wheaton 05:54

Now, this is textbook plagiarism. And by the way, it's not just one sermon. This goes on and on and on, over the course of many years. And the church has removed 140 sermons. So this is not just a one off thing with Pastor Ed Litton and plagiarism. And maybe this next soundbite explains how he got to this point of plagiarism. When he admits that he used to lie about his sermon prep.



Ed Litton 06:19

To be very honest, I used to lie. I used to tell people, you know, 24 hours a sermon, you

know. You can spend too much time. You're Dorking around doing something else with your head, but actual, and by the way, let me say this too. When you're younger, it's going to take longer. The older you get, and it's not that you're pulling up old stuff, but there is a resource of material. And there's connectivity there that will come. But I would say 8 to 10 hours average. That's exegetical work, getting in the dirt, some of it is organizing the thought.

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Host: David Wheaton 06:59

Keep in mind, who you just heard there, Pastor Ed Litton, saying that he used to lie about his sermon prep time, is now the president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Well, let's bring Justin Peters on the program. now He is a preacher and evangelist and the founder of Justin Peters Ministries, and he is going to add some biblical insight to what's being called sermon gate. Justin, thank you for coming back on The Christian Worldview Radio Program. My first question is, before we get into some of the sound bites today, because you've obviously heard the side by side comparison that we played earlier in the program with the new SBC president Ed Litton, basically, almost verbatim preaching, according to the immediate past president JD Greer sermons. On a scale of 1 to 10, Justin, how surprised were you that the newly elected President of the SBC, Ed Litton was found only days into his term to have plagiarized and in dating back many years, maybe 2013, 2015, over 100 sermons that we know about to this point, from the immediate past president JD Greer without giving public attribution to where he got his content. And not only that, but the church where Litton pastors in Alabama has removed 140 sermons at least from their website. So on a scale of 1 to 10, how surprised were you that this came out?

G

Guest: Justin Peters 08:33

David, so good to be back with you, brother. I would have to say on a scale of 1 to 10 I would probably be 9 to 10 on surprised that it came out. But nowhere near that high on the scale surprised that he does it. If the question is how surprised are you that he does it? It'd probably be about a 2, or 2 or 3 maybe. And I say that because plagiarism in the SBC in the evangelical world at large is rampant. Ed Litton is taking all of the scrutiny right now, but there's a part of me that in a weird sort of way almost feels a little bit badly for him because he's not the only one doing it. In fact, you can go right now to James Merits website. I think it's pastorsedge.com. Don't have it in front of me. But Ed Young Juniors website, Rick Warren's website and all three of these and these are just the ones that I know of off the top of my head, they sell sermons, complete sermons, manuscripts, outlines, PowerPoint presentations, slides, everything, the whole nine yards for download and you know that you can for X number of dollars, you can download a sermon, you can download entire series of sermons. So this is like a cottage industry in the SBC.

So I'm not at all surprised that he's done it. I am surprised that it's come out and it's actually turned into an issue.

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Host: David Wheaton 10:05

Justin Peters with us today on The Christian Worldview Radio Program. He's the founder and evangelist preacher at Justin Peters Ministries. You can find out more at Justinpeters.org. Before we get to some of the sound bytes of Ed Litton's interview talking about this scandal, what is the significance, Justin, do you think of the new president, Ed Litton? The sermons were taken from the immediate past president JD Greer. That seems unbelievably ironic that they were taken from him the immediate past president.

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Guest: Justin Peters 10:41

Yes. Very ironic. Yeah, you almost can't make this stuff up. It almost seems like a Babylon Bee kind of a thing. But it's real. The plagiarism is horrific enough, David. In fact, while I'm thinking about it, JD Greer said he gave Ed Litton permission to use his sermons. Well, even if that's true, and I'm assuming that it is, it's still plagiarism, because Ed Litton took that material, and he got up and looked his entire congregation in the eye, and portrayed that information, the sermons that he was presenting, portrayed it as his own material, and it wasn't his own at all. So I mean, he's lying to his congregation. He's lying to God and lying to his people. And it is hard for me to wrap my mind around what it would take for a pastor to get up and look his congregation in the eye knowing full well that he is bald faced lying to them. That is just unbelievable to me, and troubling on so many levels. And then there's the theology of the sermons in and of itself. I don't know if we'll have time to get to that or not. Maybe we can if we do, but just the theology that is in the plagiarize sermon is absolutely horrific.

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Host: David Wheaton 12:04

As I mentioned earlier, Ed Litton, Pastor Ed Litton, who pastors at, he's a senior pastor of Redemption Church, in Saraland, Alabama, he did an interview very recently, just days ago, with a podcast called SBC This Week or Southern Baptist Convention This Week. I'd like to play a few sound bites from this particular interview he does, where he's asked about this plagiarism. And get your comment on these sound bites and his response and what they say about the current worldview of those in evangelical leadership. Here's the first one, where he's asked about his own statement regarding this plagiarism.

I

Interviewer of Ed Litton 12:49

You know, a lot of things going on in the SBC. One of the big ones revolves around a statement that you made last week after a video popped up showing some similarities of a sermon that you'd preached with that of JD Greer. And, and you released a statement last weekend, and I'm going to read a part of the statement, we'll jump into the interview right out of that. "But like 1000s of other Southern Baptist pastors, I labor every week preparing to stand in front of the congregation God has called me to serve. In preparation for our series on Romans, I used several resources to help me think through how to structure the series, and how best to communicate the profound truths we encounter in these passages." Now, one of those resources you use, obviously one was a sermon series from 2019, by JD Greer. So I know a lot of people have read your statement. There's still a lot of questions out there. So let's just start this. Let you address that right out the gate.

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Ed Litton 13:36

Yeah, no, I appreciate the opportunity. I stand by the statement. It was a part of our study and it wasn't just one sermon. I mean, you can hear illustrations and different statements, and throughout several of those sermons. And I had JD's permission, but encouragement. The other thing we did, as I, as we were trying to outline the book of Romans, which is a challenge, we finally looked at it and looked at what they'd covered and felt like it was sufficient. And we also received permission to use the passages from week to week. And so that makes it look even more similar. But what I'm stating is that we did our Greek work, we did our commentary work, and then usually I'll have someone I listen to when I exercise, when I'm doing something, traveling to help reinforce and give me thoughts and creative ideas. And there's a lot of reasons we do this. In part I do it to stay fresh, listen to new voices, sometimes I listen to older voices, but to help me communicate to my people the essence of what the Word of God is saying.

I

Interviewer of Ed Litton 14:45

I guess what you're kind of saying in essence is that the sermons from JD would just be like another commentary for you and in the preparation, that kind of thing?

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Ed Litton 14:54

A lot of them I didn't really even listen. I would go straight to his written out notes that he provides and so yes, it's very much like a commentary in that sense. And you know as well, when you listen to our cues or when you read our Catechesis commentaries, and you listen to the sermon like on Gospel Coalition, you will find that his commentaries are growing right out of that sermon. Yeah, which is understandable.



Program Director 15:17

The Christian Worldview with David Wheaton returns in just a moment.



Sponsor: Samaritan Ministries 15:21

At Samaritan Ministries, our members are passionate about being part of a Christian community that shares one another's medical needs without the use of insurance. But for Samaritan members, Tony and Ginger Malik, that passion to share health with others is away of life. It was my wife's dream to come back to the farm. She wanted to be able to do sustainably raised vegetables and teach people where their food comes from. We want to try to provide the healthiest possible produce for our neighbors and our friends and the people that we are able to touch in their lives. Samaritan Ministries is a perfect fit for us because we feel like we can actually partner with other Christians and other people to help them provide for their medical needs. We're Tony and ginger Malik and we are Samaritan Ministry members. For more information, visit us at Samaritanministries.org/tcw.



Host: David Wheaton 16:20

David Wheaton here to tell you about a special offer on My Boy Ben. Ben was a Yellow Lab and inseparable companion back when I was competing in the pro tennis tour. I invite you to enter the story in its tapestry of relationships with Ben and my aging parents, with a childhood friend I would eventually marry and ultimately with God, whose gospel and grace caused all things, even the hard things to work together for good. Order a signed and personalized copy for yourself, or for a friend who loves dogs, or someone you know who needs to hear about God's grace and the gospel. My Boy Ben is owned by The Christian Worldview. It is 264 pages, hardcover, and retails for \$18.99 plus shipping. For a limited time we are offering it for a donation of any amount to The Christian Worldview. Go to TheChristianWorldview.org or call 1-888-646-2233. That's TheChristianWorldview.org.



Program Director 17:27

Welcome back to The Christian Worldview. Be sure to visit our website, TheChristianWorldview.org where you can subscribe to our free weekly email and annual print newsletter, order resources for adults and children, and support the ministry. Now back to today's program with host David Wheaton.

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Host: David Wheaton 17:43

What are your thoughts on Ed Litton's response that he had JD Greer's permission and encouragement? Of course he never attributed to him publicly. There's the plagiarism side of it. But that this is you know, this is just kind of like pastors, you know, referring to commentaries and using it in their sermons.

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Guest: Justin Peters 18:01

Yeah, that is such an absurd thing to say, David, because to say that he is using JD Greer's sermons, almost like a commentary, no, a sermon is not a commentary. A sermon is kind of the end product of the research that you are supposed to have already done, part of which is consulting commentaries. A sermon is not in and of itself, a commentary. And when Ed Litton says that he does the Greek, he does the work in the languages, I almost laughed out loud when I heard him say that because I had already seen the video in which he says, I don't know if you've seen this yet or not? But he actually says the Bible does not differentiate between homosexuality and hetero sexuality. He says the Bible doesn't even have a word for homosexuality. And that is gobsmackingly either ignorant or disingenuous, because the Bible absolutely does have a word for it. Paul uses it in I Corinthians 6:9. Our sin, oikotie. It's a word apparently, that Paul himself coined, but the word literally means, men bedding men. That's what the word means. And so yes, the Bible does have it. It's just astonishing to me that he can say something like, "Oh, we do the work in the languages." Well, apparently he doesn't. And just because he gets permission from JD Greer does not absolve him of the offense of plagiarism. If, for example, when I was in seminary, and I actually attended the same seminary that Ed Litton did, we were there at different times, but if I was back in seminary and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and I went to one of my buddies in the men's door means dorm and said, "Hey, Lance, Lance, I got this paper coming up and I don't have time to do it. I know you've already written a paper on this, can I use your material? And he said, "Sure, feel free. Here you go," and I were to take his paper and basically rewrite it, maybe change a few words here and there, but same basic stuff and turn that in, it's still plagiarism. It doesn't matter if I have had Lance's permission, it's still plagiarism.

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Host: David Wheaton 20:28

And you'd be kicked out of school for that in seminary. Justin Peters with us today here on The Christian Worldview, the founder and evangelist preacher at Justin Peters Ministries, Justinpeters.org, is their excellent website. Let's go to soundbite number two from this interview with Ed Litton on SBC this week. And this is where he describes what I really hadn't heard of before, this whole thing broke, that pastors, some of these bigger pastors use sort of a team approach to preparing their sermons. Here's that soundbite.

G Guest: Justin Peters 20:30

I would have been kicked out of Southwestern Seminary on my ear. They would have kicked me out of it so fast, it would have made my head swim. And yet, and Ed Linton would have been kicked out for doing the same thing. Any student would. And yet, he's the president of the entire denomination for doing something in a voluminous way. As you said, He's taken down 140 some odd sermons, and even some of the sermons that are still up there, there's plagiarism in those too. I mean, we're talking hundreds of sermons that he has plagiarized. And yet he's the president of the entire denomination. How does that work? It's just unbelievable.

I Interviewer of Ed Litton 21:47

And in your answer, you mentioned "we" a lot. I know you talked about in the statement, you employ a sermon team approach to help you collaboratively create the sermons. So can you talk to us like what does that look like at Redemption Church?

E Ed Litton 21:59

Well, let me tell you why we started doing it's one of the best things I've been a part of long term. We have a lot of young men on staff, we have young people that feel a call to young men that feel a call to the Lord and laymen in our church, at least on occasion to preach the gospel. And so our purpose was to raise up a new generation of gospel communicators and gospel preachers. And then every week, we have a, we have a planning meeting. Now that planning meeting, I lead the planning mood, but it's based on the sermons gonna be based on my work and the text. But we get together, all the other parts of that team are also sometimes given separate commentaries to study. And they bring something to the table, so that we're not an echo chamber, and we're looking at the text, we break it down. A lot of times we get out of that meeting with a very clear outline, and, or illustrations, and then we finish the rest of the week building that out for whoever the preachers are going to be. And again, I lead that process because I am discipling young preachers, and we, of course, you know, from all the people have assumed about this, that people would say, Don't disciple anymore, because you're messed up. But But the reality is, it is it's a very effective way. And for me, it's been a powerful tool because I'm listening to other voices.

H Host: David Wheaton 23:19

Okay, again, that's Ed Linton, the new president of the Southern Baptist Convention. And Justin, I really had never heard about this team approach. We have a team of researchers

and writers putting together a sermon for a pastor, I always assumed it was the pastor himself. Maybe an assistant would look up a little bit of research here, and they're on something and help out in some regard or something like that. But what what is your response to this this quote unquote, team approach to preparing sermons?

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Guest: Justin Peters 23:49

Yes, that is that is one of the more egregious issues here in this related to this topic. I couldn't believe that Edlin actually openly admitted this, and apparently, there was no hesitation on his part at all thinking that maybe, maybe this isn't right. Maybe this is not a good thing. And in fact, we just heard him say it's one of the best things that they've that he's been a part of, is this team approach to writing sermons. I am absolutely appalled at that. David, when I sit in a church on a Sunday morning, and I'm listening to the pastor, I want to know that that man that I'm listening to preaching God's Word has been in his study has studied to show himself approved unto God, a workman who need not be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. I want to know that that man has studied the text that he has put in the time that he has wrestled with it, that he has gleaned everything that he can. I want to know that the truth of God's word that he is presenting to me has impacted him has saturated his mind has filled His heart. And what we just heard from Ed Linton is the polar opposite of that. He has a whole team to write his sermons. And apparently I guess each member of this eight man team contributes a little bit and they somehow cobble it together. That is that flies in the face of how studying and preaching should be done. And Edlund is not being impacted by the word of God, he's not being impacted by the text, because he's not studying it, as evidenced by the horrific theology in the sermons that, that he's plagiarized. I mean, if he was really studying the text, he would have alarm bells going off in his head immediately knowing like, wait a minute, that the Bible actually does have a word for homosexuality and what what is this? So it's just unreal, and what a terrible disservice, not only to his church. But what a terrible disservice to these young men who are helping him write the sermons he is training them to do the same thing. When they have their own churches, their own ministries, they're going to do the same thing. They're not going to think that there's anything wrong with it. I mean, it is. The levels of deception and error here are just mind blowing, right? It really is. And he couldn't

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Host: David Wheaton 26:19

he's calling it discipleship.

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Guest: Justin Peters 26:21

Yes, he calls it discipleship. I mean, that is, that is just unbelievable, right? That is not discipleship. You are training young men, how to deceive their churches and how to dishonor Christ. That's what you're discipling them and how to do

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Host: David Wheaton 26:37

and then the senior pastor is nothing more than a editor of content he's given to kind of cobble it together to collate all these different things. It really seems to me It takes away the the leading of the Holy Spirit as a pastor spends time alone in his office in the word and in prayer. asking God to help help him understand and interpret and then preach the truth of his word. Justin Peters with us today on The Christian Worldview, talking about pastors and plagiarism in light of this scandal within the Southern Baptist Convention with the president Ed Litton plagiarizing, we don't even know how many sermons it is now, many of them from the immediate past president JD Greer, let's go to the next soundbite from this interview on SBC this week with Ed Litton where the interviewer basically gives atlantan the opportunity to apologize for what took place. Here's what he said.

I

Interviewer of Ed Litton 27:34

So with all the discussion here, what's the impact been on you? And maybe even Kathy?

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Ed Litton 27:39

Well, I appreciate that question. What God has made very clear to us is that we are quoting Isaiah 48:10 in a refiners fire. malikai three tells us the same thing that God is, it doesn't matter where the heats coming from God, being sovereign and intimately involved with our growth is helping us be refined, and I just want to say, I apologise to to anybody who has been offended, and rightly so and hurt and some of the things I've been represented in such a way, but I'm not denying that, that we borrowed these things. And, and I want to say this, too, I I'm asked by good people and goodwill people. Why didn't you just credit JD, I want you to hear my heart. This is not an excuse or justification. I am sorry, I did not. I had a preaching professor in seminary that we would preach in front of and he would evaluate us and he was one of the kindest people I've ever met, for evaluating but a student got up probably the smartest guy in the class. And every citation from ICC Lenski from any critical commentary he he made the any commentary he cited all them and even his illustrations, because I got this from that book in 1000 illustrations or whatever. When you got finished, the professor very kindly said that was a good sermon. But he said I'm gonna just tell you something. When a diamond miner goes looking for diamonds, he doesn't hold up the pick and the shovel. He holds up the diamond. Now please hear my heart, Jonathan. I am not excusing myself or explain. I'm just explaining

my heart. I love my people and I want them to see Jesus. He is the diamond. This has opened my eyes and it's open concerns in and will I do it differently. I promise you're gonna do it differently. And even my preaching team has been uncomfortable for the last two weeks because we are engaging the subject line. They know what their pastor is going through. And they had I'm sure doubts I know they do doubts themselves and we were able to talk about those things and we're making this a growing experience because our God is a refiner.

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Host: David Wheaton 29:53

Okay, Justin, I just have to use the texting x acronym s m h shakey. My head when I listened to that, I mean again he kind of apologize but then went into this rationalization basically that you know, the guy who's looking for the diamonds doesn't hold up the pick in the axe and I promise not to do it again. And was that even an apology? What was that?

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Guest: Justin Peters 30:18

That was a train wreck is what that was his whole thing is a train wreck. But, boy, if that didn't sound like a Hollywood apology, I don't know what does you know, from time to time, these Hollywood celebrities? Say something stupid, they've got to come out and they, you know, I apologize if my words offended anyone, you know, blah, blah, blah. We all know those are fake. Well, that's what that sounded like. That was that was no, that was no apology. And he says my preaching team has been troubled by this for the last two weeks, I should have been troubled by this from the inception of the plagiarism. That's what should have troubled them. They it's been going on for years. I mean, we know now, at least back to 2014 I think it is 13 or 14 old, old sermons. But liron have now been discovered to have also been plagiarized. So this has been going on for many years. And who knows how long before that. So you know, these are these are crocodile tears if this something if this was something that really bothered their consciences, as it should have, they would have done something about this years ago. And they're only changing now simply because they got called. That's not a that's not a godly sorrow per second Corinthians seven that's they're just in it had they not been called they would have been rocking along just doing the same thing that they've been doing for years.

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Host: David Wheaton 31:47

Well said, Justin, and if it sounds like we're being hard on Pastor Ed Linton, well, I think they're this warranted in this situation. After all, he is the one of the most influential now positions in all of evangelicalism, in least in this country, and perhaps even around the

world as the president of the Southern Baptist Convention, what what this state's what this, this message this, this gives to other pastors gives to the name of Christ, what the response is going to be within the Southern Baptist Convention, whether this will be swept under the rug and is justified and let's move on here. There's nothing to see here. This is a very serious situation there. There's no more important place in the world than in the pulpit. And that is why this needs I think careful scrutiny and a biblical worldview applied to what took place here at The Christian



Program Director 32:40

Worldview with David Wheaton returns in just a moment. David



Host: David Wheaton 32:44

Wheaton here volunteer host of The Christian Worldview radio program, listeners are often surprised to learn that we as a ministry pay for airtime on the radio station, website or app on which you hear the program. The primary way, this expense is recouped is through listeners like you donating to the ministry or becoming a monthly partner. Our aim is to have each broadcast outlet fully supported by the listeners to that outlet. If you are a regular listener, we would be grateful if you made a donation or became a monthly partner of any amount. To do so. Go to The Christian worldview.org and click on Donate. You can also call one triple 8646 2233 that's one triple 8646 2233 or The Christian worldview.org. And be sure to specify in which station website or app you listen, as that helps us decide whether to continue on a given outlet. Thank you for your support.



I struggled with my identity all the way through my life lived eight years is Lord Jensen, until I found the Lord Jesus Christ.



The issues are unavoidable. there on the news, the White House in rainbow colors there in our legislation, the Texas bathroom bill in our schools drag queen story out there even reaching into our churches. Being the church together. We're not just talking about issues we're talking about people. The



Host: David Wheaton 34:09

proceeding is from in his image, a 103 minute documentary film that biblically and compassionately addresses the issue of transgenderism. You can order the DVD for a donation of any amount to The Christian Worldview, call one triple 8646 2233 or write to box 401, Excelsior, Minnesota 55331 or visit The Christian worldview.org. That's one triple 8646 2233 or The Christian worldview.org.

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Program Director 34:50

Thanks for joining us on The Christian Worldview. Just a reminder that today's program and past programs are archived at our website, The Christian worldview.org shoretext are also available. And be sure to share with others. Now, back to today's program with host David Wheaton.

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Host: David Wheaton 35:05

I'm going to skip the next soundbite where he did talk about, he talks about, you know, why'd you remove the sermons, we'll just skip that one for now, just for the sake of time, let's get to the last one, Justin, where he's asked about the contentious nature now of, you know, within social media and the criticism going on over this particular scandal and so forth. And if you listen closely, this is where the race card gets pulled in.

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Interviewer of Ed Litton 35:31

You know, a lot of this, I think, has shown us really the hostility of the day online, both inside and outside of the Southern Baptist Convention. It's happening not just in our convention, it's happening in other conventions, other denominations, the PTA is going through theirs right now with our general assembly in St. Louis. And we see it a lot really in secular politics. I mean, that that's been like the last five or six years in secular politics, it's gotten to a point where it's almost unbearable. How do we like, work with one another across these sides? so to speak up with that and air quotes? But how can we see each other you know, and, and really improve on this culture that seems to be driven by Attack, attack attack, rather than grace and unity and

E

Ed Litton 36:11

mercy? Again? That's a great question. I'm gonna say this, I applaud the people who are trying to do this. And there are good people trying to bring a civility to this on Twitter, other social media, we need to learn how to be civil in our conversation, because we're all for a lot of reasons because Christ commands the segment because the world is watching this. The hallmark of scriptural debate, conversation among believers is honor, first,

respect for one another, listening without condemnation, Romans, chapter eight, verse one, we need to assume the best of each other and leave room for repentance when there is a need for genuine repentance. The assumptions on each other's hearts are just wrong. We need to humble ourselves.

I Interviewer of Ed Litton 36:53

How have you seen that maybe impact your church? You've been there 27 years? I know. You know, we will want to talk a little bit about your your pastoring at redemption church there in mobile. But how have you seen your church maybe worked through maybe some of this hostility that maybe it's related to secular politics? That seems to be the kind of the way it really creeps into the local church? I would think, especially in the south?

E Ed Litton 37:19

Well, I think a lot of times we've we've realized our people because we do talk about this, that there's a false narrative. In my particular case, it's about me that I have been called woke up and called because of my work and racial reconciliation. And but they know it and the people know and and that's one of the reasons I stand behind me. It hasn't been 27 years of perfection. It's been 27 years of pain and suffering and difficulty together. But But what happens is people learn to trust and that is a core issue here. And that's why this conversation is so important because we automatically are distrustful of each other and especially if we're strangers to each other.

H Host: David Wheaton 37:56

Okay, that was a lesson again, explaining away this whole plagiarism scandal and the interviewer saying with become so critical back and forth. And, you know, we need more grace and mercy and Ed Linton agreeing to that, and, and then kind of implying that the reason that there's been so much controversy and criticism is because he's because he's considered a woke and his work in racial reconciliation. Your thoughts on this final soundbite? Justin?

G Guest: Justin Peters 38:23

Yes, David, you're right. He, he came very close to playing the race card here. I can. No, I can speak for myself that my my concerns here have absolutely nothing to do with race, one way or the other. This is not about in and of itself. Social Justice. Although, you see his supporters are coming from the social justice. Proponents of the SBC. But all SBC people from the from the presidents of the seminaries, all the way down to the all the delegates,

everybody sitting in the Pew, regardless of where you come down on the social justice issue, and I've planted my flag very firmly in that issue on that on the side against it, but regardless of where you come down against it, come down on it, this is a character issue, this is a matter of character, integrity, this is a matter of lying to your people. This is a it speaks to his character regardless, I wouldn't be saying the same thing. If he was on my side of the social justice debate, if he if his if you can find his name on the statement of on social justice and the gospel that that I helped to, to formulate and put my John Hancock to if he is John Hancock was on there. I'd be saying the same thing. It doesn't matter. So, you know, for him to try to pawn this off is an excuse, uh, well, it's just my enemies. You know, people view these things differently than I do. They're the ones that are trying to bring me down so that other guy can get in that kind of thing. That's not the issue. That's They have heard it said, and if you have to, and I don't know the primary source for this, so it's not my own but I've heard is, anytime you say I am sorry, I did such and such. But here's why I did it. Then whatever follows the but negates the I'm sorry, if you make an excuse for your sin, then you're not truly sorry for your sin. So that's what we're dealing with here.

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Host: David Wheaton 40:30

Do you think this is a disqualifying? I'm assuming you think this is a disqualifying repeated sinful pattern of him as a pastor? And if so, what is the response that you're reading so far from other evangelical leaders about it? What does it say about the evangelical movement today?

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Guest: Justin Peters 40:50

Yes, it is disqualifying. Absolutely disqualifying? He should not be in the pulpit. He should not be in the ministry at all. Much less the president of the SBC. As I said earlier, I would have been kicked out of seminary for doing 1% of this. So would he have been kicked out when he was in seminary? So yes, it is morally disqualifying. As far as what is going to shake out? My guess is that he will remain as the president of the SBC. That's my guess. I guess I'm somewhat encouraged that people are still talking about it, because I know that they're wanting it to just go away. But I just learned today that this is apparently made the front page of the New York Times even so the world is watching, as they say the world is watching. But it really does seem to break along the fault lines of the social justice issue. Those who are on his side of it who have dip their toes in are fully committed to the social justice movement to one degree or another. They are defending him. Those of us who are not are rightfully calling this out. But as I said, this issue should transcend the social justice debate. This is an issue of character and integrity, and add lightness as failed it. I would love to know just how many Southern Baptist pastors are doing the same thing he is it's, as

I say, this is a cottage industry in the SBC. It's a it's a wide spread

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Host: David Wheaton 42:18

problem. Perhaps the dirty little secret going on within evangelicalism right now. And Justin Peters with us today here on The Christian Worldview talking about this situation of pastors and plagiarism. You alluded to this earlier. I think in our conversation, they just a couple more questions for you just for the sake of time here. But you you did an interview recently, on your own website, your own podcasts, and they can listeners can go there to your website, Justin peters.org. I'm assuming it's there or linked from there, where you brought up this research group called docent, and on their website says here's what they do. They partner with pastors to provide research assistance to lighten their load and help them serve their churches more effectively. As this assist with both sermon in sociological research, offering consultations with experienced ministry leaders and producing curriculum, the website path Yoast says this service dosen is used and are endorsed by Tim Keller, John Ortberg, Mark Driscoll, Craig Gross Shell of Life Dot Church and of course, JD Greer. And he has an extensive quote, praising this organization dosen that my people remarked to me, how many hours did you spend on that sermon? Where did you get time to do all that research? And he says, ha, thanks, guys for making me look so good. So what did you find out about this organization called docent? And why is this a very bad thing? Bad sign for the just pastors to be using? Yeah,

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Guest: Justin Peters 44:00

yeah, I never even heard of docent David until four or five days ago as of this recording. And a friend of mine, texted me a link. And so I clicked on it. And you have to go to the Wayback Machine to see the endorsement of JD Greer, because that's apparently been removed now from their website. So I had never even heard of them until less than a week ago. But yeah, they have a team of seminary trained guys and maybe Gail's to I don't know. But you can basically as a pastor, you can say, I need help with this. I need understanding on this text. Need you do research on this anywhere from just some basic research into an issue or a topic or an event or something like that all the way up to completely writing your sermon for you. And I was struck out by the website because they actually say on there that this is on the Wayback Machine again. I don't mind The only current one, the current website now, I don't know. But they actually say that we will, we will tailor your message to your particular theological commitments. In other words, you tell us what your theology is, and we'll massage the text to fit your theology that is the exact opposite way that you're supposed to study the Bible. When I study God's word, I cannot come to God's Word with my preconceived theology and enforce that own to the text. My theology is supposed to be shaped by the text itself, I'm supposed to get the

meaning out from the text that's exegesis. That's what we should be doing. And in docents website, they brag about, I see Jesus reading theology into the text. So if I say, Hey, I'm a charismatic, and can you help me craft a sermon from First Corinthians 13, because I'm charismatic, apparently, they will do that for you for a price. Or if you say I'm a cessationist, I'd like you to help me with a message from First Corinthians 13. from the cessationist perspective, they would do that too. So I just shake my head at the layers of deception and error in sin involved in this is just as a deep, dark whale that we have begun to peer into. Through all this.

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Host: David Wheaton 46:30

I heard someone or read someone on the internet. a pastor himself say that this turns pastors from being theologians, getting into the word and mining out God's truth, led by the Holy Spirit for their congregations, from theologians to Thespians makes them basically actors up there, they have the content fed to them, they memorize it and they regurgitate it out to the congregation. Just last question for you, Justin. And Justin Peters has been our guest today here on The Christian Worldview, their website is Justin peters.org. Just really encourage you to get in touch with this ministry sign up for their e newsletter be a great way to stay informed with the preaching and teaching adjustments Justin does all over the world. We haven't even got into many of the topics that we often discuss with him. The health, wealth and prosperity moving wants to do that for another time. But the final question, Justin is, God rejection in this country seems to have accelerated in the last year and a half. It's always been there always humanity's rejecting. But there seems to be an increase. Just acceleration of it. With regards to COVID-19. And the way that's been used to consult, consolidate government power and racial animosity and resentment and critical race theory, that's in the mainstream society, we see some of that bleeding into the church. But just with a situation like this going on in the Evangelical Church, where you just really want the church to be a beacon of light and hope and truth and grace, in a darkening culture was where it needs to be. So as we conclude today, what is your encouragement to pastors as they hear about this plagiarism scandal? What is your encouragement to Christians in this moment for how we can stand strong and be everything that God wants us to be during this darkening time?

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Guest: Justin Peters 48:18

My encouragement to pastors would be to do your own study your own writing, you've got to be in the Word of God, you've got to wrestle with the text. And it's not a chore, David, it's a yes, it's time consuming. But this is what we as preachers do. It's, it's a joy. It is an absolute joy to be able to study God's word and plumb the depths of it. This is why pastors are paid basically. So it frees them up to have the time to do that important and precious

work of studying God's word. That's why pastors get paid so they don't have to, you know, be a mechanic or an electrician, or a dentist or whatever they have the time to, to study God's Word to feed their flock so never lose sight of what an unimaginable and unspeakable privilege, it is, as it is ours as preachers to do that. As for the broader evangelical world as a whole and you see the, you know, the just the spiritual climate, you know, things of good things or bad and they're going to get worse. The Bible does not paint a pretty picture of the spiritual climate as time goes on. It's not going to get better, it's going to get worse, these will get darker. persecution will come and there's going to be a lot of Apostasy, you're going to see some big name preachers fall away. It's it can be discouraging when you see all this but God is in control. Christ has his church and David one of the blessings that has been mine as an evangelist By God's grace, I've preached the gospel now in 27 different countries. And everywhere I go, I find good solid churches pastored by faithful men that are doing their work that are shepherding their flocks, studying to show themselves approved, they labor away in the word. And they're not known. They don't have the platform's they don't have the spotlights are not doing being asked to do interviews, but they're out there. They're known only to their little flocks, and to the, to the Good Shepherd himself Christ, but they are there, Jesus church is safe, Christ will build his church. And none of this will hinder that process. Christ will build his church. And so it can be discouraging, as you see the headlines, in the papers and on Twitter and all that kind of stuff. But rest assured, God is in control. There are good churches out there, there are faithful shepherds out there, and the work of the gospel in the progress of the church goes on.

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Host: David Wheaton 51:03

Justin, thank you for that truthful reminder, that encouragement here at the end of the program, when it's so easy to get disappointed and discouraged by Christian leaders in compromise. But to know there are those out there and there probably many who just as you say don't make the headlines are faithfully mining the truth out of the word each week and preaching it which is the power for for regular Christians listening out there to stand strong and live a sanctified life. So Justin, we thank you for coming on The Christian Worldview. today. We thank you for all the wonderful God glorifying work you're doing at Justin Peters ministries. We wish all of God's best and Grace to You,

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Guest: Justin Peters 51:43

David, thank you so very much, and may God bless you as well. I appreciate your work.

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Host: David Wheaton 51:48

We're almost out of time. But let's remember what James chapter three says, Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren. Knowing that as such, we will incur a stricter judgment. There is a higher standard for those who preach the Word of God in their lives, their character and their doctrine. And this is a test of this situation with Ed Linton, of whether those and Christian Leadership still believe that and about the qualifications for a pastor and Christian leader. Thank you for listening to today's program, you can hear past programs, order resources for adults and children. Matter of fact, we have our summer clearance sale just starting right now up to 50% off on select items. You can sign up for our free weekly email, support the ministry, or become a monthly partner by visiting our website, The Christian worldview.org. If you have healthcare needs, be sure to click on the Samaritan ministries banner on our website as well. No matter what takes place in our world. Let's remember that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever. And so until next time, think Biblically, live accordingly, and stand firm.

P

Program Director 52:59

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