

Statement of Formal Charges and Issues

by Pastor Dave Kraft

Introduction

Mark, as I have said earlier in an email to you, Susan and I see you as an extremely gifted writer and communicator. God has used you immensely in the lives of thousands of people all over the world through your preaching, books and other writings. We have personally been blessed under your teaching.

You have shown us kindness and grace from day one when we first traveled to Seattle and you and Grace took us to dinner at Palisades. We both feel great affection and admiration for you which makes what follows here that much more difficult to say, but must be said for the sake of the gospel, my own conscience and the future well-being of Mars Hill Church.

This document contains three main sections: formal charges, supporting materials, and issues. Formal charges are stated with confidence. Issues are questions being advanced for serious consideration, but not necessarily charges. The answers to those questions could possibly provide cause for additional charges or further evidence to establish the current charges.

Formal Charges

Per Article 12 of the Bylaws of Mars Hill Church, I hereby file formal charges against Pastor Mark Driscoll, the primary preaching and teaching pastor for the Church that, if investigated and found to be true, could disqualify him from his position as an elder in the Church, based on the biblical requirements of an elder. As such, it is my understanding that these charges shall be referred to the board of overseers.

I believe that Pastor Mark Driscoll has violated the following biblical qualifications of an elder as a result of an ongoing pattern of attitude and behavior.

Though he has not personally sinned against me in these ways, I have come to know of many such offenses against others and I am confident that if witnesses were interviewed **(which I trust will happen)**, these charges would be thoroughly established.

I do not intend to stand as a lone witness, but believe these charges will be established by many witnesses, according to 1 Timothy 5:19 and Deuteronomy 19:15. I have already confirmed seven people who are willing to testify to these charges if given an opportunity to speak openly.

In the biblical passages cited here, a single instance might not be a disqualifier from eldership; but an established pattern of such behavior supported and substantiated by eyewitnesses would be. I believe that Pastor Mark has a long-standing pattern of violating these leadership qualities and has done so with dozens of individuals.

1. **Self-controlled and disciplined** (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:8)

Self-control and *disciplined* are related and relevant to controlling one's emotional impulses. The Greek for disciplined is *enkrates*, which BDAG describes as "pertaining to having one's emotions, impulses, or desires under control, self-controlled, disciplined."

- a. Pastor Mark exhibits lack of self-control by his speech and by verbally assaulting others.
- b. He also demonstrates lack of discipline with his words and the judgmental comments he makes, and has made, about his own elders and other leaders. This may be characterized as slander. Scripture condemns speaking slanderously, or "speaking evil," of others (Rom. 1:30, 3:8; cf. Tit. 3:2).

If an elder—or anyone else—causes injury to others by speaking ill or evil of them to anyone, it should be regarded as slander. A single instance of slander might be confronted, repented of, forgiven, and reconciled. This does not necessarily disqualify an elder. However, if there were a *pattern* of slander, we would have to ask: Is this elder self-controlled with his tongue? It is out of the abundance of the heart, after all, that the mouth speaks (Luke 6:45). The injury to others is serious. The pattern suggests something wrong, not only in the tongue, but in the heart of that elder.

2. **Not domineering** (1 Pet. 5:3): See examples from Sam Storms below, which I believe describe Pastor Mark's leadership.

3. **Not violent, but gentle** (1 Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7)

- a. Pastor Mark exhibits anger and ungraceful ways of dealing with those with whom he disagrees and who disagree with him. He does this by (among other ways) putting people down.
- b. I believe that the way Pastor Mark leads has created a culture of fear instead of a culture of candor and safety. People are afraid to ask questions or challenge ideas.



- c. Pastor Sutton in a Full Council Elder's meeting on January 15, 2013 indicated that we have a culture of fear. I believe that Pastor Mark is the source and perpetuator of these widespread fears.
- d. Pastor Mark is verbally abusive to people who challenge him, disagree with him, or question him.
- e. Pastor Mark uses words to demean, attack or disparage others.
- f. I believe that few (including Mark himself) would characterize him as gentle.

Some definitions for *plektes*, translated "not violent," include "pugnacious person, bully" (BDAG), "striker; pugnacious person, bully, quarrelsome person (ANLEX), "a person who is pugnacious and demanding" (Louw-Nida). Merriam-Webster defines *pugnacious* as: "having a quarrelsome or combative nature."

"The degrees of modes of violence that the word might express are numerous (bullying, verbal abuse, angry pushing, and shoving), and prohibition should be regarded as widely as possible" (Taken from Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*.)

It seems unlikely that one could establish a disqualifying charge of "violent" based on a single instance. The definitions clearly indicate a pattern of life, character traits that show up in various interactions with people. It's the *pattern* that results in disqualification; while it may well be that no single instance would warrant a disqualifying charge.

4. **Respectable** (1 Tim. 3:2)

I can no longer respect Pastor Mark Driscoll and submit to his leadership as a result of his persistent sinful behavior toward others. I believe we would discover that many other Mars Hill elders and leaders have also lost respect for Pastor Mark's leadership.

5. **Not arrogant** (Titus 1:7)

Pastor Mark has stated in public numerous times that he is guilty of pride. It is one thing to acknowledge sin, quite another to repent of sin and experience change through the power of the Holy Spirit.

6. **Not quick-tempered** (Titus 1:7) Many Mars Hill elders have witnessed this on numerous occasions.

Supporting Material

Sam Storms on Domineering

In his April 2011 lectures at Re:Train, Sam Storms provided a list of examples to illustrate what "domineering" might look like. The following are selected examples from his talk that I believe are an especially good description of way Pastor Mark has led over many years. (The full list of Storms' points are available on my web site here:

<http://davekraft.squarespace.com/posts/2011/5/2/not-domineering.html>.

- A man can "domineer" or "lord it over" his flock by intimidating them into doing what he wants done by holding over their heads the prospect of loss of stature and position in the church.
- A pastor domineers whenever he uses the sheer force of his personality to overwhelm others and coerce their submission.
- A pastor domineers whenever he exploits the natural tendency people have to elevate their spiritual leaders above the average Christian. That is to say, many Christians mistakenly think that a pastor is closer to God and more in tune with the divine will. The pastor often takes advantage of this false belief to expand his power and influence.
- He domineers by building into people a greater loyalty to himself than to God. Or he makes it appear that not to support him is to work at cross-purposes with God.
- He domineers by short-circuiting due process, by shutting down dialogue and discussion prematurely, by not giving all concerned an opportunity to voice their opinion.
- He domineers by establishing an inviolable barrier between himself and the sheep. He either surrounds himself with staff who insulate him from contact with the people or withdraws from the daily affairs of the church in such a way that he is unavailable and unreachable. Related to the above is the practice of some in creating a governmental structure in which the senior pastor is accountable to no one, or if he is accountable it is only to a small group of very close friends... [Dave's Note: My point here is not to question the motives of those friends or fellow elders, but to state that the creation of this governmental structure is an expression of Pastor Mark's domineering.]
- He domineers by viewing the people as simply a means to the achieving of his own personal ends.
- Ministry is reduced to exploitation. The people exist to "serve his vision" rather than he and all the people together existing to serve the vision of the entire church.
- He domineers by making people feel unsafe and insecure should they desire to voice an objection to his proposals and



policies.

Ed Stetzer Blogs

I believe that Ed Stetzer's blog series on The Resurgence, "Considering (and Surviving) Unhealthy Christian Organizations" clearly describes the environment at Mars Hill Church. I believe this is due to Pastor Mark's behavior and attitudes as demonstrated in the way he leads. (These blogs are available here:

1. <http://theresurgence.com/2012/09/19/considering-and-surviving-unhealthy-christian-organizations-part-1>
2. <http://theresurgence.com/2012/10/04/considering-and-surviving-unhealthy-christian-organizations-part-2>
3. <http://theresurgence.com/2012/10/18/considering-and-surviving-unhealthy-christian-organizations-part-3>

Here are some main points from Ed's blogs on The Resurgence that I think should make us sit up and take notice:

1. People often know of the glaring character problems of the leader, but no one can speak truth to power.
2. Many times, the leader gets a pass for the fruit of his/her leadership because of some overwhelming characteristic: preaching ability, intelligence, ability to woo others, or more.
3. People rationalize that the good they are experiencing is worth the abuse they are receiving.
4. The organization has to be willing to listen to its constructive critics.
5. The organization has to admit that sometimes unhealthy cultures come from unhealthy leaders.

I would encourage those considering an investigation to read these three posts by Ed Stetzer in their entirety.

Issues

1. Have the public statements made about elders who have recently left reflected the relevant truth of the matter, or have they covered up significant concerns? If the latter, has this been sinfully deceptive, possibly in the sense of telling a truth that hides a more significant concern?
2. Does the legal document these staff elders have been asked to sign upon exit amount to a "gag order" that perpetuates such a cover up?
3. Is Pastor Mark guilty of "slander" because of the way he's spoken about John Piper, Tim Keller, John MacArthur and other Christian leaders in elder meetings?
4. Is it wise or foolish that Pastor Mark made a public statement calling into question President Obama's belief in the Bible? Does Mark know for a fact that the President doesn't believe the Bible?
5. When Mark has been confronted with personal sin by those he's deeply hurt, has he expressed genuine repentance and sorrow, and sought their forgiveness?
6. With the exceptionally high amount of turnover in recent months at Mars Hill Church (especially among lead pastors and elders), should this be of concern that something is not right at the heart of who we are and the way we carry out ministry?

My bottom line desire in all of this is that the Holy Spirit would convict pastor Mark Driscoll of his sin and enable him to repent demonstrated by changed biblical behaviors and attitudes so that Mars Hill Church will have a healthier leadership and a healthier culture.

May 10, 2013