

Pastor Steven Furtick Getting Rich Off of Elevation Church in Charlotte

(Source: The Way Forward, Oct 23, 2013, by Bruce Gerencser)



Steven Furtick is pastor of [Elevation Church](#) in Charlotte, North Carolina. Elevation Church is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. Eight years ago, Furtick came to Charlotte with seven other couples and planted the Elevation Church.

In an October 23, 2013 article, [the Charlotte Observer had this to say](#) about the Elevation Church:

...Now Furtick has a flock of nearly 12,000 worshipers every weekend, most of them young people drawn by the Christian rock music, the multi-media worship experience and the hip, passionate pastor who is as likely to make his spiritual points by referring to a song or movie as a scene from the Bible. The racially diverse Southern Baptist church has become one of the biggest in the Charlotte area.

Every weekend, Furtick preaches – either in person or live on-screen – at eight different locations in four counties. Two other planned satellite campuses, in Lake Norman and Ballantyne, will eventually make it 10.

According to the church's 2012 annual report, its average weekly collection amounts to \$391,299...

Furtick, 33, is a prolific author. [He has written books like:](#)

- Greater: Dream Bigger. Start Smaller. Ignite God's Vision For Your Life
- Sun Stand Still: What Happens When You Dare to Ask God for the Impossible

- Seven Mile Miracle: Experience the Last Words of Christ as Never Before
- Crash the Chatterbox: Hearing God's Voice Above All Others
- Prototype: What Happens When You Are More Like Jesus Than You Think (Actually written by Jonathan Martin, [Foreword by Steven Furtick](#), who agrees with premise of the book)

It is the last book in this list that I find quite interesting. If you ask Christians who their role model is most would say **Jesus**. The WWJD (What Would Jesus Do) movement permeates the Christian church with its focus on following in the steps of Jesus. (ironically, the book that gave rise to the WWJD movement, Charles Sheldon's book, *In His Steps*, preaches a very much non-Evangelical social gospel) Those of us who were at one time Christians likely remember how much we really wanted to follow in the steps of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Who better to emulate than Jesus?

According to the Bible, Jesus was a working class itinerant preacher. He traveled throughout Galilee preaching the kingdom of God. As far as we know, he owned no property and the Bible even goes so far as to say that he had no place to even lay his head. One could rightly ask, *was Jesus homeless?* He was a man who fed the hungry, healed the sick, and raised the dead. He was, contrary to what right-wing Christians would like to believe, a socialist, who stood against the political and religious power brokers of his day. He never wrote a book, never started a church, and likely had no money. Whatever we may think of the religion that grew up around him after his death, his life is, in many ways, worthy of emulation.

It is this Jesus that Jonathan Martin and Steven Furtick says is the *Prototype*. However, when we look closely at Furtick's lifestyle, we see a man who is the epitome of a person who does not *walk the talk*. Jesus may be the ideal, the *Prototype*, but Furtick is having none of it.

The Charlotte Observer, in the abovementioned article, [had this to say about Furtick's plan to build a new house in Charlotte](#):

Pastor Steven Furtick, who has propelled Elevation Church into one of the fastest growing congregations in America, is building a 16,000 square foot gated estate on a large wooded lot in Waxhaw.

Tax value on the 19-acre property is \$1.6 million, though Chunks Corbett, Elevation's chief financial officer, pointed out that Furtick paid \$325,000 for it – a figure confirmed by Union County tax records.

Corbett also said the 16,000 square foot figure was misleading – 8,400 square feet of the house will be heated; the rest will be basement, attic, garage and porch space.

Corbett said Furtick, 33, is paying for the five-bedroom house with income from the books he's written and will write.

It's not a parsonage or a gift from Elevation, Corbett said, "and it's not tied to the church in any way."

Though Furtick said in a recent sermon that "it's not that great of a house," it will be among the biggest in the Charlotte area, featuring 7.5 bathrooms and, according to a building permit, an electric gate.

The home he'll share with wife Holly and their three young children will be nestled in a forested area near Providence Road. Nearby: other gated estates, swimming pools and No Trespassing signs.

"Quiet, private – and want to keep it that way" is how one of Furtick's future neighbors described the upscale enclave and those who call it home.

Furtick should fit right in: He listed a trust rather than his name on the deed and tax records for the Union County property, making it difficult to find his home in public records.

“That’s for security and privacy of the family,” Corbett said. “When you’re a public figure, it’s a different thing ... (Furtick) is the trust. It’s his house.”...

1.7 million dollars, 19 acres. 16,000 square feet, but hey **ONLY** 8,400 square feet will be heated. 7.5 bathrooms. Front gate. A trust that makes it difficult to find who actually owns the house. Yep, exactly what Jesus would do...

When asked how much Elevation Church pays Furtick, the church would not say. [According to the Charlotte Observer](#):

...Just how generous Elevation is to its pastor remains a mystery, though.

Corbett would not divulge Furtick’s salary, which is set not by a group of lay members of the church, but by a board of five out-of-town pastors. Furtick is also on the board, but doesn’t vote on his salary, Corbett said. These out-of-town board members are friends and mentors to Furtick and, like him, lead growing megachurches. They include Perry Noble of New Spring Church in Anderson, S.C., and Jack Graham of Prestonwood Baptist in Plano, Texas.

This board bases Furtick’s salary, Corbett said, on a “compensation study formulated by an attorney’s office” that’s not tied to the church.

In 2012, the church’s personnel costs, for about 100 employees, totaled nearly \$6 million, according to Elevation’s annual report...

[To further hide Furtick’s actual salary from the public](#):

Yet, Elevation Church has asked volunteers and employees alike to sign a confidentiality agreement, which threatens to sue if volunteers and members disclose church finances

In a September 29, 2013 sermon [told the Elevation Church congregation](#):

“I’ve been feeling sorry for myself because they tell me there’s this news reporter trying to do this story where he wants to make our church look bad,” Now me and [my wife] Holly, this year, we’re building a house. We’ve been looking for a piece of land to build a house for our family for a long time. I’m real excited about it, but then I find out, this is crazy, the news is trying to fly this chopper over our house. I’m thinking to myself, first of all, it’s not that great of a house. I’m sure there’s better houses, if you’ve got to fly a chopper over somebody’s house.

“It started to mess with me a little bit because I thought this ain’t right. I didn’t even build that house with money from the church. I built it with money from my books and I gave money to the church from the books and you start getting real defensive and being like this ain’t right. This ain’t right,”

What ain’t right Pastor Furtick is you profiting off the gospel and church. The suggestion that his book deals and the church are completely separate is disingenuous. Would Furtick have the book deals if he wasn’t the pastor of the fast growing Elevation Church? Of course not. No one had even heard of Steven Furtick before the Elevation Church started growing. If there is one thing I know about Evangelicalism, it that it turns people like Furtick into pop stars. “*God*” is blessing Furtick, right? The size of his ~~penis~~ church is proof that God is on *Team Furtick*.

Furtick, while not a follower in the steps of Jesus, is most certainly a follower in the steps of countless megachurch pastors. Numerous megachurch pastors are millionaires and live lavish lifestyles. Their stories are what legends are made of. They are, in many ways, a typical capitalistic success story. Steven Furtick is the brand and it is doing well in Charlotte. As the Furtick brand expands to more and more Charlotte area

communities, surely it is right to ask whether the millions spent on the Furtick brand could be better spent on **actually** doing what Jesus did? (only 6-12% of church income is spent on actual outreach) You know **good works** that actually make a difference in the lives of the marginalized, the hungry, sick, and homeless. I suspect all that unheated square footage in Furtick's new palace, would house quite a few homeless people. But then, what would Furtick's rich neighbors think?

HT: [The Wartburg Watch for putting me on to this story](#)

If you would like to take an in-depth look at the “*numbers*” of Elevation Church, here is a [PDF](#) of the church's 2012 Annual Report. I found the report to be quite interesting. For example, almost 1 out of 3 dollars in income goes towards personnel. 12% of church income goes towards to what Elevation Church calls outreach. (this drops in half when you add the Banner Years Offering to the equation) Total operating income? \$20,360,132. An \$8,131,881 Banners Years Offering was taken to be used for expanding the Furtick brand. Actual **TOTAL** income? \$28, 587, 051 Business is good for the Furtick brand.