

Are Celebrity Pastors Selling Their Pulpits for Commercial Gain?

Many churches use visuals on stage while the pastor is delivering a sermon, but how about pulpits surrounded by advertisements for products, such as Cadillac or Monster Energy drinks?

“The thought is disgusting, but it is happening all the time, and it’s time we started pointing it out and objecting to the commercial corruption of the pulpit,” writes Christian blogger James Duncan.

He continues, “While a lot of deserved attention is being paid these days to the deceptive marketing behind many celebrity pastors’ books, another aspect of the whole endeavor reveals the primacy of commercial interests. Not only are pastors not telling the truth about how they’re earning money, they’re not proclaiming the truth until and unless they’re earning money.”

Duncan, an associate professor of communication at Anderson University in South Carolina, argues that although pastors admittedly spend a long time writing books, they should offer their ideas to their congregation for free.

“Why not offer the results of their church-funded research to God’s people as soon as they were confident enough to put it to paper?” he asks.

He points out that it took nearly a year for Perry Noble’s book *Unleash* to be published. He coordinated a corresponding sermon series at the time of the release, but why did he wait nearly a year to share his ideas with his congregation?

Duncan argues that not preaching on a topic until a pastor’s

book is released abandons the sheep.

"Jesus told Peter to feed his sheep. Paul told Timothy to preach the Word. Multnomah Books told Pastor Steven [Furtick] to do neither until bookstores started counting sales for the *New York Times*," he writes.

Pastors should write books, Duncan says, but they should fulfill the role of pastor first.

He also argues that postponing sermon series until a book's commercial release to drive sales is unethical.

"Pastor-authors are earning money from the church's regular tithes and offerings, then supplementing that with the royalties that flow to them from book sales," he explains.

"Where this gets especially murky is when the churches participate in the marketing process itself, apparently spending tithe money on the books, essentially laundering charitable giving into commercial profit," Duncan adds.

He concludes by saying that "preaching on topics only when they know they'll get royalty payments tells us what's important to these pastors and brings into question whether they are qualified for church leadership."

Duncan points to Titus 1:8, where Paul tells Titus church leaders must not be greedy for gain, and 2 Timothy 3:3, where he tells Timothy he must not be a lover of money.