
THE PURPOSE DRIVEN GOSPEL

INTRODUCTION. What I am about to describe is commonly called the Seeker Friendly way of doing Church. Though there are plenty of others like Bill Hybels of Willow Creek, by far the most popular man in this field is Rick Warren and his Purpose Driven Life program. His book has sold close to 20 million copies. Thousands of churches use his "40 Days of Purpose" program and some 60,000 pastors are tied into his web page. It is not surprising that New Evangelicals, Liberals, Roman Catholics, etc. buy into this sort of thing for they are merely seeking numbers and whatever finances might come with it. However, we are seeing many once Fundamental Baptist churches joining this or similar schemes. While it is popular, and no doubt will continue to grow, it is deadly and far removed from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Actually, it sounds more like the "Gospel of Self-Esteem." The sad thing is few know the difference between the Gospel of salvation in the Bible and the "easy believism" gospel of our day. I will look at four major problems and errors of the program.

THE ABUSE AND MISUSE OF GOD'S WORD!

Warren loves modern versions, paraphrases, etc. Few take greater liberty with the Word of God than Rick Warren as seen in *The Purpose Driven Life*. He uses 38 or 39 different versions and paraphrases. The one he uses most *The Message*, is a very loose paraphrase by Eugene Peterson. It is often contrary to the KJV. John 3:36 in *The Message* says: "Whoever accepts and trusts the Son gets in on everything, life complete and forever." The KJV reads: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." *The Message* messes up the first part of the verse and leaves out the last part - the part about the wrath of God! I Cor.2:7 speaks of the wisdom of God which was "ordained before the world unto our glory." *The Message* says, God's wisdom is "...what God determined as the way to bring out his best in us." Sounds like the Self-Esteem gospel to me. The truth is the real Gospel of Jesus Christ never shows up in Warren's book but the Self-Esteem gospel appears over and over again. He also uses other far-out versions and paraphrases such as the *Contemporary English Version*, *New Living Translation*, *Living Bible*, etc.

PSYCHOLOGICAL GOSPEL PREDOMINATES. On a number of occasions, Warren makes statements like this: "You must build life on eternal truths not pop-psychology." But the book is literally filled with pop-psychology. He says on p.25, "You are who you are for a reason. You're part of an intricate plan. You're a precious

and perfect unique design, called God's special woman or man...You're just what He wanted to make..." You're perfect? I will tell you one thing, that's not in the Bible! Here's another piece of pop-psychology: "The moment you were born into the world, God was there as an unseen witness, smiling at your birth...When you fully understand this truth, you will never again have a problem with feeling insignificant." The book is full of this: "You only bring enjoyment to God by being you. Anytime you reject any part of yourself, you are rejecting God's wisdom and sovereignty in creating you." No wonder this program is so popular, it is designed to build up your ego and make you acceptable to God just as you are, which is exactly what the worldly crowd wants. There's no mention of sin, nor will you find the crucified life here!

The psychological approach is the underlying theme of the book and program. Warren espouses the four basic temperaments; everyone comes under one of them. This is rooted in psychology (and mythology), but has no basis in fact. Warren says, "God made introverts and extroverts...thinkers and non- thinkers..." (So, you can't help what you are). Then, he assigns these supposed different temperaments to individuals in the Bible. "Peter is sanguine. Paul was a choleric. Jeremiah was melancholy..." He says Paul had bouts with depression. Gideon had a problem with low self-esteem. Even Jesus is viewed from the bias of psychology. Warren claims Jesus served "from a secure self image." Washing the disciples' feet "didn't threaten His self image." And this program is not about psychology? It seems to me that is all it is about! It certainly is not about the Gospel found in the Bible. Where can you find God endeavoring to build up anyone's low self-esteem? The plain truth is most esteem themselves far too highly. The Bible says, "There is none that doeth good, no not one." Also, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." You have got to humble yourself to be saved - "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Ps.34:18.

ECUMENICAL IN CHARACTER. It is obvious that Rick Warren's program is designed to please just about every form of Christianity in existence - except true Christianity! When you have a program that pleases everyone, it cannot possibly be related to the true Gospel of God. Not only Evangelicals are buying into this modern gospel, but Roman Catholic churches are using it also. That alone tells you that it cannot be true to the Word of God. Warren quotes approvingly many avowed Catholics such as Brother Andrew, Madame Guyon,

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Mother Theresa, St. John of the Cross, Henri Nouwen, etc. Here is a piece of Warren's advice from Catholicism: "You must train your mind to remember God... Benedictine monks use the hourly chimes of a clock to remind them to pause and pray 'the hourly prayer.'" Besides this, you will find counsel from William James, an early leader in the field of psychology, Albert Sweitzer the very liberal humanitarian (he believed in pantheism, i.e. that God is in everything; he wouldn't kill a bug), Aldous Huxley (ultra free-thinker and free-liver), and others.

How sad that many Fundamentalists (if they be Fundamentalists) are getting involved with this heresy. Of course, when one writes as we do concerning this and other modern heresies, most people think that you are just nit-picking. When you compare the writings of Warren with the Bible it is like night and day. Unfortunately, not too many know anything about the Bible and a host of professing Christians could care less. They want to do what feels good, they want to do whatever they feel like doing. I want to emphasize that word *feel*, because that is the basis of this whole movement. They are trying to make people feel good so they will get saved. But the truth is, it can't be done! It is not a matter of feeling but of faith! To be saved one must believe what God says about him, that he is a poor, lost, hopeless sinner. Then, he must repent and receive Christ as his Savior from sin and hell. You will not find any of this in *The Purpose Driven Life*. Instead, you'll be told how good you are and that God likes you just the way you are.

ANOTHER FALSE GOSPEL. Warren's book presents an alternative to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and is a false gospel - See Gal. 1:8,9. While he claims to disavow pop-psychology, in reality, he is really promoting the psychological Self-Esteem gospel. There is little wonder in this for he studied under the master of that man-centered, egotistical system, Robert Schuller. Sin, judgment, hell, repentance, etc., are omitted from this gospel. One way Warren has of putting the gospel is as follows: "If you learn to love and trust God's Son, Jesus, you will be invited to spend the rest of eternity with him..." That is not the Gospel! The unregenerate man cannot love God. The problem is, he loves himself; it is futile to ask the sinner to love God. Warren also writes: "Real life begins by committing yourself completely to

Christ." On p.137 he says, "You become a Christian by committing your life to Christ." Though few know the difference, that is not the Gospel. I remember years ago when Billy Graham began his ecumenical journey, instead of the invitation to repent and believe the Gospel of Christ, he would ask the people to "commit your life to Christ, come and reaffirm your confirmation vows." In *The Purpose Driven Life* all one has to do is "pray the prayer." Warren says, "...pray the prayer that will change your eternity. 'Jesus I believe in you, I receive you.' If you sincerely meant that prayer, congratulations. Welcome to the family of God." Where is the Gospel in that prayer?

There are so many problems with this book; it's difficult to catalog them all. However, we will look at a few of the other faulty teachings in *The Purpose Driven Life*. Warren actually teaches pantheism, that is, that God is in everything. He quotes the *New Century Version*: "He (God) rules everything, and is everywhere, and is in everything." God is not in the trees, animals, etc. That is a heathen philosophy. Warren says, "One way is to use 'breath prayers' throughout the day, as many Christians have done for centuries. You choose a brief sentence or simple phrase that can be repeated to Jesus in one breath: 'You are with me.' 'I receive your grace.' 'I want to know you.' etc. Pray it as often as possible so it is rooted deep in your heart." It sounds like psychology and the idea of eastern religion "mantras" to me. Have you ever heard of true born-again Bible believers doing such a thing? Hindus, Roman Catholics and other mystics, Yes, but not true believers in Jesus Christ and His Word.

A FINAL WORD. Warren's gospel is the psychological gospel of Self-Esteem. Little wonder it is so popular. While it is not popular, I will stick with the Gospel in the pure Word of God. It is the only Gospel that will save your soul, in fact, it is the only Gospel - there is no other. It is the Gospel that condemns the sinner and calls him to repent and believe the Gospel of Christ. And what is that? **"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."** I Cor.15:3,4. Please note: CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS! Have you been saved from your sins through the Christ of the Bible and HIS GOSPEL?

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