

Critics chide Warren, ‘pastor’ of Murdoch, over porn channels: Warren accused of applying double standard

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Author-pastor Rick Warren is under fire for failing to discipline media giant Rupert Murdoch for owning and expanding pornographic channels for satellite TV. The Australian-born owner of Fox Broadcasting and cable TV networks isn't a member of Warren's 20,000-member Saddleback Church, but Warren is on record as claiming to be Murdoch's pastor.

A reprint of a September 12, 2005, article from *New Yorker* magazine appears on Warren's Web site, [Pastors.com](#), in which Warren describes having dinner with former General Electric chair and CEO Jack Welch.

“He [Welch] came to church, and we had dinner,” Warren said. “I’ve been kind of mentoring him on his spiritual journey. And he said to me, ‘Rick, you are the biggest thinker I have ever met in my life. The only other person I know who thinks globally like you is Rupert Murdoch.’ And I said, ‘That’s interesting. I’m Rupert’s pastor! Rupert published my book!’”

In November 2006, the *Orange County Register* asked Warren about his friendship with Murdoch, whose News Corp. subsidiary publishes Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Life* but also tabloid newspapers featuring topless women.

“I don't have to agree with 100 percent of what another person does in order to work with them on the 20 percent that we do agree on,” Warren said. The article went on to note that Murdoch was among the first to support Warren's PEACE plan, donating \$2 million to the global humanitarian effort launched by Warren's church in 2005.

Murdoch, with past acquisitions including the Christian Broadcasting Network, which he bought from televangelist Pat Robertson for \$1.9 billion in 1997, reportedly is

increasingly interested in the profitability of porn.

The British magazine *The Business* reported in February that Murdoch's British Sky Broadcasting (BSkyB)—with 7.2 million subscribers, one of his most profitable ventures—quietly built a stable of pornographic channels it owns and operates, after years of hosting adult programming from third-party vendors.

The revelation brought new criticism from some of Warren's conservative critics, who view his seeker-friendly, purpose-driven worship model as watering down the gospel.

Chris Rosebrough, who heads the Christian Accountability Network, issued a press release calling on Warren to discipline Murdoch for expanding his pornographic channels.

"Rupert Murdoch is a born-again Christian and Rick Warren claims to be his pastor," Rosebrough said. "As a Christian, Murdoch is committing an egregious sin by owning, expanding and profiting from pornographic channels, and Rick Warren, as his pastor, has a biblical duty to call Murdoch to repentance and/or put him out of the church."

Another Warren watchdog, Ken Silva, pastor of Connecticut River Baptist Church in Claremont, New Hampshire, and president of an "Internet discernment" work called Apprising Ministries, joined in.

If Warren considers himself to be Murdoch's pastor, Silva reasoned, he must consider Murdoch to be a born-again Christian, and that it is not necessary for Murdoch to be a member of Warren's church for him to be called his pastor.

"And this is exactly why I am now asking," Silva wrote, "Rick Warren, as Rupert Murdoch's pastor when are you going to publicly discipline Murdoch for his exploitation of women?"

WorldNetDaily.com, a conservative journalism site, posted a story May 10 saying neither Murdoch's company nor Warren responded to e-mails requesting comment.

Warren's ministry has not ignored the pornography industry. His Pastors.com Ministry Toolbox section regularly monitors the porn business. Warren recently explained his church's policy on dealing with a staff member who has to be disciplined because of sin.

“Sin is to be confessed only as widely as it affects others,” Warren said. “Private sin requires only private confession to God. Personal sin that involves others requires interpersonal confession to the people involved. Public sins (those that affect a large group of people in our congregation) regrettably must be dealt with publicly as a warning to others. The Bible says that those who teach are held to a greater public accountability because of their visibility to those they teach.”

Warren’s critics speculate that one reason he might be tempted to employ a double standard is because Murdoch’s empire also includes Zondervan, publisher of Warren’s *Purpose Driven Life*, which has been on the *New York Times* bestseller list for 45 weeks and has sold more than 11 million copies.

Warren and Zondervan are reportedly working on an updated and revised edition of Warren’s 1995 book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, due out later this year.

This isn’t the first time Murdoch has been accused of profiting from smut. Murdoch’s News Corp. owns DirecTV, and Gail Dines, a professor of sociology and women’s studies at Boston’s Wheelock College, says that the satellite TV company makes more than \$200 million a year in pay-per-view pornography.

In mainstream news media circles, Murdoch is known for his media outlets that favor politically conservative views—notably the Fox News Channel. The business mogul most recently offered \$5 billion to buy the *Wall Street Journal*. -Bob Allen, *EthicsDaily.com*