



How Your Church Can Avoid Mission Drift

Sat, 7/17 4:32PM 54:00

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

church, pastor, christian worldview, people, god, week, mission, ministry, shepherd, samaritan ministries, life, word, believers, flock, christ, sermon, members, scripture, bible, drift

SPEAKERS

Host: David Wheaton, Program Director, Featured Resource: My Boy Ben,

Sponsor: Samaritan Ministries, Matthew Fletcher, Featured Resource: In His Image



Host: David Wheaton 00:07

How your church can avoid mission drift. That is the 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. You can find out more at TheChristianWorldview.org. Last week, we discussed the very troubling situation that the new president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Ed Litton, plagiarized sermons for several years from the immediate past president JD Greer. What's worse is that as of yet, Litton hasn't resigned, nor has the SBC removed him for a transgression that would result in expulsion of any seminary student. The only guesses as to why Litton remains as SBC president is that Christian leaders don't consider repeated plagiarism, which is really a type of lying and deception, to be a disqualifying sin for a pastor, or that plagiarism is so widespread amongst pastors that no one wants to, "cast the first stone." Whatever the reason, the state of evangelical leadership seems to be in questionable condition right now. But lest we despair, Jesus Christ says, "I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overpower." That's from Matthew chapter 16. In other words, no failing of pastors or Christian leaders will hinder God building his church, which is the body of true believers. In fact, as our guest Justin Peters mentioned last week, there are many faithful pastors laboring each day in little known churches across the country. They may not have large social media followings or multi site church campuses with 1000's in attendance, or best

selling books, but they do understand the purpose of the church and their role as a shepherd of the flock. Matthew Fletcher is one such pastor. He's been in pastoral ministry for 30 years. He's a senior pastor of Webster Bible Church near Rochester, New York. And he joins us this weekend on The Christian Worldview to discuss how a church can follow Christ's prescription for his body and avoid the kind of mission drift so prevalent today. Now, mission drift, you could define as the drifting away or maybe being distracted from fulfilling one's mission. And this happens to so many organizations, whether churches or Christian colleges, seminaries, parachurch organizations, they start out with a good and sound mission. Then over time, as people change and come and go, these organizations begin to drift away from their original mission. Unless there's a strong commitment by leadership to stay on mission, this drift begins to take place. You know, a really sad example of this kind of mission drift is Bethany Christian Services. I think we mentioned this earlier this year in the program. They're one of the largest Christian adoption agencies in this country. And their mission is according to their website, Bethany demonstrates the love and compassion of Jesus Christ by protecting children, empowering youth, and strengthening families through quality social services. Well, it was a shock earlier this year when Bethany announced that they would allow homosexual parents to adopt children across the US. This from the Detroit Free Press. The agency started working with LGBTQ parents in Michigan two years ago, after pressure from a lawsuit, but the policy was not nationwide. "These days, families will look a lot different than they did when we started 75 years ago," said Nathan Bolt, a spokesman for Bethany Christian Services. "And Bethany is committed to welcoming and serving all of them. We will begin implementing this practice nationwide. Immediately," Bolt said. The practice is allowing homosexual parents to adopt children. So the question is going back to their mission to protect children, empower youth and strengthen families. How exactly is Bethany doing that, when they are placing children in homes that are structurally sinful environments? That's not protecting children. That's not empowering youth. That's not strengthening family. That's redefining the family as God designed and defined. So there's a perfect example of mission drift. Now the Evangelical Church of America is suffering from a chronic case of mission drift. Gotquestions.org is a good resource for getting sort of a one page description of answers to common questions. I looked up what they defined as the mission of the church, and they defined it this way. To make disciples. That's from the Great Commission in Matthew. To glorify Christ. And number three, to build up the saints. Of course, many mainline denomination churches have gone very, very far away from that. But the tragedy is that many evangelical churches have veered very far away from this mission to make disciples, to glorify Christ, to build up the saints. And this is where our guest today, Matt Fletcher, comes in. He's the senior pastor as I mentioned, of Webster Bible Church, and I met Matt many years ago, at the expositors conference, down in Mobile, Alabama, at Steve Lawson's former church. We struck up a friendship and we have been in touch ever since. He just came to Minnesota and visited us. And we had

this conversation early one morning. Let's start out with a kind of a fundamental question about the purpose of the church. I think if you asked church leaders in many evangelical churches, what is the purpose of the church, they might be able to say, well, to worship God or to glorify Him, but I think maybe in practice, that might not be the mission that kind of bleeds through. It might have to do with, we need to attract people to Christianity, it might be something they would project, or they would say, we need to help hurting people, people are beat up six days a week, we need to encourage them on the seventh, there's lots of programs and different things we need to do to help their families, their marriages, and so forth. You know, maybe more liberal churches might say that the purpose of the church is to strengthen the community, to create more social justice, social bonds in a community. Or they might say the purpose of the church is to proclaim the gospel to non believers. In other words, the church is for non believers really, not as much for believers, people need to get saved. Not to say that all of those things are inherently wrong for a church to do or to have a part of the purpose of the church, but I have a feeling you're gonna say the purpose of the church is different than those things. What is it?

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Matthew Fletcher 07:20

The purpose of the church, we need to remember, is to glorify God by displaying His glory. I mean, God Himself makes that clear, in Ephesians, chapter three. And if you look at it in the context of Ephesians, and the New Testament as a whole, glorifying God is our chief aim. And we do that through equipping his people through evangelizing the lost. But it's always through a goal to honor God in all that we do. You know, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, whether we eat or drink, whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God. Two errors that I think evangelical churches, what I mean by evangelical I mean, they proclaim the true gospel, but two drifts that can occur is one, toward a secret driven model where we need to evangelize the law. So we need to get them here to church. What do unbelievers want? What will attract them? Well, you know, that's a huge danger because unbelievers don't know what they need, you know, God does, and for them to set the agenda rather than God is dangerous. I think it was Charles Spurgeon that said, "The church that the world likes best is the church that God abhors. Because when the church becomes like the world, we lose our influence on the world." But the other drift that can occur, I think, is what we could call disciple driven ministry. Where What do believers want? Believers are compared to sheep throughout Scripture. I think it's John MacArthur that says, "Because sheep can be dumb and dirty." You know, sometimes we can be selfish, we can be prone to our own selfish things. And so it's not even really what God's people want, though they should want the right things, it's what does God want for his people? So through corporate worship, building up his people, and evangelizing the lost, those three things are extremely important and a means by which we attain our goal to glorify God

and to display His glory.

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Host: David Wheaton 09:16

I was thinking of the the passage in Acts, I think it's in Acts 2, where the description of the four fundamentals that should take place in a church are. I think it's the preaching of the Word or the apostles doctrine, fellowship is another one, fellowship of believers, breaking of bread, or communion and prayer.

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Matthew Fletcher 09:35

Yes.

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Host: David Wheaton 09:36

Are those the fundamentals of a church? Is it risky to get too much beyond those things? Is there a benefit and simplicity in the church? What are your thoughts on the methodology of a worship service at a church?

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Matthew Fletcher 09:51

God's Word must govern all that we do, you know, beginning with corporate worship. I like the idea that when when we Gather for worship, we pray the Word, we sing the Word, we hear the Word. We see the Word, you know, through the ordinances, baptism, and communion. And so I think that's important. What you mentioned from Acts two, I think is a great framework. I think it was Stan Touissant who was chairman of exposition at Dallas Seminary for a number of years. say there's really two things they gave themselves to. They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, and to the fellowship, which consisted of the breaking of bread and prayer. So that's an interesting thought. So you have the teaching of God's Word as paramount in all that we do. It dictates our agenda as a church. It's the means by which we live out the one another command to the New Testament. And that's what really God uses to evangelize the last corporately. Jesus said, "By this will all men know that you are my disciples if you love one another." So all the one another commands are a corporate witness to the world regarding the power of the gospel.

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Host: David Wheaton 11:00

So it seems like the church shouldn't try to be like the world. Church should be very different than the world when an unbeliever walks in and says, what is going on here? This

is so different.

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Matthew Fletcher 11:10

They should see something in the church that they never see in the world, and we trust God's Spirit to draw them to himself through that corporate witness of the church.

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Host: David Wheaton 11:20

Matt Fletcher with us today here on The Christian Worldview Radio Program, the senior pastor of Webster Bible Church in Webster, New York, that's just outside Rochester, New York. Their website you can hear sermons on is Websterbible.org. We talked about the purpose of the church briefly here. Let's go on to the purpose of a pastor. Now I think today again, if you ask most evangelical pastors, they would say to lead, to preach the word, to disciple and so forth of the believers in the church. But I think the reality is that many evangelical pastors today are sort of an inspirational speaker, like a motivator. They see themselves as an encourager, once again, you know, people have a lot of problems. I need to speak encouragement to them. Encouragements a good thing. But as you look at the New Testament, there's lots of encouragement, but there's lots of warning in there. There's a balance there. So let's talk first about the the purpose of a pastor from Scripture.

M

Matthew Fletcher 12:22

When I thought about that question you just asked, I'm reminded when I first became a pastor back in the early 90s, an itinerant Bible teacher, who many of your listeners will probably recognize, Lehmann Strauss, who is now with the Lord was doing a week long Bible conference at our church, and I was walking down the hall, and my office door was open. And I actually found him standing in my office. And he said, "So what do you do here?" And you know, I just had so much respect for this guy, you know, he was old enough to be my grandfather, had walked with the Lord for a number of years. And I said, "Sir, I'm the the youth pastor." He says, "I know what your title is, but what do you do?" And you know, that has stuck with me nearly 30 years now that I've been in ministry. It's like, what does a pastor actually do? And there is something in the title itself that tells us what we're to do. The word pastor itself, is the translation of the Greek word *poimenes*, which means shepherd, and we are to shepherd the flock of God. Paul tells us that in Acts 20:28, that were to pay attention to the flock, the flock of God that he purchased with his own blood. So we're to tend the flock or to shepherd them, primarily through our teaching ministry, by preaching the word. You'll remember in II Timothy 4, the last canonical letter Paul wrote, he gives a very serious charge to Timothy, to preach the Word. In Ephesians 4, he says that God gave pastor teachers and that's a dual role, a pastor, a shepherd, and a teacher,

to equip God's people for the work of the ministry for the building up of the body of Christ. And so we're to tend God's people, primarily by teaching them. And the Bible says we're also to live by example. You know, Peter, in I Peter 5, as a fellow elder tells them to be an example to the flock by our humility, by our godly living, by our own evangelistic efforts, that if I want people sharing the gospel with others, I'm to share the gospel with others. Paul says to Timothy in that same charge, when he says preach the Word he says, do the work of an evangelist. I don't think Timothy was an evangelist in terms of his primary role in giftedness, but he was to do the work of an evangelist, and without embarrassing you, David, you did a great job at dinner last night. Now we went out and you took the opportunity to share the gospel with the gentleman who was waiting on us and I think that was a good example of being an example to the flock.



Program Director 14:58

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



Sponsor: Samaritan Ministries 15:02

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 a way 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.



Featured Resource: My Boy Ben 16:01

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.

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Program Director 17:08

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 17:24

Interestingly enough, I think you see in the larger churches and you have a fairly I think let's say a mid sized church, 300 people, so you have a chance as a pastor to not only shepherd the flock by teaching them but also probably pretty intimately walking with them as well, because you probably know most everyone in the church. You know, a lot of churches, evangelical churches today are very big. And sometimes the main senior pastor can be a teaching pastor, he can be a preacher come to speak, but there's not a lot of connection with that, that Shepherd over his sheep, because it's just big, he's maybe super busy, other things going on. So he's not able to truly be a shepherd. Is there a danger or something not ideal about that when a church gets too big, or maybe a pastor starts seeing himself purely as, I'm the preacher here, but someone else can do sort of the groundwork in the life of people in the church?

M

Matthew Fletcher 18:25

Yes, that's an excellent point that you raised. And I think there's a tendency, in a lot of mega churches today, even in our day, probably several 100 isn't considered a mega church, but certainly in the 1000s, you know, for the pastor to take on the role of a CEO instead of a shepherd and, or as purely as a visionary for the church. And I think that's so dangerous, because that is a mission drift away from our calling, which is to shepherd the flock of God. And I think there are some men, some pastors that have what we might call extraordinary leadership gifts by which they are using those gifts to really make sure God's people are well cared for. But I would say they are the exceptions. I'm thankful that I belong to a church, I pastor a church where I know the name of every member, I can pray for every member of their household, I try to make a point to do that every day, I take a portion of our church directory, and I pray for them by name. A lot of times David, I'll I'll actually walk around our sanctuary and just pray for our members. And we have one corporate gathering a week for worship. So we don't have multiple campuses, we don't have multiple services. All of us are gathered together as one on the Lord's day to worship

Him in spirit and truth. And I would say any core member of our church, if they are truly plugged in, they pretty much know all the other members of the church and that's a it's a real blessing, huh?

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Host: David Wheaton 19:57

That's interesting. You're talking about just doing one service. Just By definition, doing two services, there's a division there between your service one and service two. In reality, they may not interact with each other very much except in coming and going at church. Matt Fletcher with us today here on The Christian Worldview, the senior pastor of Webster Bible Church, just outside Rochester, New York. I'm trying to envision what someone like you, Matt does during the week, who views your role correctly as a shepherd, not just purely as a preacher, so to speak. So obviously, you're doing sermon preparation, you're teaching the flock through your preaching, so there's preparation going on with that and I'm gonna ask you about that, so there's many hours of that. I can imagine you're doing discipling, you know, either one on one or small group discipling, with the elders of your church, young men in your church, or whoever you can tell us about that. You're also doing counseling I'm sure, to the congregants of your church, or I'm sure you're visiting people from your church who are sick. And then there's also I'm sure other responsibilities that you have maybe in the community or elsewhere, of course, with your own family as well. So maybe describe what a typical week is like for you. Of course, we know you're at church on Sundays, but what's going on the rest of the week?

M

Matthew Fletcher 21:11

Sure. I'm very thankful that we have a team of elders that work together. So while a lot of these primary responsibilities fall to me, and to the staff, I also have a small staff that I work with. It really helps to relieve the burden that falls to pastors. But yeah, a typical week for me, obviously Sunday is busy with ministering to people in person while we're gathered at the church and preaching the Word. It's an early start for me. But Mondays, I call it miscellaneous Monday, we meet as a staff on Monday, I write a personal letter to any guests that come to our church, if we get a connection card, I follow up with that, any emails that have come in over the weekend, you know, try to have a 24 hour turnaround so that people know when they reach out to their pastor, I'm pretty good at getting back to them. I think that it's a small thing that helps build credibility. So I try to almost it's almost like in a broad sense, clearing my inbox on Monday. Tuesday, I begin my sermon prep, I do some discipleship. We have a men's group that meets on Tuesday mornings called Journey Men that I'm a part of, and we meet together. And it's named that for the sake of being on this journey toward Christ likeness. And so we have a plenary session where different teachers teach. And then we break up into small groups to pray together,

hold one another accountable, encourage one another. My wife and I lead a small group on Wednesday in our home, we host it. So that gives us an opportunity to be with about a dozen other people in our home, where we go over a sermon based application questions to talk about how God's word applies to our life. There's always biblical counseling during the week that I do and you know, the occasional hospital visit. But Wednesday and Thursday are very heavy sermon prep, I begin on Tuesday, but Tuesday's just getting acquainted with the text, praying over it. Wednesday and Thursday are kind of like the heavy duty sermon prep. And Thursday I don't schedule any meetings, appointments, counseling sessions, unless there's really an urgent matter more an emergency. That whole day is devoted simply to sermon prep, writing out my sermon, because it takes probably about a solid 20 hours a week for me to prepare my sermon and probably the other, you know, 20 to 30 hours consist of the rest of pastoral ministry, I try to devote time each day, David to what I call pastoral care in prayer. And I spend that time praying for a portion of our members. And a lot of times, I'll try to write one or two handwritten notes a day of encouragement, for people I prayed for that day to let them know I prayed for them and how thankful I am for them. And I use Paul's letters in the New Testament as kind of a model of encouragement. For the five or 10 minutes it takes to do that it means the world to people. They come on Sunday and tell me how blessed they were to get that and I don't always do that faithfully, you know, just like any person I can slip and maybe it'll go a couple weeks where I haven't really written that encouragement, but I always try to get back because I know it's in the little things where we are faithful that produce long term fruit.

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Host: David Wheaton 24:20

You can see how beneficial and how encouraging these are. But you can see how much work this is, too. This is taxing. This is tiring. This is mentally and emotionally draining. And so that actually leads well on to the next question about, how taxing is being a pastor? This is your 30 years in pastoral ministry now. You're taking a sabbatical this summer. Your church wanted you to take some time off this summer. Tell us about just the the taxing element of being a pastor and then also the sabbatical this summer and what you're trying to accomplish do this.

M

Matthew Fletcher 24:52

Paul talks about in I Timothy 5 about those who labor and Bible doctrine and preaching and that word labor means to toil to the point of exhaustion. And so if you're gonna preach God's word correctly, it's gonna wear you out week to week. I mean, every Sunday afternoon, I go home and I'll sleep like 90 minutes because I am worn out. It's like the culmination of all your weeks preparations when I preach on Sunday morning. I think it

was John MacArthur that called it the blessed burden. You know, it's a blessing, you know, God has shown us a mercy by calling us into the ministry. And yet Paul talks about in II Corinthians 11, about the daily pressure that is on him because of his care for the church and his concern for the church. And so you bear that week to week. And we're thankful to have our regular vacation time, which which we try to use every year. But you know, there's that acumulative effect over the years and years of doing this. And so our elders in congregation blessed us with a sabbatical this summer. And basically, it's just a prolonged hiatus for the purpose of achieving a goal. And the way we've set it up is it can be to refresh yourself, maybe in your relationship with your spouse, and just have that quality time together that we don't always get because of the demand of ministry. It's a time to do some research and writing if there's a certain project you're working on that you just want to have time to work on, given all the other daily and weekly responsibilities from, you know, week to week, throughout the year. You can incorporate maybe a missions trip, you know, and maybe teach overseas and preparing course material and being a blessing to the broader church and collaborating with missionaries in that way. A sabbatical can have multiple purposes. But I'm so glad that for ours this year, because it's our first real sabbatical we've had, our elders wanted to make it primarily for a refreshment. So we're, we're thankful for the opportunity to travel. I'm doing a lot of reading of books that I've been wanting to read, but just haven't had time to read, spending precious time with my wife, Ruthie, visiting family and even friends such as yourself. So this has been great. We're just two weeks in. So I'm thankful we have like another eight weeks left, and I'm really looking forward to what the Lord has for us.

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Host: David Wheaton 27:10

Well we hope your time in Minnesota is part of the refreshment.

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Matthew Fletcher 27:13

It has been amazing.

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Host: David Wheaton 27:14

Well, good. That's great. So I hope listeners just listening today just get a better appreciation. We're talking about mission drift that can happen in the church, avoiding that but just giving you a behind the scenes look at what a pastor who is committed to fulfilling his role as a New Testament pastor goes through, the challenges, what their week is like. Let's talk about polemics. That word, maybe you should just define that word. It has to do with a warning against false teaching. And as I read the New Testament, I see so much polemical warning. Be careful of false teachers. Be careful of your doctrine. Those

who come in unnoticed. Christ's woe to the Pharisees. Watch out for their doctrine. You see so much in the mainstream evangelical church, that again, we need to spend the time in the church encouraging. Don't bring up negative things, don't be a downer, keep it positive. Maybe you could define polemics better than I did there and talk about the importance of that. But also the challenge of that, because you know, some people just can't handle more negative news in a world that has so much of it already.

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Matthew Fletcher 28:25

Yes, polemics. I don't have like the dictionary definition in front of me. But I think we all understand it means to take an adversarial stance on something, it's something that you are clearly against, and that you're speaking out against. And so what we might call a contrary position on a given issue in making that clear, that where you stand on that issue, it's that he had that contrary stance, you know, adversarial, not in the sense of deliberately trying to stir up trouble. But trouble may start and division may occur because you are taking the stance that you are. And we see that through Paul's epistles. The primary way I address it, I think there are maybe even well meaning evangelicals that almost look for things, and that almost becomes like their ministry becomes defined by what they're against. And I don't think that's a good image to have. I don't think that's how we would describe the Apostle Paul. That's unbalanced, because that's not the way the New Testament is either. But then there's the flip side where people leave a pastor, as I'll say, particularly theologians, they're more interested in pleasing men than pleasing God. They want to be on good terms with everybody, and they're always worried about what people think about them, instead of what God thinks about them in this situation, but I'm by nature, a people person. I like people and I like to be liked. I tend to avoid conflict. I don't like that in a natural sense. But that's where my life is governed by the word of God. So in my own ministry, polemics come into play pretty much through my exposition of God's Word. That's what I love about going verse by verse through books of the Bible, is God's Word sets the agenda. And God's Word is perfectly balanced. God gives us all the encouragement we need, the comfort, the affirmation, but God also speaks the truth always to us. And Paul, at times spoke very strongly. And he even sometimes called people out by name, so that people could recognize these false teachers that were in their midst. And I don't take joy in that. I think if a pastor, preacher takes joy in that there's something wrong in their heart, it should pain us to have to do that. But out of our commitment to the Lord out of our love for Christ, our devotion to the Word of God, we must do these things because it's not only feeding the flock, we're also defending the flock of God. And Titus 1:9 says that we need to refute those who contradict the truth of God's word.



Host: David Wheaton 30:51

I was thinking as you're answering there, something that a favorite pastor that both you and I have, Stephen Lawson used to say. I can't remember if it was him who said this, or he was quoting someone else, but it's something like the problem with pastors today is that no one wants to kill them anymore,



Matthew Fletcher 31:05

Yes, that is Stephen Lawson. I remember his saying that. That's so true.



Program Director 31:09

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



Host: David Wheaton 31:13

David 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 what 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 TheChristianWorldview.org and click on Donate. You can also call 1-888-646-2233. That's 1-888-646-2233 or TheChristianWorldview.org. And be sure to specify on which station, website, or app you listen, as that helps us decide whether to continue on a given outlet. Thank you for your support.



Featured Resource: In His Image 32:13

I struggled with my identity all the way through my life, lived eight years is Laura Jensen, until I found the Lord Jesus Christ. . . The issues are unavoidable. . . They're on the news . . . The White House in rainbow colors. . . They're in our legislation. . . The Texas Bathroom Bill. . . In our schools. . . Drag Queen story hour. . . They're even reaching into our churches. . . Let us be the church together. . . We're not just talking about issues we're talking about people. The 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 TheChristianWorldview.org, call 1-888-646-2233, or write to Box 401, Excelsior, Minnesota 55331 or visit TheChristianWorldview.org. That's 1-888-646-2233 or TheChristianWorldview.org.

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Program Director 33:19

Thanks for joining us on The Christian Worldview. Just a reminder that today's program and past programs are archived at our website, TheChristianWorldview.org. Short takes 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 33:34

Matt Fletcher with us today here on The Christian Worldview, the senior pastor of Webster Bible Church in Webster New York just outside Rochester. Their website is Websterbible.org. Let's go from the pastor to the congregant. From a pastor's perspective, what do you love to see in someone who is a member of your church?

M

Matthew Fletcher 33:55

A model congregant to me, and by a congregant I'll say a church member, is someone who clearly has believed the gospel of Christ, has embraced Him as Lord and Savior, and that is evident in their life and relationships. That they are humble servants of Christ, that live to honor the Lord in all that they do, in what they say, in their behavior, their interactions with others, everything they do exists to honor God. In the church, it's a lot of simply showing up, not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together. When the doors of the church are open for corporate worship, they are there every Lord's Day unless they're providentially hindered. And because every believer has received spiritual gifts for the building up of the body, they use their gifts to bless and build up others in the church to the glory of God. Peter talks about, was it 1 Peter 4:10 and 11? Some have speaking gifts others have serving gifts, you know, these are behind the scenes. It's not about them. It's all about the Lord and serving his people with joy. And those that just faithfully do that, that respond with meekness to the implanted Word, that is preached to them week in and week out are the hugest blessing to me. And I think to any pastor. My dad was never a pastor and some of his brothers were. They were involved in missions, full time missions work. But my dad to me, even growing up, I looked to him as really a model church member. He was faithful, he exercised his gifts for the good of others and for the glory of God over the course of his entire adult life.

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Host: David Wheaton 35:33

That's a great model and example he set for you. This is the final question. So I was very interested to hear that recently, you preached through the book of Hebrews. And as we were talking about something to discuss today, in our in our interview, I can't remember

how it came up, but you said something to do with Hebrews 13:8. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever. And of course, that's a verse that we commonly end this program with, as I think we try to end basically to say, you know, there's a lot of things going on in the world that can be challenging. The world's changing, where do you have foundation work? Where can you have an anchoring? Where can you hold on to something that doesn't change? And there it is, Hebrews 13:8. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever. I want to read the verse before that though. It also says, Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. This is, I'm assuming that he's referring to pastors here. I don't have the whole context. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. And then it goes into verse eight, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever. So maybe you could just give us some context on this passage, the verse we use frequently on this program and just explain what it means.

M

Matthew Fletcher 36:52

We have heard people use that a lot, and rightly so that the fact with everything that changes in the world around us, Jesus is always the same yesterday, today and forever. And this provides a measure of comfort, assurance, and just a real sense of security for the Christian. And that it's utterly true. What was fascinating to me is looking at that verse in the context of Hebrews which emphasizes the supremacy of Jesus Christ above all. That Jesus is better than anything or anyone you can compare him to. And if he really is the Son of God, who saves us, who keeps us, who helps us, who holds us, who will never leave us nor forsake us, and puts us in His kingdom which can never be shaken, that's the message of Hebrews. This is the last chapter of Hebrews. So this is where the practical exhortations come. That if Christ is truly Supreme, and he has saved us, Chapter 13 is all about exalting Jesus in everyday life. And if you begin at the start of the chapter, he starts by saying, Let brotherly love continue, hold marriage in honor, he says, in essence, hold your money loosely because our life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions. It's all about Christ. And the next command is essentially, remember your leaders. And it's in that context, he says, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. When he says, consider the outcome of their way of life, the word consider their means to ponder, to contemplate, to really think about, and the word outcome, talking about the leaders way of life is it points to a life that has already been lived, the person could be dead, or they might be near the end of their life. Like when Paul wrote Timothy his final letter, I have finished my course I have kept the faith. David, you'll recall in chapter 11, we read what is often been referred to as the Hall of Faith. These people who though imperfect, by faith, they lived a life unto the Lord. And we are to follow their example. And so I believe your program uses that verse in a right way. Because even though it's designed for comfort and a sense of security, you are also challenging your listeners every week, to hold fast to the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. And I'll just say quickly, if

you follow the sequence of Hebrews 13 on this subject, I just made a bullet point here, that if we are to remember our leaders, we will recall and live out our lives knowing that their message was centered on Christ. It's grounded in Scripture. It is strengthened by grace. It is dying to self. It is fueled by hope, and it is expressed through praise. That's the pattern we see of that verse and its implications in terms of following our leaders throughout chapter 13.

H

Host: David Wheaton 39:39

And that's well said. This is a great way to end our interview, having a little pastoral outline here to take with us from our conversation today. Well, thank you for giving some more context and explanation to that passage in Hebrews. And we love that verse because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. For this is our great hope, in the midst of our fallen world. So Matt, we're just so thankful again for not only your time today in the program, but so great to see you and Ruthie here in Minnesota and just the sweet fellowship of believers centered around Christ and His Word. We just have enjoyed the time so much. And we just pray all of God's best and grace to you and your family, your grandkids, your church, and just everything that God has before you going forward in your life. So thank you again.

M

Matthew Fletcher 40:26

Thank you, David. My wish is the same for you. All of God's best in your life, marriage and ministry, and thank you for being such a blessing to us.

H

Host: David Wheaton 40:34

That was Matt Fletcher everyone. Hope you enjoyed the interview with him. He's a faithful man with a pastor's Shepherd's heart. Again, their website is Webster bible.org. Well, how about some follow up thoughts on this idea of mission drift in the church? The term ecclesiology is one that is good to know. It's defined as the theology as applied to the nature and structure of the Christian church. It's basically the doctrine of the church. Having a sound biblical understanding of what the church is. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2, he said, so then you are no longer, he's writing the church in Ephesus, you are no longer strangers and aliens, you're not non believers, but you are fellow citizens. You're believers, with the saints and members of the household of God, which is the church, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself, being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him, you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God, by the Holy Spirit. And there's a great description of what the church is, it's the body of Christ and Christ

Jesus Himself, is the cornerstone. So we can't just make church up as we go, come up with these, what we think are innovative strategies to bring people in the door, and so forth. No, there's a way that God has established and written down in His Word and exemplified in His Word for a church to operate. Here's just some points not in any order, but just some thoughts about what's important for a church taken from Scripture. First, pastors and elders, those who lead the church, need to be biblically qualified. There's two passages in Scripture that really describe what a qualified pastor or elder needs to be. I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. I'll read just the passage in I Timothy 3. It says there that an overseer then must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine, or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money, he must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity, verse five, but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the Church of God? Good question. And not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. That from I Timothy 3. And if those qualifications were just followed for pastors and elders, the church would have the right kind of leadership to be able to operate to the glory of God. It's so common today for elders of churches to be successful business people. And that has nothing to do with the qualifications that we see in Scripture as to what a elder should be. It's all about character issues, not business success. Now a pastor specifically must be a shepherd of the sheep, not just a person who preaches and leads, who inspires and motivates, he must see his role as the Bible describes it, as being a shepherd of sheep who need to be led. He needs to love them, as Christ loves his church. When you have qualified pastors and elders, they understand and pursue the mission of the church. To worship and glorify God by gathering believers together to teach them the Word, to fellowship with each other, to remember Christ's death and resurrection through communion, and also to pray. That's taken directly from the example in Acts 2. So this sound ecclesiology, this doctrine of the Church, understanding what what God has prescribed for the church, this ecclesiology then can lead to a sound methodology in how the church operates and that methodology should include some of these points. Again, this is not an exhaustive list, but just some thoughts on methodology, how a church should operate. The priority of a church service should be the proclamation of the Word of God. So everything else should be leading people to receive the faithful preaching of the Word of God. Everything else should not be distracting to that or do anything to lessen that importance. So the music shouldn't be overpowering, overstimulating, it shouldn't be some performative experience, so that when you get to the sermon, it pales in comparison to what the music just was. Another point on methodology, the Word of God should be read publicly, in every church service. After all, this is the only part of the church service that is going to be perfect because it's taken straight from God's Word. It says in I Timothy 4:13, this is Paul writing to

us under Shepherd Timothy. Paul says, until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and teaching. You can often go to a church service where the Bible is hardly read, that's completely getting things backward. That needs to be a huge priority in the service is to hear from God through reading his Word. And so that means when the when the Bible is read, it should not be read perfunctorily, quickly, just wrotely, but it should be read with gravity. After all, these are the very words of God. Read it, let it sink in. Nothing bothers me more than when someone reads scripture and just kind of rolls right through it. No, this is the Word of God. Another point for methodology in the church service is give people who attend time to reflect, to consider their own lives and repent of any sin and respond to the teaching of the Word. So a perfect time to do this is during the communion service. Don't have so many things going on during the communion service that people can't think about what they're actually doing and examine themselves, to see whether they're right before God, whether they have any unconfessed sin in their life. Another point, prayer should be integral in a service not just perfunctory again, the pastor needs to give a prayer that directs the congregation's hearts toward God, toward each other as they fellowship with each other and serve each other, but also outside the boundaries of the church as well to the world around them. Maybe it's missionaries or civil leaders, we're commanded to pray for civil leaders, for countries around the world, for peoples who need to hear the gospel. The pastor needs to set an example for how his people should be praying. Another point is the preaching itself should be expository in nature taken directly from a passage of scripture, rather than topically, not about how to have a better marriage and raise better children or this topic or that topic. Let God speak through His Word. And the message should be sober with substance. The pastor should not try to be glib or entertaining or tell too many stories about himself. And while he's added, I think it's helpful to stand behind a pulpit. A pulpit is a symbol of authority with a Bible on top of that pulpit and notes. I always get a little concerned when I see a pastor up front with no pulpit, maybe a Bible on his hand and no notes and pacing back and forth. I never know whether this pastor just has a incredible gift of communication, or whether this man has been locked in his study for many hours during the week being impacted by the Holy Spirit, and he's going to bring us the Word of God. Another point with regards to the message that every message, every sermon should, in some way, point to the main point or main theme of Scripture, which is that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer. In other words, there should be an evangelistic element, doesn't need to be every message, the whole message. But for unbelievers who may come in through the door, and believers who need to better understand the gospel, there needs to be some explanation of that woven into every sermon, or at least most every sermon. Music is another huge issue in the church and we won't get into that too deeply today. But music overall should direct members attenders hearts to reverently worship God, it should encourage people to participate, rather than being performed at. You know, when there's such a high performance, concert like situation going on in front of the church, you often see people

just kind of standing up and being performed at, sung at. Instead, there should be an encouragement for the congregation to sing aloud and sing heartedly to the Lord. And that's why the music shouldn't be overpowering in a church service. Ideally, there should be just one service in a church. So there's unity in the body. That's not a hard and fast law. But I think that's helpful that you get to see all the members come together at one time. Ideally, the church shouldn't get too big, and that's a relative term, but it shouldn't get too big, where the pastors and elders don't personally know and are not involved in the lives of the members of that church. Ideally, children should be in the service with the entire family. So again, so it's not divided, everyone from every age group doesn't go to their own part of the church and have their own church service. If there is a children's church for younger children watch, I think is totally fine, it should be to teach those children soberly. Not just little fun games with a little Bible lesson that's not going to prepare them for life in the real world. And I'll just mention one more point because we're running out of time is that church discipline, restoration of a sinning, professing believer is a must in a church. This is a lost practice in the evangelical church today. And if you don't have this kind of church discipline with the purpose of restoring someone, sin just spreads and affects the whole body. Read Matthew 18. And of course, one other major aspect of the church is about missions, we will get to that in a future program. Thank you for listening today to The Christian Worldview. You can hear past programs, order resources, sign up for our free weekly email, support the ministry or become a monthly partner by going to our website, TheChristianWorldview.org, or just calling us at our office at 1-888646-2233. And as always, if you have health care needs, if you're not satisfied with your health insurance, I would really encourage you to look into Samaritan Ministries. Just click on the Samaritan Ministries banner on the homepage of our website, TheChristianWorldview.org. And by the way, I or The Christian Worldview doesn't get paid if you become a member of Samaritan Ministries and take advantage of their health care sharing service. They just align with our ministry. They believe that our audience would benefit from their services, and we are members ourselves who have had a great experience with them, so that's why we can highly recommend them. One more quick announcement is that the Christian Worldview annual golf event is set for Monday, September 20 at Woodhill Country Club, here in the Twin Cities. We'd love to have you participate, even if you're from out of state. Find out more again at our website TheChristianWorldview.org/golf. Pastor Matt Fletcher explained our closing verse from Hebrews 13:8, but I'm going to repeat it again. Jesus Christ and His Word are the same yesterday and today and forever. If you are a believer in Him, you can be anchored in that. Until next time, think biblically, live accordingly, and stand firm.



Program Director 52:59

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