

# How do I get my own concierge pastor?

In Mark Driscoll's [apology to Mars Hill](#) last week, he reassured us that he was well cared for by his own team of pastors.

I have been a pastor for a long time, but have not had a close pastor since college. I now rejoice that God has been gracious to give me pastors for accountability and wise counsel.

In a similar fashion, Steven Furtick calls Craig Groeschell his personal pastor, and Perry Noble has identified Clayton King as his pastor.

Where did this idea of a concierge pastor come from? It's self serving and isolating, and it's a bad idea for the following reasons:

## **It's hypocritical**

The three pastors listed above lead multi-campus churches where they appear to most of their congregation on video screens, often live, though sometimes prerecorded. Noble has said he has [no interest in meeting people](#) in his church, though even if he were willing, it would be impossible. Noble, who has about 30,000 attending his various campuses each week, is driving his church to reach 100,000 in weekly attendance. Clearly, these churches think this is a good model, and they are all working hard to expand it.



If you're one of the 12,000 members of Mars Hill, 14,000 members of Elevation or the 30,000 at NewSpring, you are not likely to ever meet your pastor. Why then do the holographic pastors of these churches demand personal attention from their own flesh-and-blood personal pastors? If a personal relationship with a pastor is so important, these churches need to change their model dramatically.

## **It's unnecessary**

Why does a pastor even need a pastor if he's doing his job? Assuming that the essence of

church is to provide Christians with the preached Word, sacraments, prayer and fellowship, for a pastor who participates in the life of his congregation there ought to be no need to look outside his church for what he needs. Perhaps it's the very isolation that leading a megachurch imposes on a pastor that drives him to seek a personal pastoral connection that he denies to his own congregation.

A good pastor considers himself part of the same flock that he pastors, subject to the pastoral care of Jesus, just like other members of the flock. If the preaching and spiritual life of the church is insufficient for the pastor who is responsible for it, he ought to resign on account of his ineffectiveness.

(I'm not saying that pastors shouldn't have access to encouragement and counsel from others, even outside the church, but those relationships are not the same as the pastor-congregation relationship.)

### **It's elitist**

It defines the pastor's status as a celebrity who can only be understood by other celebrities. These three pastors have chosen concierge pastors who are just like them or under their control. All three pastors are relatively young, as are their churches. If authentic pastoral care was what they were looking for, wouldn't it make more sense to find a local pastor who had been laboring in the city for four or five decades? Such a person would be able to provide an independent, outside and mature perspective. That, though, is probably not what they want.

### **It's conflicted**

Driscoll's two named pastors are members of his executive team, meaning they also draw their income from and report to Driscoll. Perry Noble pays Clayton King to be the teaching pastor at NewSpring. Craig Groschell has a more distant relationship with Furtick than the other two examples, though he also earns speaking fees for appearances at Elevation.

In all cases, the concierge pastor draws significant income from his celebrity congregant. Though pastors everywhere are paid by their congregations, the difference here is that the financial relationship between the pastor and the lone congregant is personal and

direct. If you really wanted a pastor who would subject you to proper discipline and accountability, you wouldn't pick someone who has to risk significant financial setbacks for speaking hard truths.

## **It's a dodge**

By claiming that they're under the authority of another pastor, these pastors create the appearance of being subject to discipline without the reality or possibility of it. In a traditionally governed church, pastors are accountable to boards of elders or deacons comprised of members of the local church, or they're answerable to synods or bishops within a formal denominational structure. Some pastors are accountable both ways — to their congregations and to their denominations.

What we're seeing in these three churches is a model where the pastor claims entrepreneurial founder's privileges. As is especially evident in the Mars Hill [corporate structure](#), Mark Driscoll is essentially untouchable and unremovable as pastor. These founding pastors evidently don't feel an obligation to submit to governing authorities from within the church that they started, so telling us of their external pseudo-authorities gives the appearance of spiritual submission, even if it is to authorities that are ultimately toothless.

## **It's unbiblical**

There's no Biblical warrant for a pastor to have a personal pastor. While pastors were subject to external authorities like the [Jerusalem Council](#), that structure bears no resemblance to the one-on-one pastoral relationships that these pastors are creating. There are Biblical examples of close companionship and wise counsel like we see with David and Jonathan, though Scripture doesn't present those as pastor-church relationships.

The burden of Biblical proof ought to lie with these pastoral innovators. Unless they can make a convincing argument from Scripture for the relationships that they are instituting in their pastoral offices, we have a Berean responsibility to call foul on these arrangements.

## **It's exclusive**

Mark Driscoll wants you to have a marriage like his. Perry Noble wants you to deal with stress like he does. And Steven Furtick wants you to quiet the confusing voices in your head like he does. None wants you to have a pastor like he does, though.

See, if everyone in their congregation handpicked their best friend to be their personal pastor, celebrity pastors would have nobody to sell books to.