

IX 9Marks

How Can Our Church Find a Faithful Pastor?



**Mark
Dever**

Church Questions

Endorsements for the Church Questions Series

“Christians are pressed by very real questions. How does Scripture structure a church, order worship, organize ministry, and define biblical leadership? Those are just examples of the questions that are answered clearly, carefully, and winsomely in this new series from 9Marks. I am so thankful for this ministry and for its incredibly healthy and hopeful influence in so many faithful churches. I eagerly commend this series.”

R. Albert Mohler Jr., President, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Sincere questions deserve thoughtful answers. If you’re not sure where to start in answering these questions, let this series serve as a diving board into the pool. These minibooks are winsomely to-the-point and great to read together with one friend or one hundred friends.”

Gloria Furman, author, *Missional Motherhood* and *The Pastor’s Wife*

“As a pastor, I get asked lots of questions. I’m approached by unbelievers seeking to understand the gospel, new believers unsure about next steps, and maturing believers wanting help answering questions from their Christian family, friends, neighbors, or coworkers. It’s in these moments that I wish I had a book to give them that was brief, answered their questions, and pointed them in the right direction for further study. Church Questions is a series that provides just that. Each booklet tackles one question in a biblical, brief, and practical manner. The series may be called Church Questions, but it could be called ‘Church Answers.’ I intend to pick these up by the dozens and give them away regularly. You should too.”

Juan R. Sanchez, Senior Pastor, High Pointe Baptist Church, Austin, Texas

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How Can I Love Church Members with Different Politics?, Jonathan Leeman and Andy Naselli

How Can Our Church Find a Faithful Pastor?, Mark Dever

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What If I Don't Desire to Pray?, John Onwuchekwa

What If I Don't Feel Like Going to Church?, Gunner Gundersen

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Why Should I Join a Church?, Mark Dever

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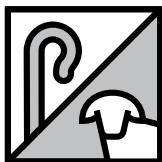
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He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

Ephesians 4:11–12



We tend to esteem someone's final words. So consider David's final words from 2 Samuel 23:3–4:

The God of Israel has spoken;
the Rock of Israel has said to me:
When one rules justly over men,
ruling in the fear of God,
he dawns on them like the morning light,
like the sun shining forth on a
cloudless morning,
like rain that makes grass to sprout
from the earth.

Spiritual authority wielded in a way that honors God brings flourishing and life. Conversely,

spiritual authority wielded dishonorably wreaks havoc and devastation. Sadly, many Christians know this from experience. Far from the morning dawn or a much-needed dew, ungodly or ill-equipped pastors bring darkness and destruction to their churches. They hurt people. But a godly pastor, a true shepherd, is one of Christ's greatest gifts to his people (Eph. 4:11; cf. Acts 20:28).

Friend, if your church is currently looking for a pastor, pray that God would send your church a man who knows how to wield authority—not for his own sake but for the spiritual good of others.

Your church needs a godly pastor.

In this little book, I'll provide some biblical and practical advice on how to find a godly pastor. We'll examine who should lead the search for the new pastor, what to look for in a pastor, and then consider some practical steps on how to move forward.¹ But before we begin, let me take a moment to address the pastors on their way out. Despite what many think, the outgoing senior pastor plays a critical role in the success of your church's transition to the next pastor.

A Quick Word to Current Senior Pastors

To any pastors who may be reading, let me remind you—yes, you!—of your own responsibilities in helping your church find your successor.²

Unless you're pastoring your church when the Lord comes back, you will always be preparing your congregation for the next man. Sadly, many pastors seem utterly indifferent to how their churches will fare after they've gone.

But one of the most important parts of a pastor's ministry is helping to secure a sound man to follow him. Robert Murray M'Cheyne once told his congregation: "Changes are coming. Every eye before me shall soon be dim in death. Another pastor shall feed this flock, another singer lead the Psalm, another flock shall fill this fold."³

Brother pastor, do you speak to your congregation like that? Do you make them aware of the speedy passage of time and the obligations that puts on us? How are you seeking your congregation's blessing and benefit beyond your own ministry there? Do you truly love the sheep or just the paycheck?

Let me quickly suggest three things you ought to be doing right now to prepare your church to transition well to the next man.

First, prepare your church for the next pastor by teaching your congregation that godly elders are a gift to the church.⁴ In other words, raise up other leaders. As you establish elders, remind your people to be thankful for each of their shepherds, not just the senior pastor. Go out of your way to ensure that you build your ministry around the Bible and not around your own cult of personality. Diminish the number of times you preach so that other capable men in your congregation can fill the pulpit. This will help your congregation get accustomed to hearing preaching that's not yours. Cultivate in your people an appetite for *sound preaching*, not just *your preaching*.

Second, prepare for your transition by making sure you're financially prepared to no longer have your current job. I cannot tell you how many times I've heard a pastor keep his job when he feels burnt-out because he doesn't know how else he's going to make a living. That should never happen.

Finally, when it comes time to leave, suggest someone (either from inside or outside the church) that you think would be a suitable replacement. This is faithfulness, not interference. Shepherding your church through this decision will be one of the last ways to *love* your congregation. Of course, sometimes the Lord calls shepherds away swiftly, like when a man dies. Generally speaking, however, a shepherd shouldn't assume his charge is complete until he does everything within his power to secure a worthy successor.

Who Should Lead the Search?

Let's turn now to consider *how* a church should find its next pastor. The most pressing question: Who should lead this search? Most churches, at least in America, appoint pastoral search committees to this task.

I know many dear, godly folks who have served in such committees around the country and even around the world. This task is momentous, and many search committee members give

The gift of a godly pastor cannot be overemphasized, but the task of finding a faithful pastor is daunting. In this booklet, seasoned pastor Mark Dever offers clear, biblical insight to churches in search of new leadership by providing six characteristics to look for in a new pastor, along with eleven strategies to implement during the search process.

Church Questions is a series that seeks to provide ordinary Christians with sound and accessible biblical teaching by answering common questions they have about church life. Each volume offers biblical answers and practical applications with the goal of nurturing healthy church practice and commitment.

Mark Dever (PhD, Cambridge University) is the senior pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC, and president of 9Marks (9Marks.org). Dever has authored over a dozen books and speaks at conferences nationwide.

CHURCH RESOURCES

