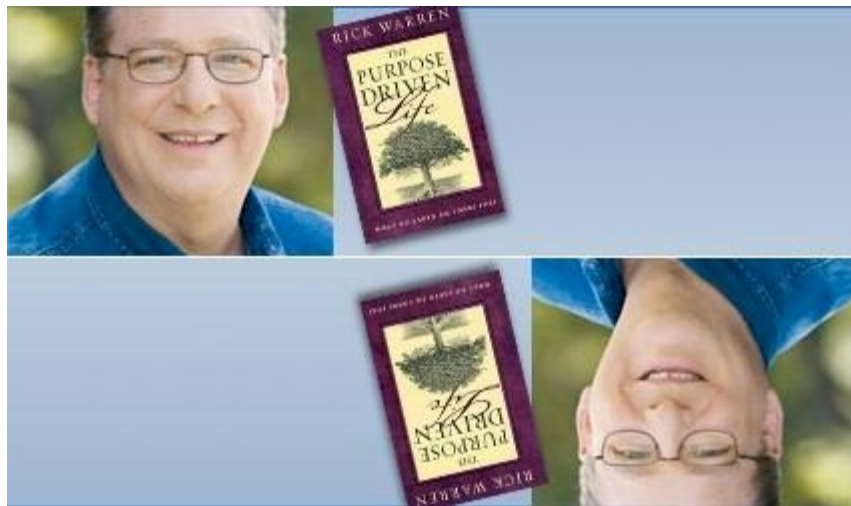


Examining the

PURPOSE DRIVEN

Philosophy



How Rick Warren has turned the Gospel upside down

By Eric Barger

Eric Barger's **TAKE A STAND!** MINISTRIES

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The following is the text of an email I received from a person who is in the leadership of a major Christian conference that I have spoken at in the past here in the United States. "Jane" (not her real name) became concerned over the title of a message I had submitted for their 2006 conference. The message is called "The REAL Purpose of the Church - What the Purpose Driven Life didn't tell you."

- Eric Barger

In a message dated 09/28/2005 9:52:42 PM Pacific Daylight Time, *****@aol.com writes:

Hi Eric:

It has been a long time. It looks like the Lord has blessed you Big Time!

From the view of the Workshop Chairman, I have a problem with the seminar on "The Real Purpose of the Church - What the Purpose Driven Life didn't tell you." I am at Saddleback and can see God moving in the hearts of soooo many people. I do the "Shape Interviews"...placing women in the Ministry. There is so much love and humbleness on the staff as well as the people I work with. When Pastor Rick said his father told him to "win one more for Jesus," that was my answer. People do misunderstand this ministry.

Tell me more about this.

***God Bless,
Jane***

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Hi Jane,

Thanks for writing back so promptly. I appreciate the opportunity to dialog with you on this most important topic, "The REAL Purpose of the Church."

For the past few months I have been speaking nationwide on "The REAL Purpose of the Church" as a part of my Take A Stand! discernment series. Please understand that in undertaking this topic I didn't go looking for a "cause" or wish to simply be controversial or cantankerous. I originally began to investigate the Purpose Driven philosophy primarily because of the growing controversy surrounding it and also because so many people had personally contacted me with questions concerning Dr. Warren's teachings.

We are an apologetics and discernment ministry and find there is much confusion about The Purpose Driven Life (PDL) and The Purpose Driven Church (PDC) in relation to sound biblical doctrine, history and standards for Christian practice. Your email has frankly spurred me to research much further and take the time to write out my basic position and some of my concerns. So this may be fairly lengthy, but the Purpose Driven controversy includes a wide range of issues that need to be addressed.

Regardless of whether I speak on this topic at the convention or not, my goal in this email is to provide you with more information to use in making a biblical decision about the PDL. I am trusting God that as I lay out my case the Holy Spirit will direct me and will also aid in helping you to work through any defensiveness or preconceived feelings which you may already have concerning Dr. Warren's teaching. I respect your position and your work and I know there must be many, many good people at Saddleback. I also know that untold numbers of pastors and lay teachers have either endorsed or used Dr. Warren's books and teaching. However, we dare not allow our judgment to be clouded by sheer popularity. Above all, I pray that you receive my words as your brother in Christ and that my viewpoint will be food for thought - and prayer.

I want to ease your mind a bit concerning my actual live seminar and new video/DVD ("The REAL Purpose of the Church"). When presenting the seminar, my approach does not overly fixate on Dr. Warren or go into great detail concerning his books or teaching. Instead, in my public ministry I have chosen to focus on what the New Testament clearly instructs concerning why we are here and what the goal and methodology of the Church is to be. With that said, allow me to lay out the apologetics case concerning the PDL and PDC for you here.

PURPOSE DRIVEN - YEA OR NAY?

In short, my position is that *The Purpose Driven Life* isn't all wrong; it's just not all right. And I believe that, without the direction and refinement of a pastor or leader, *The Pur-*

pose Driven Life can easily lead those who follow it to a detrimental conclusion about their purpose for life in general, the function of the local church and, most importantly, about salvation itself. I will document for you why I have come to these conclusions in the text below.

WHY WE MUST EXAMINE

Concerning whether or not Christians should speak publicly about teachers or teaching that is being presented in the church as “Christian,” consider that in the Church today there are two severely divided camps.

One camp believes that there should be little or no public discussion and certainly no ex-
pose’ carried out concerning the teachings being advanced in “Christian” circles.

While I strive for unity whenever and wherever able, unity at any cost is clearly not what the Scripture teaches and can be absolutely deadly.

Concerning the central doctrines of the faith (which literally comprise the core of Christianity and are mandatory to constitute biblical salvation), if the Church is not in step with the Bible it is an invitation for error to be birthed and then spread and do horrendous damage. In a time when many are just not willing or able to compare teaching and teachers to the Scriptures, this is occurring at an alarming rate. This can especially be so when a book like *The Purpose Driven Life* becomes so popular. When we see error, we need not be arrogantly dogmatic in denouncing it as some are but we do need to try to bring correction and sound warnings to those affected.

The Apostle Paul said: “*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*” (1 Thess. 5:21). Peter and James also exhorted us to examine carefully what is being taught to us, as did the Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus also warned the Church to be aware of teachers who would mislead. He made this warning an emphatic fourteen times.

The other of the two camps sadly denigrates others in the Body of Christ due to disagreements about peripheral doctrinal differences. Peripheral (or non-essential) doctrines would include eschatology (study of the end-times, rapture, etc.), methods of baptism (sprinkling vs. emersion), demonology, controversies over spiritual gifts and more. My position has been that it is absolutely tragic for authentically born-again believers to dispute, publicly malign, and break fellowship with those who disagree with them on peripheral doctrines. It’s one thing to dialog and disagree; it’s another thing to name others as “cultists” when their view of some peripheral doctrine is different from one’s own.

Through the years, I have had remarkable fellowship with people and churches from extremely diverse backgrounds. I have good friends who sprinkle in baptism and those who only believe in total emersion. I have fellowship with and teach in churches that believe in

the pre-tribulation position of eschatology and with others who see things from the post-trib side. One week I might be speaking in a Presbyterian Church and the next in the most vivid Pentecostal setting. Why? Because none of these peripheral issues are scripturally worthy of the breaking of fellowship. The truth is found in the famous quote commonly attributed to the third-century Church Father, Augustine, who we are told said, "*In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.*" I try to see things this way.

So the demarcation line for breaking of fellowship with teachers and their teaching should be, first, whether a teacher or teaching endorses or ignores the essential doctrines that are mandatory for salvation. This is exactly what *The Apostles Creed*¹ teaches. In this tried and true statement from the early days of the Church one can easily read the mandatory doctrines that literally comprise what it means to be a "Christian." The second issue that should be considered is whether a teacher or teaching introduces doctrines or philosophies to the Body that are destructive or that contradict or subvert the literal teaching found in the text of God's Word. In other words, is what is being said and endorsed by a teacher in line with the biblical and historic model concerning both essential doctrine and the practical operation of the Church of God?

Like Augustine, I choose to "major on the majors," knowing that what a person or church believes about peripheral doctrine is not going to get anybody to Heaven – or keep anybody out. This position is not always popular because many folks expect someone in my field of ministry to get on their peripheral bandwagon and beat their drum with them. And though apologists are often thought of as super-dogmatic on issues, I often take a long time evaluating my positions on issues and trends. This was indeed the case as I watched Dr. Warren's climb to notoriety. Frankly, I would much rather have just stayed out of the Purpose Driven controversy. However, after much study, much time and even more prayer, I was forced to abandon neutrality concerning *The Purpose Driven Church* and *The Purpose Driven Life*. The facts demonstrate that, sadly, we are not dealing in just peripherals here.

While I believe there are a number of relatively good things said in the PDL book, I am, along with a growing number of other apologists and ministries, very concerned about some of the teachings and accompanying philosophies found therein and the negative results that are now becoming apparent. As unpopular as it may be, the ministry of apologetics can never be aimed at what is popular, expedient, self-serving or bestselling. My duty has been, is now and forever will be to uphold the doctrines of the faith as expressed in God's Word, regardless of whether they may be deemed offensive or old-fashioned to some.

MIXED MESSAGES

The PDL begins by declaring that "it's not about us" and that "it's all about God." However, I am not the first person to notice that, to the contrary, the rest of the book proceeds to tell us that indeed, it IS all about us. Perhaps Dr. Warren really didn't intend to say one thing and do another, but honestly, the PDL is all about us and how God fits in instead of

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declaring that our lives should be all about God and how we need to fit in. This is illustrative of trying to appease the reader and appear genuine on an issue (read that as being orthodox) while systematically subverting and undermining the original position. That's called "say one thing and do another."

The PDL is a mixture of the so-called "feel good" gospel mixed with the underpinnings of liberal theology. It is the religious psychology that man wants to hear. This "here-and-now" philosophy mixed with Christian jargon and ideas completely focuses on our lives on Earth rather than on true worship and eternity. It has become the ultimate religious self-help book and does everything except instruct the believer to become selfless, as Jesus commanded.

When you read John Newton's classic song of conversion, proclaiming himself a "wretch," and compare it to the egocentric, self-absorbed gospels being currently passed off as "Christianity," the cavernous dichotomy becomes clear. Our lives here are but a grain of sand on the shores of eternity. How can the Church presume any other mission than to proclaim sound doctrine that converts the sinner and induces repentance?

*Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.*

*The world shall soon dissolve like snow,
The suns refuse to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Shall be forever mine.*

*When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.*

While I am more and more amazed at how seasoned Christians have been generally drawn to (may I even say "seduced by") Dr. Warren's teaching, I am equally concerned for how the overriding ideas in the PDL philosophy may affect baby Christians or those merely examining Christianity. Just like a rocket leaving planet Earth, if it's only a little off course at the start of the journey, one can rest assured that it will be tremendously off target by the end.

Let me address that word I used in the previous paragraph. I know the word "seduced" makes a lot of people angry when someone uses it as I just did. However, it is better to come to your senses and at least examine the possibilities of what I am saying here than

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to continue running full speed toward a cliff claiming that there is no problem ahead. It is a part of our Adamic nature that we sometimes have difficulty admitting past misconceptions or mistakenness. This is doubly true of those in leadership. I am not alone in these views, as you will see.

Noted Christian leaders such as R.C. Sproul, John MacArthur, David Wilkerson, Dr. Noah Hutchings, Dave Hunt, Chuck Missler and Pastor Chuck Smith have added their voices to a growing chorus concerned with the so-called "Emerging Church," "Seeker" and "Purpose Driven" movements. In mid-2006 Chuck Smith ordered that Calvary Chapel's online bookstore immediately discontinue selling all materials by Rick Warren, including *The Purpose Driven Life* and *The Purpose Driven Church*. The reason given states that Dr. Warren's teachings are in conflict with that of Pastor Chuck.²

I have only peripherally followed the teaching and ministry of John MacArthur, popular radio teacher and pastor of Grace Community Church in southern California, but he is completely correct in stating his concern with the PDL philosophy.

MacArthur said: *"...the thrust of the book is at odds with the message of Scripture...the true gospel is a call to self-denial, not self-fulfillment. The gospel is a message about redemption, not about life's purpose."*³

Though they lived decades before we were faced with "seeker" philosophies, Christian voices whose lives and ministries have stood the test of time sounded warnings (some prophetically) as to the peril the Church would soon be facing.

"There is a notion abroad that to win a man we must agree with him. Actually the exact opposite is true."

- A.W. Tozer

"Each generation has had to be converted by the man who contradicted it most. The man who is going in a wrong direction will never be set right by the affable religionist who falls into step beside him and goes the same way. Someone must place himself across the path and insist that the straying man turn around and go in the right direction."

- G.K. Chesterton – the prolific early 20th century Christian apologist

"A man on fire disturbs the world, a building on fire attracts the world, a community on fire changes the world. ...I consider that the chief dangers which confront the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell."

- William Booth, founder of The Salvation Army

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As I mentioned, MacArthur, Smith, Wilkerson, Hutchings and Sproul are not alone, either. There are many other contemporary leaders voicing concerns. Here's one:

"The Purpose Driven Life is mainly about by-products of Christianity rather than Christianity itself. This is my main beef, but it is also the central feature of the entire seeker sensitive movement that Warren now presides over. It isn't about the attributes of God or the saving work of Christ and "other boring stuff like that." It's about you. It's about what you can get out of Christianity. Rick Warren long ago conceded that the audience must be treated as consumers and must be appealed to out of their love for self. But, you say, The Purpose Driven Life begins by saying, "It's all about God, not about you." I praise the Lord for that statement, but it just does not ring true in a book that is all about you. Notice the "purpose" language -- this comes from psychology and management consulting, not from Jesus Christ. This is why The Purpose Driven Life is so popular, and also why its spiritual impact will be vastly less than its financial impact.

"So, in sum, let's not anoint Rick Warren as our national spiritual guru. His compromises with culture and intense pragmatism will not provide the substance that we need."

- [Rev. Richard Phillips](#)

Phillips is the chair of the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology and senior pastor at First Presbyterian Church Coral Springs, Margate, Florida. ⁴

NUMBER(S) PLEASE

If church attendance or book sales were the only proof of God's approval, then Dr. Warren would be king and the PDL would be mandatory reading for Christians. However, one can build a huge church today and in doing so "program" God right out of the building. The goal of pastors for their churches should never be sheer numbers, anyway. Nor should the goal be to craft adherents into a manmade, man-centered program that replaces authentic Christianity with a quest for self-fulfillment or Christianized psychotherapy. Shouldn't our successes be judged first on our complete submission to the Word of God, followed closely by whether or not we have produced real, powerful, Holy Ghost-filled disciples for Jesus?

Attendance numbers in today's church world seem to indicate one of two scenarios. Setting aside location, nice buildings and physical trimmings, denominational tradition, family ties and friends, the crowds come because either (1) a bonafide move of God is taking place in a church, resulting in an authentic revival, or (2) there is an effective marketing plan being utilized which may encompass a general theme or message that sounds Christian, or is trimmed with Christian themes, but is actually tailored to appeal to the carnal nature of man. The first is scriptural and the second obviously is not.

It is a well-known fact that, when he was starting his church, Dr. Warren canvassed the area around Saddleback, asking the general public what kind of church they would attend

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if it was located near them. He then took the responses (from Christians and non-Christians alike) and by public opinion began to formulate what the look and feel of Saddleback would become. It is one thing to draw from our modern culture the amenities and construction techniques to build a nice, modern facility, but I cannot think of a more dangerous precedent to set when it comes to deciding issues such as church doctrine or practice. To "give the people what they want" by appealing to their flesh is exactly opposite of what the Scripture teaches.

Presenting to the world an image of what carnal man wants Christianity to be may draw people into our buildings, but Bible believers should be aware that numbers never prove God's approval. When style replaces substance (i.e., appearances supercede sound doctrine), the table is set for trouble. Have we forgotten the many instances cited in the Old Testament, in particular, when the ungodly desires and demands of the people led to disastrous consequences? Yet the fact that his ideas appear to work (based primarily on numbers) seems to be the basis for a considerable amount of Dr. Warren's popularity among clergy. Now it appears that millions of Christians and upwards of 400,000 leaders have been brought to believe that, because the ideas in the PDC (in particular) bring a desired result, they must also be right. (After all, the PDL sold a record seventeen million copies in just nineteen months, bringing the total to twenty-four million in English alone as of January 10, 2006. It became a *New York Times* #1 bestseller and is now the bestselling nonfiction hardback book in history. ⁵) This dangerous barometer for church growth and practice might sadly have been anticipated, since we are in the midst of the perilous times referred to in the Bible as the "end-days." I know it's deemed as negative and anti-growth to speak about it, but the Apostle tells us that in these hours some in the Church will be lovers of themselves and be reduced to accepting only "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (II Tim. 3:1-9). There is no mistake that in this passage Paul is warning about what will take place within the Church. In fact, II Tim 3:5 could correctly read "a form of the religion of Christ." Here Paul instructs Timothy as to the proper response: "...from such turn away" (II Tim. 3:5b).

I firmly believe that we should do everything we can to make our churches appealing and inviting to the world around us - as long as what we do in no way forsakes biblical commands or disregards the full and complete counsel of Scripture. It is fairly obvious that Dr. Warren has already reaped some reproof because of the correlation that often exists concerning churches that experience growth while using gimmicks and that are at the same time taught to embrace either incomplete or incorrect doctrine. Warren went out of his way to defuse this criticism on page 53 of the PDL ("Myth 4") saying that Jesus drew large crowds but never compromised the truth to do so. Dr. Warren intimates that in drawing a large following he also never compromised truth. If this is so, then perhaps we need a definition of the word "truth."

While Dr. Warren may be teaching part of what Jesus taught, the Purpose Driven philosophy doesn't come close to representing the entire truth represented in Scripture. **Leaving**

essential truth out is as deadly as adding to it. Please take special note of points seven and eight in the section below, subtitled “Eleven Problems with Purpose Driven,” as well as my article, “The REAL Purpose of the Church.” The only way a defense of Dr. Warren’s teachings stands up is if what is considered “truth” is redefined. What should be especially troubling is that this is the same basis on which many of the cults are built.

As a researcher of aberrant religious systems, I can assure you that nearly all of the so-called “Christian” cults (those that have sprung up from some sort of biblical foundation) start with at least partial truth and then either ignore vital elements that comprise *complete* truth or introduce heresy, legalism, etc., to formulate and supplement their doctrines and practices. Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, The Way International, Christian Science, Armstrongism and others all have one thing in common: a basis of truth mixed with varying degrees of error and/or the omission of vital truths. Though these false belief systems have produced many followers, they have never produced any truly righteous fruit.

During a recent conversation with the pastor of a growing, biblically-based church, he mentioned to me his reservations about the church growth philosophy of the Purpose Driven movement. As we spoke he made an astute bottom-line observation, commenting, “*God isn’t interested in just a church full of people. He wants a people full of power.*” He was 100% correct.

ELEVEN PROBLEMS WITH PURPOSE DRIVEN

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

- Proverbs 14:12

Allow me to list a few of my concerns, the majority of which are not included in my seminar teaching on the issue. (Again, in “The Real Purpose of the Church” message I focus on the three-pronged “Great Commission,” which I’ll briefly outline below, rather than a heated expose of what I see as erroneous in Dr. Warren’s teaching.)

(1) SOUND DOCTRINE

Dr. Warren stated the following, speaking at The Pew and Religion Forum, May 23, 2005:

“Now the word “fundamentalist” actually comes from a document in the 1920s called the Five Fundamentals of the Faith. And it is a very legalistic, narrow view of Christianity...”

Here are the Five Fundamentals of the Faith Dr. Warren is referring to:

1. The Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ

2. The Virgin Birth

3. The Blood Atonement

4. The Bodily Resurrection

5. The Inerrancy of the Scriptures ⁶

The fact that Dr. Warren views the fundamentals of the faith as “narrow” and “legalistic” should offend every authentic, concerned Christian on the planet. This is a direct attack upon the very bedrock of Christianity itself. What Warren seems to be saying here is that Christianity as we know it and as it was delivered to us by the Apostles and the Lord Himself is either unneeded, outdated or just plain wrong. The problem is, in this age of lax attitudes and even more lax understanding of the Bible, those who claim to be Christians are either ill-prepared or unwilling to recognize the difference between truth and error and even less ready to confront teachings and leaders that misrepresent the Gospel.

If you think that Warren's comments at the Pew and Religion Forum in 2005 were a fluke, he went even further in an interview published in the *Philadelphia Enquirer* on Sunday, January 8, 2006.

Writer Paul Nussbaum ends the *Enquirer* article as follows: “Warren predicts that fundamentalism, of all varieties, will be ‘...one of the big enemies of the 21st century. Muslim fundamentalism, Christian fundamentalism, Jewish fundamentalism, secular fundamentalism - they're all motivated by fear.’”

Besides thinking that Christians who believe the basic fundamental doctrines as taught by the Bible are somehow in league with the worldview of radical Muslim terrorists, Dr. Warren now casts the past 100 years of Christianity as being woefully inadequate without his leadership. Warren stated: “*The New Testament says the church is the body of Christ, but for the last 100 years, the hands and feet have been amputated* (Really? Tell that to the missionaries, evangelists and lay people who have died for their faith over the last century!), *and the church has just been a mouth. And mostly, it's been known for what it's against.*” (Whoops...think he's talking about guys like me?) “*It's time for modern evangelicals to trade words for deeds and get similarly involved.*” ⁷ This is exactly the kind of social gospel garbage that the early liberals espoused when their movement sprung up, ironically about 100 years ago. It also sounds as if Dr. Warren believes that before he came along the Church was a miserable failure. This is a very dangerous view for a Christian leader to take of himself.

It is obvious that Dr. Warren is reacting to the pressure of a growing number of preachers and writers like me (some known and some not so well-known) who are coming around to see that this whole Purpose Driven thing just ain't what it's cracked up to be.

Please understand that I am not blaming the general widespread abrogation of Jesus' commands solely on Dr. Warren. However, it would appear that Warren is at least guilty of "selective theology," by which attempts are made to negate portions of the Bible, judging particular Scriptures and practices to be void, outdated or impractical for today. If that wasn't enough, though, now he's taken aim at the entire track record of Protestantism.

WHAT WOULD LUTHER SAY?

Considering his current popularity, it is not surprising that Dr. Warren's "P.E.A.C.E." initiative and the "New Reformation" he has proclaimed have gotten some traction.

Warren stated: *"My goal is the second Reformation of the church. Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther tacked his 95 theses to the door. The first Reformation was about creeds. This one is about deeds. This reformation needs to be about behavior, about what we should do. It's about the church's mission. I intend to give my life to this."*⁸

Dr. Warren wants to replace historic orthodox Protestant Christianity with an update. From his statements about the *"Five Fundamentals of the Faith,"*⁹ it is obvious that, besides making the Church "deed" oriented, he wants us to abandon doctrine, too. We've seen this before in the cults. Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses are two prime examples. Spiritual liberalism is perhaps the best example, though, as it replaces salvation by grace with the good works of man.¹⁰ Are the Purpose Driven philosophy and the "New Reformation" just a repackaging of liberalism aimed at dragging Evangelicals away from all of those pesky and oh-so-cumbersome biblical doctrines?

One has to wonder how biblically-minded Christians could support this "New Reformation" notion when it is examined further. Perhaps a better question we should ask is, **"What's wrong with the original Reformation given to us by Luther, Tyndale, Hus, Coverdale and the other Reformers?"**

Though at first glance the ideal of the P.E.A.C.E. initiative seems lofty, one has to deduce that what Dr. Warren is endorsing is actually a version of so-called "Kingdom Now" or "Dominion" theology as well as "Replacement theology" which, among other errors, completely allegorizes the literal return of the Lord and the role of Israel in the last days.

It should also deeply concern every believer when a recognized Christian leader proclaims that building new churches is more important than personal evangelism, as Dr. Warren has. I find it interesting that the link to the video of the sermon in which Dr. Warren made such a statement has been deleted from the Saddleback website. However, several weeks

ago I watched it in its entirety and replayed the portion in which he made the “building churches is more important than evangelism” announcement several times to make certain I heard him right. I was stunned. (Just for the record, the sermon was linked at: http://www.saddlebackfamily.com/peace/Services/110203_high.asx.)

Among other passages, I am reminded of Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders found in Acts 20:28 and following... *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them[selves]. Therefore watch...”*

This is clear beyond question. From within the Church shall come men who will gain fame and notoriety. Most will obviously not start out by teaching blatant heresy per se and may even have begun completely orthodox in doctrine. However, through circumstances such as cultural acceptance, popularity, time itself or a number of converging factors such as media-driven popularity, some will slowly (or perhaps in quantum leaps) distort the authentic truth. Some who get sideways in matters of theology and practice will have amassed sizeable followings through their books, radio and television programs or denomination.

Paul clearly identifies this in II Timothy 4:1-8.

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

- II Timothy 4:2-4

Some who know their Bibles will alertly separate themselves from these teachers who are leading others into error. Others, tragically, will be seduced, just as I Timothy 4:1 and II Timothy 4:1-8 indicate. However, because of our fallen human nature, it is now often considered narrow-minded to cite Biblical truths, and those doing so are misunderstood and branded by some as “trouble makers.” I believe this may relate to Paul's exhortation to Timothy in II Timothy 4:4 to “endure afflictions.”

Paul's warnings to Timothy are strikingly similar to the warning given in Isaiah 30 as well. This passage speaks prophetically to where many in the Church are today:

That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right

things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

- I saiah 30:9-11

Just as Isaiah warned, today many people want to hear what they want to hear, be it illusion or even blatant lies. In the current atmosphere, which is dictated to by the god of church growth, they expect the Church to present them with nice, pleasant, user-friendly messages that don't confront them with the sickness of sin and the righteous standards of a Holy God.

I realize how confrontational and even condemning it sounds to quote the passages from Acts 20 and II Timothy 4 when speaking of the most popular Christian leader in the world today, but the errors of those Paul is referring to are certain to be surrounded by lots of acceptable teaching. Otherwise, we'd ALL recognize it as false doctrine.

This is pretty blatant, though, isn't it? To call the fundamentals of the faith "narrow" and "legalistic" is an offense against the countless men and women who have given their lives for those same fundamental truths of Christianity through the centuries. The real tragedy is that Dr. Warren would have us abandon sound biblical doctrine, embrace unreliable and highly questionable paraphrases of the Bible (such as Eugene Peterson's *The Message*) and trade in Christianity as we know it - doctrine and practice - for Purpose Driven experiences.

It would appear that, though generally fainthearted, author Richard Abanes has become a chief defender of Dr. Warren. As you probably know, he has written a book entitled *Rick Warren and the Purpose that Drives Him*, which is a basic defense of Warren to his critics. Though the book leads the reader to believe that all of the objections to the PDC and PDL are addressed, Abanes specifically avoids mentioning or dealing with issues such as Warren's use of the Scriptures or his presentation of the Gospel itself. In his book, Abanes also does his best to portray those who speak up against the premise of the PDC and PDL as just wacky, paranoid ex-cultists.

Abanes also attempts to defuse the objections I have cited here concerning Dr. Warren's statements about the Five Fundamentals.¹¹ However, no matter how one attempts to dress it up, there is no truthful way around Warren's statement that he believes the Five Fundamentals of the Faith comprise a "very legalistic, narrow view of Christianity."

(2) NEW AGE THOUGHT

As one commences reading Dr. Warren's two most popular books (PDC and PDL), one immediately notices the acceptance by Dr. Warren of the culture and its alleged intellectuals. There is quote after quote from an assortment of known New Agers, occultists, mystics, spiritual liberals and secularists from whom Dr. Warren attempts to extract wisdom.

While troubling, this is but a tell-tale sign of the underlying and more disturbing philosophy upon which the Purpose Driven books and teaching seem to rest. It appears that Dr. Warren perceived that the best way to make his mark was to declare that historic Christianity was horribly lacking in the eyes of modern man and, since he couldn't go to the Bible alone for answers, he decided to ask the world how they would like him to fix it.

Perhaps one of the most disturbing statements in the PDL appears on page 88, where Dr. Warren states that "God lives in everything." This is exactly what pantheists believe.¹² Religious Science practitioners teach this, too.¹³ It is also a main tenant of New Age thought and, though you will find a few liberal theologians spouting the idea,¹⁴ it is not Christianity. In fact, this demonic misconception has succeeded in persuading multitudes to doubt why a God who supposedly lives in everything would have to come and die for the restoration of a creation in which He resides in every single molecule. This is a particularly damaging error that undermines the effectiveness of Christian witnessing when dealing with New Agers.

The Scripture actually states that God created everything - however, He has chosen to reside only in His born-again believers.¹⁵ According to the Scriptures, we Christians are the dwelling place of God - not the trees, mountains, birds or fish!

(3) SCRIPTURE "FISHING"

Dr. Warren employs what is commonly known as "Scripture fishing." Of the 642 Bible quotations used in the PDL, he quotes from at least 15 different versions of the Bible. Frankly, as I read the book it became very apparent to me that Dr. Warren trolls through version after version until he finds one that says what he *wants* it to say on any given verse, rather than accepting what the text actually states.

As you know, many of those quotations in the PDL seek to use the word "purpose." However, Dr. Warren has made one glaring omission that I could not find anywhere in the PDL. It is I John 3:8, which states: "*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*" (KJV). And this brings me to my next point.

(4) SPIRITUAL WARFARE

How can anyone claim to have the model for church growth and yet ignore the fact that we (the Church) are engaged in a spiritual war? Can any plan for church growth that suggests pastors abandon all else for a new philosophy willingly ignore the biblical fact that there is a well-organized army posed against us and that we are both fighting and residing behind enemy lines? Yet, this is what the PDL and PDC both do.

Just as I was stepping out into these unsettling waters and doing the research for myself, the well-known evangelist Mario Murillo called me personally and pointed out that *The Pur-*

pose Driven Church NEVER makes any mention of spiritual warfare and really makes no mention of Satan and his forces. The following week I read *The Purpose Driven Church* cover to cover on a cross-country airplane flight. Mario is correct. I was shocked. This is the plan that hundreds of thousands of pastors are employing, yet it focuses only on what can only be deemed “warm and fuzzy.” To claim to have the answers for the Church and yet not mention the enemy (let alone the war) would be like Eisenhower never mentioning Hitler because to do so could be construed as negative!

(5) MUSIC

Many church members have intimated being upset because of the changes initiated to make over worship styles by so called “purpose driven pastors” who are following Dr. Warren. There is no doubt that styles of music have long been, are now and will continue to be a source of dispute and consternation inside the Body of Christ. It is, besides doctrine, perhaps the greatest point of division and contention and one that causes many churches and Christians to divide and break fellowship. I have known several pastors who for good or bad have attempted to change the worship style of their church through the years. It is a very touchy subject and everybody has their opinion. I have made my feelings on this known in the chapter “The Battle Cry of Praise” from my book, *Disarming the Powers of Darkness*. Simply put, worship (music in particular) can be a powerful tool of victory in spiritual warfare. As for styles, I firmly believe that our young people need the depth of the hymns and some of us in the “50 and over” section need desperately the life imparted by some of the new music. But that is not what I wish to deal with here, for even saying this much on the topic is sure to cause debate with some folks.

(6) BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

While there is no doubt that Dr. Warren’s teaching on music and worship in the PDL and PDC are controversial to some, it is his teaching on issues such as sin, repentance and salvation itself that are of the most concern to me. I believe wholeheartedly that a baby Christian or seeking unbeliever turned loose with *The Purpose Driven Life* alone will most likely come to radically different conclusions about these issues than those that are taught in the Bible. These troubling conclusions are further aided by the instructions given to the “40 Days of Purpose” leaders, which suggest that people not use their own Bibles during the teaching sessions. This encourages and legitimizes the aforementioned “scripture fishing” I mentioned and causes the student to rely completely on *The Purpose Driven Life* instead.

Moreover, Dr. Warren firmly instructs people to avoid judging anything, which is a position I advise him to continue if he intends to further the Purpose Driven message. On Page 34 of the PDL, he states that doctrinal views **do not matter**. This is an issue on which Scripture takes a completely opposite view. Should I cite the many passages that indicate the utter importance doctrine plays in the success or failure of our eternities?

I'll just mention two:

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

- Colossians 2:8

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

- I Timothy 4:1

On page 164 of the PDL Dr. Warren says, *"God warns us over and over not to criticize, compare, or judge each other. ... Whenever I judge another believer, four things instantly happen: I lose fellowship with God, I expose my own pride, I set myself up to be judged by God, and I harm the fellowship of the church."*

This sounds so good to the ear and flesh of man but it does not wash with the counsel of the Scriptures.

Frankly, the more I read and research this, I realize it is no wonder that Dr. Warren insists that no one bother comparing or judging practice or doctrine to the Scriptures. His doctrine seems to be less defined and certainly less biblical as time passes, yet the growth of his audience seems undeterred by his outrageous statements and views. Remember, he thinks that fundamental Bible believers are "dangerous terrorists" because we believe, follow and practice the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Is it just me or is anyone else uncomfortable with the fact that the most popular Christian leader today is quickly turning what is perceived as Christianity into a "different gospel"?

If we examine Dr. Warren's statements on page 34 of the PDL carefully we'll see what is becoming a "different gospel" in action. Note the two confusing and potentially deceptive errors made here.

"One day you will stand before God, and He will do an audit of your life, a final exam, before you enter eternity. The Bible says, 'Remember, each of us will stand personally before the judgment seat of God... Yes, each of us will have to give a personal account to God.' (Rom. 14:10b, NLT). Fortunately, God wants us to pass this test, so he has given us the questions in advance. From the Bible we can surmise that God will ask us two crucial questions: First, 'What did you do with my Son, Jesus Christ?' God won't ask about your religious background or doctrinal views. The only thing that will matter is, did you accept what Jesus did for you and did you learn to love and trust him? ... Second, 'What did you do with what I gave you?' Preparing you for these two questions is the goal of this book."

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First, while it is true that every believer in Christ will stand before the Bema or judgment seat and there be properly rewarded, there will be no test given there.¹⁶ The "test" is over once we leave this planet. Second, the question of what a person did or didn't do with Jesus Christ while they were here on earth will not come up. That is forever settled here on Earth when each sinner confesses Jesus Christ, trusts in Him and makes the decision to turn from sin in repentance. When we stand before His throne, our eternity is forever sealed and He is not going to hand out a pop quiz or arbitrarily change His mind.

Since Dr. Warren brought it up, on what basis does God exact judgment at the "Bema" seat of Christ? He judges our rewards based on our obedience to His Word. What does His word constantly instruct us to do? Jesus emphatically instructed His disciples more than seven times to preach the kingdom (repentance leading to salvation), pray for the sick and cast out devils.¹⁷ Why doesn't the Purpose Driven philosophy teach this?

Paul sternly rebuked the Corinthian church for **NOT** identifying false teachers in their midst (II Cor. 11:1-4). In turn he tells them in I Corinthians 2:15 that those who are spiritual judge all things. In I Corinthians 14 Paul instructs them to judge preaching and in I Corinthians 5 says that sin must be judged. In fact, I Timothy 5:20 instructs us that those who continue to practice sin unrepentantly must be rebuked publicly "...that others also may fear." So much for Warren's insistence on never judging the works or doctrinal beliefs of others. I'll side with the Apostle Paul.

In some circles, it is certainly acceptable to bandy about the phrase, "Judge not lest ye be judged." However, anyone understanding the context of Jesus' statement in Matthew 7 and the concept of "righteous judgment" (which Jesus clearly dictates in the very same chapter, i.e., 7:24) knows better. To imply that we should never test or judge anything due to the teaching of a single passage (Matthew 7:1) is certainly one of the misuses, if not the prime misuse, of Scripture known to man! While the idea of being nonjudgmental may tickle one's ears, let's not forget that the Bereans were praised for their Scriptural evaluation of what Paul and Silas taught. We must surely do the same with every teacher we encounter in these increasingly strange days.

I am extremely troubled that, according to page 167 of the PDL, Dr. Warren **requires Saddleback church members to sign a covenant in which he or she promises to protect the unity of the church.** I found the covenant on the Saddleback Church website, as well. What a dangerous and unscriptural practice this is. Even though Dr. Warren intimates that unity such as this is an act of love, the Bible never calls us to promise blind allegiance to any leader or church. To be submitted to the covering of one's church leadership is a very important aspect of how the Church should function. But choosing unity at the cost of sound doctrine is not biblical and is certainly counterproductive, even cult-like. A covenant (i.e., oath) that insists on unity at any price is a pact that no biblical Christian should ever enter into.

(7) 40 DAYS?

Dr. Warren's obsession with the number "40" is also out of step what the Bible teaches. It is more than intimated in the PDL that as a person undergoes and completes the "40 Days of Purpose" they are somehow made ready for Christian service. Warren cites eight examples of the biblical use of "40" in the PDL. He says that Noah, Moses and the spies in Numbers 12 were all transformed in 40 days. Really? That is certainly **not** what the Bible says in these instances. It should be noted that the most famous 40-day period noted in Scripture was when Jesus fasted in the wilderness (Matthew 4). I guarantee you that He wasn't out there trying to figure out who He was and why He was put here! He KNEW who He was and knew EXACTLY why He was here - in fact, He **MADE** "here"!!!

No, 40 days doesn't do it. Not even close. The disciples spent three years in intimate contact with Jesus and the 40 or so days between His death and their power-filled public ministry were filled first with fear, then awe at the risen Savior, then finally the fiery anointing of the day of Pentecost. This anointing was **the** enabler that allowed them to preach with conviction, see thousands saved and the miraculous unleashed, and the church body built God's way. When it comes to standing firm in our troubled times, I'll take the Christian full of God's power any day; I tremble at the thought of how many may fail because they followed the hollow, lifeless gospel being presented in so many once-great churches today.

To prepare for godly service, the Apostle Paul went to the back side of the desert for three years, but that would never do for the modern-day Western mind. Some of us can spend eight years or more in college, but when it comes to almost anything else - including spiritual wisdom and revelation - we want instant gratification!

It is at least shortsighted, if not spiritually dangerous, to think there is something magical about the "40" figure. (In the church I attend, one cannot even volunteer to help in the nursery until you have been connected to the church for at least six months.) Forty days of anything - not even a fast - does not necessarily prepare one to be deemed "ready" for ministry. How foolish to forward such a sophomoric idea that could devastate so many lives.

(8) SIN

"Many people are driven by guilt. Guilt-driven people are manipulated by memories. They allow their past to control their future. They often unconsciously punish themselves by sabotaging their own success. When Cain sinned, his guilt disconnected him from God's presence, and God said, 'You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.' That describes most people today-wandering through life without a purpose."

(PDL, p. 27-28)

Cain was not separated from God by guilt. He was separated from God by SIN. But to speak of such things is a real no-no in many Christian circles today. The "seeker sensitive" and "church growth" movements have deemed words such as "sin," "Satan," "Hell," "judgment," etc., to be "negative" and thus detrimental to the cause of church growth. Jesus didn't think so. We have a choice to either tell people what their "itching ears" want to hear or tell them the balanced and biblical truth. It is not the mission of the church to pat people on the head and give them a lollipop named "purpose." It is our mission to see captives set free because they come to Christ in complete repentance.

Though I certainly do not believe that every sermon must be focused on hellfire and brimstone, unless we bring a sinner to understand that he is indeed lost and that his sins are about to send him headlong into an eternity in Hell, we have failed in our earthly mission and have but created a spiritual Kiwanis Club. Talk about missing your purpose here on earth! What could be worse? Unless each person God entrusts us to minister to is brought to recognize their hopeless condition and the eternal consequences it produces, we help engender in them a false religious security and fail in the very mission and purpose we are here on earth to fulfill. That is, that every person we can possibly reach will not perish but instead receive eternal life (John 3:16).

(9) SALVATION

Perhaps most unsettling is Dr. Warren's view of what constitutes separation from God and what the definition of salvation actually is.

Please carefully read the following quote from pages 58-59 of *The Purpose Driven Life*:

"First, believe. Believe God loves you and made you for his purposes. Believe you're not an accident. Believe you were made to last forever. Believe God has chosen you to have a relationship with Jesus, who died on the cross for you. Believe that no matter what you've done, God wants to forgive you.

"Second, receive. Receive Jesus into your life as Lord and Saviour. Receive his forgiveness for your sins. Receive his Spirit, who will give you the power to fulfill your life purpose.

"Wherever you are reading this, I invite you to bow your head and quietly whisper the prayer that will change your eternity: 'Jesus, I believe in you and I receive you.' Go ahead. If you sincerely meant that prayer congratulations! Welcome to the family of God!"

If that sounds right, it is only because we evangelicals have gotten so used to the term and notion of someone making a "decision" for Christ. I admit that I have used the term "decision for Christ" many times. However, I have come to realize that, unless the Spirit of God draws people to Himself and unless they are convicted of sin and righteousness, they can repeat any prayer I give them and remain as lost as a goose!

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The key ingredient that is dubiously missing from Dr. Warren's theology as presented in the PDL is **REPENTANCE**. Let me state unequivocally that there is **NO** salvation without repentance.

We have supplanted so-called "decisionism" for authentic conversion. What a tremendous disservice that Dr. Warren, as well as many evangelicals, has done (to the lost and to the Lord) by announcing that anyone who merely says a few words is somehow automatically a member of the family of God and on their way to Heaven.

Though it is widely misunderstood and/or ignored in this day, we must never confuse asking God's forgiveness with what the Bible describes as repentance. They are two different elements, each of which partly constitutes what becomes in the end a genuine conversion to Christ. But one without the other is a false, misleading assurance of something that the seeker is mistakenly brought to only think he or she now has.

Jesus never called men to just pray a little prayer. He called them to repent and completely follow Him. This is also the continuing message of the Book of Acts (2:38, 3:19, 8:22, 17:30, 26:20, etc.). The Book of Acts is our roadmap for the Church Age, yet we evangelicals have decided to take just part of what Paul wrote to the Romans (10:9-10, 13) and build our entire doctrine of conversion on it. One should also read Romans 3, which declares the sinfulness of man and our separation from God, especially in a day when the bulk of humankind around us believes that somehow God grades on a curve and that, because they aren't as bad as Hitler or Osama, they are going to get into Heaven. While it is true that the letter of the Law kills, how would we understand our fallen condition without the Law pointing out our absolute failure before God? Without an understanding of our sinfulness and the imperative need that we each have to turn from what got us into this mess, how can a conversion be genuine?

It is just this sort of "easy-believism" that is literally going to take millions of people to Hell. We should be shocked by how easily we have been lulled into thinking that praying some sort of a prayer, without including repentance as a prerequisite, could actually make for a real, authentic salvation experience. This is why (in my estimation) the "seeker" model is one of Satan's most effective tools to ward off a real conversion to Christ. I am not alone. In a personal letter, David Wilkerson of World Challenge wrote, "As I've traveled the world the last two years in ministers' conferences, I've seen the havoc which that ministry [Rick Warren's] has caused...It [the Purpose Driven Church philosophy] simply does not work."

Though Dr. Warren writes, "*Receive his forgiveness for your sins,*" it must again be noted that conversion and the accompanying discipleship comes only when people turn from their wicked ways. Please understand that I am in no way advocating so-called "sinless perfec-

tion" here. Instead, I hope it is obvious that my concern is about the presentation of what it means to be saved and what is required of a person when they come to God.

In exhorting the Ephesian elders, Paul states in Acts 20:21 that his complete teaching in a nutshell was "repentance and faith." As Paul witnessed to King Agrippa, he recounted the Lord's instructions, which were given to him on the Damascus Road. It was Paul's mission (and must be ours) *"...to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts 26:18)*

Clearly, FAITH and REPENTANCE are co-equal elements in authentic salvation. Paul's mission was not to teach one and not the other, for faith without repentance leads no man to Heaven. In fact, Paul stood accused by the Pharisees and eventually lost his life because he taught two things: resurrection of the dead and repentance from sin.

We should note that the Roman governor, Festus, declared Paul as "insane" for proclaiming resurrection and repentance. This is a microcosm of how so many in the world feel about the real message of the Church. It is also why many people claiming to be the "Church" have altered the message today.

It's not that I think our themes or delivery should necessarily be depressing or negative. However, the truth is that the world will gladly embrace the "feel good" or so-called "positive" gospels while they generally reject preaching from the Word of God that focuses on repentance. This is the reason that various Christianized self-help teachings have garnered such large followings in recent times.

In the flesh, I can surely understand how some pastors could attempt to justify becoming more "positive" in an effort to draw larger crowds. While I reiterate that I am all for being positive, it cannot be at the expense of the real gospel. Shouldn't we stand for the whole truth and let the Holy Spirit draw whom He will rather than tampering with the only message that can redeem a soul? Doing otherwise is certain to result in eternal disaster.

Above all, I hope I've been clear that turning from sin in true repentance is the only door leading to forgiveness and salvation and that an emotional or fleeting sorrow for past sins is not authentic repentance.

**BELIEF (have faith) + REPENTANCE (turn from sin and worldliness)
= BIBLICAL SALVATION**

Frankly, I cannot for one moment fathom the Apostle Paul whom we read of in Scripture teaching the Purpose Driven philosophy. However, I will admit that, if Paul would have employed Dr. Warren's teaching, he probably could have avoided a whole boatload of trouble – including losing his head. Instead of focusing on repentance and eternity (complete with

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confronting false doctrines and sin), if Paul would have just toned down his sermons a bit and been more practical he could have gained favor with the crowds in Ephesus, Caesarea and elsewhere. After all, the masses rejected his narrow views and he did want them to come back to his church, didn't he? Didn't he understand that he needed to give the people what they wanted? They would have accepted a more positive and uplifting message, wouldn't they? God help the Church to once again preach what the Scripture demands instead of "feel good" self-help and psychology masquerading as the Gospel, for we have surely lost our way.

Allow me to add another thought concerning repentance and salvation. After having the awesome privilege of leading thousands of people to Christ over the years, I have come to understand how very important a public confession of faith is. If, indeed, people answer the "invitation," I always try to have a time of public commitment and prayer. It is God's business to actually convert a sinner. It is our task to do all we can to follow the biblical model in our teaching and practice. It is vital that the new convert tell somebody what has happened to them once they have prayed "that prayer." Something dynamic happens when a sinner announces by his public commitment to Christ, saying that "I am done with the world, finished with my carnal flesh, and am now denouncing the works of Satan to follow the King of all Kings." Every authentic invitation for salvation should follow Jesus' model, for the Master never called anyone in secret. Every confession of faith found in the New Testament was a public confession.

The PDL focuses the adherents on their purpose. But the Bible focuses the adherent on complete commitment to God instead. One way is right and the other is not. I really wonder if this is what Dr Warren's father meant when he told his son to "win one more for Jesus." The plan his son is presenting is surely not what the Bible says to do.

(10) DIVIDE AND ALIENATE

It is disturbing to see how some of the ideas expressed in *The Purpose Driven Church* are being used as a divisive tool. We need all segments and age groups of the Body of Christ together for the sake of everyone in the Body. While a Church going "Purpose Driven" may attract some unchurched individuals to the building, there is a widespread epidemic of churches being torn apart and leadership being encouraged to alienate particular segments of believers. Put bluntly, there is a disenfranchising of senior adults in churches worldwide, particularly in North America, due to the leading of many church growth "experts" and most notably because of the philosophy expressed in Dr. Warren's books. In a vain attempt to become "cutting edge," churches are instead cutting out those who oppose PDL, "seeker sensitive," "contemplative prayer," "emerging church" and other mostly nonbiblical ideas.

Dr. Warren has stated again and again that "the pillars of the church are only holding things up." Well, I personally know an internationally respected scholar whose Purpose

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Driven nightmare story should be read by anyone considering the idea for their church. Dr. Noah Hutchings' book, *The Dark Side of the Purpose Driven Life* chronicles how his former church - the second largest Church in Oklahoma - implemented Dr. Warren's Purpose Driven plan. In so doing, the new pastor ran off a number of leaders and has succeeded in now emptying the parking lot as well. The word is that recently they had to mortgage part of their facility just to pay salaries.

Each week I am receiving emails asking for advice and help due to churches from coast to coast splitting because of the PDL philosophy. (It is fascinating to me that one such email has come in while I have been writing this!) Satan is no doubt having a field day with the mayhem the PDL ideals have brought and it ought to alarm us all. For all of the talk of unity, the Purpose Driven ideas have caused more grief and division than we'll ever be able to document. Anyone who resists or even questions the abrupt changes that must be implemented to bring a church into the Purpose Driven camp are either ridiculed or run off. For more on this I suggest you read Berit Kjos' insightful research at: www.crossroad.to. (In particular see: www.crossroad.to/articles2/04/4-purpose-resisters.htm.)

For me personally, perhaps the saddest aspect of the Purpose Driven philosophy is how many folks are contacting me to express that their home church is now their former home church due to the fact that they were either deemed resisters to the PDL and forced out or because the PDL teaching has destroyed any resemblance of biblical preaching and ministry in their local body and they left to find a scripturally-based church instead.

May God help the Church if in 20 or 30 years the Purpose Driven adherents (aging but convinced of their validity) are displaced by the unscriptural thinking and teaching of another, even more convoluted, replacement of the truth.

(11) MOTIVATIONS

Knowing how it goes with those who have achieved elite status (or at least media notoriety), I know that any attempt to initiate direct communication and dialog with Dr. Warren will result in little fruit. I don't want to be an extreme cynic, either, but one has to think, because of the millions of dollars at stake, the backing and partnership with News Corps' Rupert Murdoch, the reputation he has garnered and the sheer power he wields, that Rick Warren probably couldn't care less what I or anyone else might have to say. I would enjoy being surprised if the possibility of meaningful dialog developed between Dr. Warren and me or other concerned leaders. But honestly, I am certainly not counting on it. Here's even more reason why.

As you may know, I have advised the leadership of the Church Ministries Convention Network for several years. I have also spoken many times at Sunday School and Christian Workers Conventions across the country. Thus, I am in regular communication with many conference directors nationwide. Through a series of circumstances and at the behest of a

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group of local pastors, one such conference director of a successful yearly conference tried to negotiate with Dr. Warren's people to arrange to have Dr. Warren speak at a single keynote session at a conference a few years back. My friend was told that the fee for Dr. Warren's appearance would be \$100,000 for ONE session! This says two things to me. First, Rick Warren is no friend of continuing Christian Education and/or Sunday School. Knowing it was completely out of the question, the \$100,000 figure spoke clearly that Dr. Warren would not come to such a gathering. Second, it stated that money has become the obsession and, though I completely believe in the free market system, it is more than disconcerting to think that this is the way a Christian minister reacts. Former Presidents of the United States often make far less than \$100,000 for speeches. (At the time of this writing, former President Clinton's base fee is \$75,000.) Who in the world does Dr. Warren think he is?

I cannot close without commenting on a very disconcerting incident that both the Christian and secular media reported on.

In our day of "anything goes" Christianity, it will probably be deemed as trivial, narrow and legalistic of me to mention it, but how can God be blessed when the most visible Christian leader of our day - Rick Warren - stands on the stage in the middle of Angels Stadium, Anaheim, CA, before 30,000 people (at an event sponsored by Saddleback) singing Jimi Hendrix' 1960's glorification of LSD, "Purple Haze" ¹⁸

IN CONCLUSION...

Instead of Christianized pop psychology or nostalgic trips back to the hippie era, what are desperately needed today are pastors, evangelists and teachers who will set the pulpits on fire with the complete truth of the Gospel. Rather than trying every new manmade invention to grow local churches, we Christians need to get our Bibles open and get on our faces before God. We must start earnestly praying that He send a convicting revival that will fill our churches with people who are sick of sin and ready to become powerhouses for God. Church growth without His presence is simply a dead work.

Jesus taught three essentials for the operation of the Church, not once but at least seven times in the four Gospels. From the outset of the book of Acts, the Apostles continued in these three practices exactly as Jesus had instructed them. These three elements of the Christian's life and practice in which Jesus commanded us to endeavor are ignored in Dr. Warren's teaching in the biggest-selling Christian book of our day. Again I ask, why is this?

Here are the three unified and unchangeable elements on which Jesus and the Apostles built the early Church. We are to:

- (a) Preach the Kingdom, that men should repent
- (b) Pray for the sick and believe that they will recover

(c) Cast out devils and set captives free through deliverance in Jesus' name.

Pretty radical, right? No, that is what Christianity IS, or at least it's what it WAS. And certainly this is what it SHOULD BE, according to the clear-cut teaching in the Scriptures.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.

- Matt. 4:23-25

And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people...And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

- Acts 5:12, 14-16

This IS God's authentic plan for church growth, all wrapped up neatly and emphasized by the Bible again and again throughout the Gospels and the Book of Acts. Why look any further? (Again, see my article "The REAL Purpose of the Church" at: www.ericbarger.com/real_purpose/rpotc.1.htm for more.)

May I add here that, since I minister in many different "kinds" of Christian churches, it is curious to me how many of my Pentecostal brethren have been led into the Purpose Driven philosophy? It seems to me that the Purpose Driven genre is completely incompatible with what Pentecostals have always stood for. Is it perhaps because the term "Pentecostal" is only an identifier and not a reality for many in what used to be referred to as "Full Gospel" circles?

With that said, however, I was blessed to read about a meeting of Pentecostal leaders held in Dallas on January 9-10, 2006. When Evangelist Steve Hill took the microphone, he asked a woman in the back of the conference room to dim the lights. After speaking for a few minutes he asked her to dim them even more. Then he startled the group by saying, "This is what is happening in today's church.... There is a dimming of the gospel taking place in America. We've got to start preaching the Cross again."

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Pastor Casey Treat of Seattle warned those in attendance, "I am excited about 'relevant' ministry. But have we become so relevant to the world that we've become irrelevant to God?"¹⁹

It is my prayer that the eyes of pastors and laypeople alike continue to be open to the tremendous need for the preaching of the Cross. May we abandon everything, including the much sought after prize of relevancy, if it hinders us from connecting all of the dots of Scripture.

But I digress.... How can you or I or Dr. Warren arbitrarily decide to ignore and abandon the core essentials of how the Church should look and operate, replacing them with a new marketing plan that forsakes our clear biblical mandate?

In II Samuel 6, we find the account of a man named Uzzah who was one of the sons of Abinadab. David and the whole house of Israel are seen here celebrating with songs and music in a grand parade. In the procession, Uzzah and his brother were helping to transport the Ark of God, which had been placed on the back of a cart drawn by oxen. When the oxen stumbled at the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out to stabilize the Ark so that it would not fall. Because of this, he was instantly struck down in the wrath of God! End of party.

You see, though Uzzah was participating in a very noble act and one that seemed like the right thing to do, he paid the price for not doing it God's way. Uzzah's death was a result of not only his unrighteous act but because leadership (i.e. David and the Levites) failed to follow God's prescribed plan. God had given irrevocable instructions as to how the Ark was to be moved. According to Numbers 1:47-52, Levite priests were to carry the Ark on poles and no one else was to touch it as it was a symbol of God's presence and majesty. Uzzah's leaders (David included) had gotten sloppy and probably lazy, too. Instead of showing care for God's instructions, it appears that they wanted to party and enjoy themselves. Starting with David, the leaders let Uzzah down. They told him to do things contrary to God's prescribed plan and he ended up paying the ultimate price. Modern Christians will do well to heed this Old Testament warning. The Church is heading into similarly troubled waters, all in the name of growth and progress. As witnessed in Uzzah's example, doing what **seems** right to us can lead to devastating consequences - especially if we've been schooled to believe this is acceptable by leaders who take it upon themselves to change or ignore God's instructions on doctrine and practice.

I know it sounds as though I have a vendetta against Rick Warren. This is really not the case. I have nothing against him personally and am well able to separate the man from his teaching. However, since *Time Magazine* called him the most influential Christian in America (November 2004) and since his belief system is so obviously unorthodox, should he expect no scrutiny? In fact, based on how far-reaching his influence is, shouldn't we expect him to be the most accountable Christian leader in our world today?

Examining the Purpose Driven Philosophy

What I am saying here will not be heard on the evening news. It won't be aired on any of the existing Christian TV networks. My concerns and the concerns of thousands of other committed Christians are over what has happened to the authentic Gospel on our watch. I am reminded again of Paul's warnings in Acts 20:30: "...of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them[selves]." He called them "grievous wolves." Peter calls them "false teachers."

To determine what false teaching is and who false teachers are, the scholars who edited the study notes for *The Full Life Study Bible* make some eye-opening observations.

- 1) False teachers do not cry out against sin
- 2) False teachers do not proclaim and defend the complete Gospel of Christ
- 3) Their converts are not completely committed to all of God's Word
- 4) It is the responsibility of each Christian to discern the level of reliance on the Scripture by any teacher

The Full Life Study Bible scholars conclude:

"If a teacher does not rely completely on Scripture, we can be sure that they and their message are NOT from God." ²⁰

According to these criteria, much of what is found in the "Seeker," "Feel Good," and "Purpose Driven" teachings is dangerously parallel to that which would be espoused by a false prophet/teacher. Again, I reiterate that Dr. Warren's successes, media popularity or the amount of how much one may esteem him cannot cloud our judgment. What must be judged is if the entire biblical truth is being presented, perverted or ignored.

I sincerely wish that I had examined the PDL and PDC books and found nothing objectionable. But after receiving so many disturbing questions about the PDL and PDC philosophies, I simply had to read for myself to see whether any of it were true. I am sad to say that indeed it is true...and more. Rick Warren and I will be gone in 50 years. However, unless the Lord comes soon, I predict that biblical Christians will still be dealing with the theological mess he has created long after he's gone.

All of this may have distressed or angered you. I hope this is not the case. If it did, then I am personally sorry, yet I do not apologize. I know also that many Christians, even pastors, will dismiss me out of hand for even questioning Dr. Warren's widely-accepted philosophy. I regret this, as well, but, regardless of any momentary adversity it may cause our ministry, there are some things worth fighting for and the authentic Gospel is supreme among them.

Thanks so much for hearing my heart, for your study of what I have said and for your time.

Examining the Purpose Driven Philosophy

God Bless you,

Eric

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

- Jude 3

Footnotes:

- (1) www.ericbarger.com/apostlescreed.htm
- (2) www.calvaryd.org/assets/uploads/RecallonStorms.pdf
- (3) www.gty.org/index/sidebar.php?id=492
- (4) www.christianity.com/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID307086%7CCHID559376%7CCIID1952540,00.html
- (5) www.pewforum.org/events/index.php?EventID=80
- (6) I bid
- (7) www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/living/religion/13573441.htm
- (8) *The Dallas Morning News*, May 16, 2005 and www.pastors.com/article.asp?ArtID=8329
- (9) www.pewforum.org/events/index.php?EventID=80
- (10) Ephesians 2:8-9. Also see "The MOST Dangerous Cult", Eric Barger, www.ericbarger.com/mdcult.htm
- (11) www.abanes.com/warrenfundamentals.html
- (12) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pantheism>
- (13) www.idyllwildchurch.com/treatments2.htm
- (14) www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/2004-Council/Sermon_31-08-04_EN.pdf
- (15) I Cor. 3:16, I Cor. 6:19, II Cor. 6:16
- (16) Rom. 14:10, II Cor. 5:10
- (17) www.ericbarger.com/real_purpose/rpotc.1.htm
- (18) www.letusreason.org/Popteac26.htm and www.ksgn.com/extras/saddleback.asp
- (19) J. Lee Grady's "[Fire in My Bones](#)" email, "2006: The Best of Times, The Worst of Times", Jan. 13, 2006
- (20) *The Full Life Study Bible*, Zondervan, P. 1509. It is ironic to note that Zondervan also publishes *The Purpose Driven Church* and *The Purpose Driven Life*.

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Eric Barger's **TAKE A STAND!** MINISTRIES



“Discerning the Times in the Light of the Word”

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“We exist to see the Lost Saved and the Church Changed by the Power of Jesus Christ!”

After spending two decades immersed in the world as a record producer, rock musician, drug addict and New Ager, Eric Barger (pronounced *Bar-jer*) is now widely recognized in the area of Christian Apologetics Ministry. Eric's **Take A Stand! Ministries** confronts both the culture and the Church, focusing on the Cults, World Religions, the Occult, Spiritual Warfare and most particularly the troubling unbiblical trends and doctrinal issues facing Christians in these end days.

He is the author of numerous books such as the best-seller **From Rock to Rock, Entertaining Spirits Unaware: The End-Time Occult Invasion** (with co-author David Benoit) and **Disarming the Powers of Darkness**. Eric has written for **USA Today** and has been interviewed by hundreds of print and electronic media outlets, including **Time Magazine** and **Fox News**. His articles are now syndicated on dozens of biblically-based prophetic and apologetics websites and blogs.

Eric has been a featured guest on many Christian and secular programs, such as **Southwest Radio Ministries**, **Christ in Prophecy** with Dr. David Reagan, **Understanding the Times** with Jan Markell, **Point of View** with the late Marlin Maddoux, **Unraveling the New World Order** with Dr Larry Bates, TCT Network's **Rejoice**, and Canada's **100 Huntley Street**.

His current focus of exposing the heretical Emergent Church movement and the popular yet problematic book, *The Shack*, are perhaps both the most requested live seminars and video teachings Take A Stand! has ever produced.

October, 2010, marked the beginning of Eric Barger's 28th year of full-time apologetics and discernment ministry. Each year he travels some 200+ days across the US and Canada presenting "Take A Stand!" Seminars in conferences, churches, and Christian schools. Eric's multi-media messages, like his writing, are Biblically based, doctrinally sound, and evangelistically focused.

Eric Barger is an ordained minister with United Evangelical Churches. He serves on the executive and advisory boards of ministries such as Jan Markell's Olive Tree Ministries, Columbia River Fellowship, Steering Wheel Ministries and the apologetics group, Saints Alive in Jesus.

Eric, and his wife, Melanie, have two grown daughters and four grandchildren.

To schedule Eric Barger's seminars for your church or community, for media interviews, or for more information please visit us at www.ericbarger.com or call 214-289-5244.

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