

Rick Warren: Battling Internet Scammers 'Making Money on My Son's Death'

It isn't enough that after four months, **Rick Warren** understandably struggles with grief daily over the suicide death of his 27-year-old son, Matthew. But recently, the senior pastor at **Saddleback Church** has also been forced to battle the scammers who have attempted to profit from Matthew's death on the Internet.

Warren said on his Facebook page this week that more than 200 phony social media pages have been created to solicit funds to memorialize his son—179 of which have been “shut down.”

“We're still working on the rest,” Warren wrote. “Thanks to you friends for reporting them and thanks for ‘LIKING’ this real page. I appreciate you so much for your help. God bless you.”

Matthew Warren committed suicide in April after a lifelong battle with mental illness.

Rick Warren is only one of many prominent pastors who have been targeted by scammers with fake social media pages to solicit funds in their name. Joel Osteen of Lakewood Church in Houston, John Hagee of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio and Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research are among those who have been targeted.

Stetzer told CNN that scammers play upon the emotions and sympathies of unwitting victims. But, he said, the content of the postings should make people leery before acting on the request.

“I think it's important that people realize that there are a

lot of evil people in the world,” Stetzer said. “The posts really weren’t like I would post, and secondarily, they began to contact people and those people said, ‘That really doesn’t sound like you at all.’”

Facebook removes any fake pages when those pages are reported, the company’s website says.

Warren has since returned to the pulpit. After a 16-week absence, he told members of his congregation that his daughter, Amy, told him, “Satan picked the wrong family to pick on.”

“I am in a family of spiritual redwoods. I mean, they are giants of faith,” he said.