

RICK WARREN'S PURPOSE DRIVEN LIE

by David Cloud

Then it was the thing to do, to read Rick Warren's book. He swept all under the guise of "loving all!" And so I even did what the church to which I was going then did, the Methodist one, his "40 days of community!" How easily I was deceived then, this just some 5 years ago, when it was I knew not to properly divide the true word of God!

RICK WARREN'S DANGEROUS

"JUDGE NOT" ECUMENISM

Updated and enlarged January 20, 2011 (first published June 15, 2004) (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Life* is a No. 1 bestseller in both Christian and secular markets. It has sold millions of copies and at least two million people have participated in "40 Days of Purpose" campaigns. Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* and his earlier *The Purpose Driven Church* had sold 26 million copies as of September 2005. In October 2003 and again in September 2004, Jerry Falwell (who is associated both with the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist Bible Fellowship) teamed up with Warren for Purpose-Driven "Super Conferences" with the goal of influencing 10,000 church leaders.

Warren is the senior pastor of Saddleback Community Church, a contemporary Southern Baptist mega-church in southern California. I attended a service in August 2003, and the "praise time" reminded me of a night club, with a longhaired "worship" leader, sensually attired women singers, pounding rock & roll, and swirling lights in the background.

EXCERPTS FROM "THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE"

Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Life* contains extensive documentation of his dangerous and unscriptural "judge not" ecumenical philosophy.

On page 164, 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 to be judged by God, and I harm the fellowship of the church."

In typical New Evangelical fashion Warren makes no distinction between judging hypocritically (which is forbidden in Matthew 7) or judging on the basis of personal preference in matters not commanded in Scripture (which is forbidden in Romans 14) and judging on the basis of the Bible.

Actually, the child of God has an obligation to judge everything by God's Word. The believers at Corinth were rebuked because they were careless in this regard and were tolerant of false teachers (2 Cor. 11:1-4). The Bereans, on the other hand, were commended because they

carefully tested everything by the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). The Bible says “he that is spiritual judgeth all things” (1 Cor. 2:15) and Jesus taught that we should “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). We are to judge preaching (1 Cor. 14:29) and sin in the churches (1 Cor. 5). We are to try the spirits (1 John 4:1).

To test preachers and their message carefully by God’s Word is not a matter of pride, but wisdom and obedience.

On page 34 of *The Purpose Driven Life*, Warren says: “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?”

If this is true, why does the Bible say so very much about doctrine and why did the apostles call for doctrinal purity on every hand? Paul instructed Timothy to allow “no other doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:3). That is the very strictest stance on doctrinal purity, and it is precisely the stance we find throughout the apostolic writings. Rick Warren has a lot to answer for, because millions of people are basing their lives upon his teaching rather than upon the pure Word of God.

If God is unconcerned about doctrine, why did the apostles spend so much time warning about false doctrines and doctrines of devils? See, for example, 2 Cor. 11:1-4; Gal. 1:6-12; Phil. 3:18-21; Col. 2:8; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Tim. 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 4:1-4; 2 Pet. 2.

Rick Warren requires his church members to sign a covenant that he or she promises to protect the unity of the church (*The Purpose Driven Life*, p. 167). This is dangerous and unscriptural covenant. The child of God is not instructed to submit to a church or to its leaders blindly and at any cost. We are commanded to “prove all things” (1 Thess. 5:21), and all things means all things. The Bereans are exalted because they “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). No preacher is above being tested by God’s Word. The Bible says, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge” (1 Cor. 14:29). Preaching is to be carefully judged by God’s Word. The pastor has God-given authority (Heb. 13:17), but it is not unquestionable authority and it is not his own authority; he is not a shepherd over his own flock; he is an undershepherd over God’s and he will give an account to the Great Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:1-4). The pastor’s authority is not in his own word; it is in God’s Word (Heb. 13:7); and if he strays from the Word of God he has no authority over God’s people and he should not be followed. Blind loyalty to a church is Popery and it is a gross heresy.

Warren even claims that “conflict is usually a sign that the focus has shifted to less important things” (p. 162).

If this were true, then the apostles and preachers in the early churches were side tracked much of the time, because they were frequently involved in doctrinal conflicts. Paul was involved in such conflicts almost continually. Most of his epistles contain lengthy sections in which he takes a stand against false teachers. In his epistles to his fellow preacher Timothy, Paul repeatedly warned about false teachers by name (1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17-18; 4:12, 14).

PROMOTING HERETICS

In keeping with his unscriptural judge not philosophy, Warren uncritically quotes from a wide variety of theological heretics, especially Roman Catholics such as Mother Teresa, Henri Nouwen, Brother Lawrence (Carmelite monk), John Main (Benedictine monk who believes that Christ “is not limited to Jesus of Nazareth, but remains among us in the monastic leaders, the sick, the guest, the poor”), Madame Guyon (a Roman Catholic who taught that prayer is not from the mind does not involve thinking), John of the Cross (a pantheist who believed the mountains and forests are God). Warren does not warn his readers that these are dangerous false teachers who held to a false gospel and worshipped a false christ.

Mother Teresa and Henri Nouwen were universalists who believed that men can be saved apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ. When Mother Teresa died, her longtime friend and biographer Naveen Chawla said that he once asked her bluntly, “Do you convert?” She replied, “Of course I convert. I convert you to be a better Hindu or a better Muslim or a better Protestant. Once you’ve found God, it’s up to you to decide how to worship him” (“Mother Teresa Touched other Faiths,” Associated Press, Sept. 7, 1997). Henri Nouwen said, “Today I personally believe that while Jesus came to open the door to God’s house, all human beings can walk through that door, whether they know about Jesus or not. Today I see it as my call to help every person claim his or her own way to God” (Henri Nouwen, *Sabbatical Journey*).

Why does Rick Warren continually and non-critically promote heretics?

As for the “Purpose Driven” philosophy, we don’t need a man’s shallow encapsulations of the New Testament faith; we need the “whole counsel of God” as found in the Scriptures (Acts 20:27). The Lord Jesus Christ instructed the churches to teach “all things” rather than a few things (Mat. 28:19-20).

RICK WARREN’S IGNORANCE ABOUT FUNDAMENTALISM

Rick Warren knows a lot about megachurches but almost nothing about fundamentalism. In his appearance before the Pew Forum in May 2005 he made the following comments: “Today there really aren’t that many Fundamentalists left; I don’t know if you know that or not, but they are such a minority; there aren’t that many Fundamentalists left in America. ... 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, and when I say there are very few fundamentalists, I mean in the sense that they are all actually called fundamentalist churches, and those would be quite small. There are no large ones. ... that group is shrinking more and more and more” (“Myths of the Modern Mega-Church,” May 23, 2005, transcript of the Pew Forum’s biannual Faith Angle conference on religion, politics and public life). To set the record straight, fundamentalist churches are growing both in size and in number and many of them run in the thousands. Consider Lancaster Baptist Church north of Los Angeles, in Warren’s native California, with a membership of 4,000. The fundamental Baptist movement has tens of thousands of churches in America alone, many of them with a membership of a thousand and more, and has a large and aggressive missionary arm that exceeds that of the Southern Baptist Convention. And that is only one segment of fundamentalism. Even one small fundamentalist ministry like mine touches tens of thousands

of people. For example, some 80,000 of my sermons have been downloaded from just one site, and that is only one aspect of my ministry. As for the origin of the fundamentalist movement, Rick Warren gave false information to the Pew Forum. There was no document called “the Five Fundamentals of the Faith.” Most books on the history of fundamentalism claim that the name “fundamentalist” probably derived from a series of books called “The Fundamentals” that was published from 1910-1915. With the financial backing of two wealthy Christian businessmen, some three million copies of the 12 volumes of The Fundamentals were distributed to Christian workers in the United States and 21 foreign countries. The series, composed of 90 articles written by 64 authors, did not promote “five fundamentals” but rather dozens of fundamentals. (For more about the history of fundamentalism see

<http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/fundamen1.htm>) As for fundamentalism being a “narrow view of Christianity” Warren is correct. It seeks to be as narrow as the Bible, and if that is a sin, the apostles and early churches didn’t know about it. As for Warren’s idea that fundamentalism is a form of “legalism,” this only exposes his anti-biblicist perspective. What kind of “legalism” is it for a blood-washed saint to aim to preach all of the truths of God’s Word and to be faithful to God’s Word in all matters? If that is legalism, Paul was a great legalist, for he testified, “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Rick Warren is a very dangerous man, the blind leading the blind. His books are accepted by the world (e.g., his “40 Days of Purpose” has been used by Coco-Cola, Ford, Wal-Mart, the NBA, LPGA, NASCAR, professional baseball teams, etc.), because he is of the world.

RICK WARREN LIKENS BIBLICAL FUNDAMENTALISTS TO MUSLIM EXTREMISTS AND ATHEISTIC SECULARISTS

In his interview on Larry King Live on December 2, 2005, Rick Warren likened biblical fundamentalists to Muslim extremists and atheistic secularists. He said: “There are all kinds of fundamentalists, Larry, and they’re all based on fear. There are Christian fundamentalists. There are Muslim fundamentalists. I’ve met some Jewish fundamentalists. You know that there are secular fundamentalists. They’re all based on fear. Secular fundamentalists are afraid of God.” This statement is a vicious libel against Christian fundamentalists. George Dollar, in his history of fundamentalism, defined it in this way: “Historic fundamentalism is the literal interpretation of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-biblical affirmations and attitudes” (Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America*, 1973). Looking back over the fundamentalist movement since the 1930s, John Ashbrook defined it as follows: “Fundamentalism is the militant belief and proclamation of the basic doctrines of Christianity leading to a Scriptural separation from those who reject them” (John Ashbrook, *Axioms of Separation*, nd., p. 10). That is the type of fundamentalism that tens of thousands of fundamentalist churches throughout the world seek to emulate. Rick Warren has set himself up against this scriptural position and has likened it to Islamic terrorism and secular atheism. If fear is a central aspect of biblical fundamentalism it is the fear of God that leads to strict obedience to His Word, and that is scriptural and right. That was exactly how Paul instructed the believers at Corinth to live: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). Paul instructed the church at Philippi to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). Hebrews 12:28 says we are to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” If

Rick Warren does not have this fear, he is not a true Christian, and if he does, let him apologize publicly for saying that fear is a wrong thing and for likening those who practice it as dangerous extremists. I won't hold my breath, though..

RICK WARREN PREDICTS A "NEW REFORMATION"

In his appearance before the Pew Forum in May 2005, Rick Warren predicted a "New Reformation" or a "Third Great Awakening" for America. He said: "You know, 500 years ago, the first Reformation with Luther and then Calvin, was about beliefs. I think a new reformation is going to be about behavior. The first Reformation was about creeds; I think this one will be about deeds. ... The first Reformation actually split Christianity into dozens and then hundreds of different segments. I think this one is actually going to bring them together. Now, you're never going to get Christians, of all their stripes and varieties, to agree on all of the different doctrinal disputes and things like that, but what I am seeing them agree on are the purposes of the church. ... Last week I spoke to 4,000 pastors at my church who came from over 100 denominations in over 50 countries. Now, that's wide spread. We had Catholic priests, we had Pentecostal ministers, we had Lutheran bishops, we had Anglican bishops, we had Baptist preachers. They're all there together and you know what? I'd never get them to agree on communion or baptism or a bunch of stuff like that, but I could get them to agree on what the church should be doing in the world" ("Myths of the Modern Mega-Church," May 23, 2005, transcript of the Pew Forum's biannual Faith Angle conference on religion, politics and public life). Warren's New Reformation is not about beliefs or creeds or doctrinal purity; it is rather about "the purpose of the church." Let me see if I understand this. It is not important that a church be biblical or that it hold biblical doctrine or even that it preach a biblical gospel (e.g., Catholic priests). It is only important that "churches" agree on their purpose? How can a church have a biblical purpose when it does not have biblical doctrine? How can it have a biblical purpose when it preaches a false sacramental gospel? If sound doctrine is not a foundational issue, I wonder why Paul instructed Timothy to "charge some that they teach NO OTHER DOCTRINE" (1 Tim. 1:3)? I wonder why he didn't rather instruct Timothy to go easy on the doctrine thing? Could it be that the apostle Paul's teaching is contrary to Rick Warren's? I, for one, am certain of it!

RICK WARREN DENOUNCES THE SBC'S DEPARTURE FROM THE LIBERAL BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE

During a press conference at the Baptist World Alliance's (BWA) Centenary Congress in Birmingham, England, in July, Rick Warren called the Southern Baptist Convention's withdrawal "silly" and "a mistake" ("Warren: Global Baptists Are in This Together," Kentucky Western Recorder, July 27, 2005). A mistake to pull out of an organization that is shot through with theological liberalism, that is a home to preachers who deny that the Bible is the infallible Word of God? Rick Warren obviously has a greater love for wolves in sheep's clothing than Jesus Christ does (see Mat. 7:15-17). Warren, a keynote speaker at the BWA Congress, said Baptists should have "unity without uniformity." This is not the kind of "unity" we find in the Bible. Paul instructed the churches, "... that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). Warren said, "I see absolutely zero reason in separating my fellowship

from anybody.” Perhaps he needs to read Romans 16:17; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 2 Tim. 3:5, and similar verses in an accurate Bible like the King James instead of the paraphrases that he is accustomed to using, because the Bible’s command to separate from false teachers should be a good enough reason for doing so. Warren warned that Baptists often are “known for what we’re against rather than what we’re for.” In his book, that is wrong, but it isn’t wrong when measured biblically. Paul spent much of his time preaching against sin and error, both in the book of Acts and in the epistles. The Lord Jesus Christ frequently preached red hot messages on hell, and He was known for His opposition to the Sadducees and Pharisees, the liberals and Catholic priests of His day. Rick Warren has adopted the contemporary “positive” philosophy and he measures ministries by that rather than by the pure Word of God. Warren also said he is praying for a second reformation of the church that will focus more on deeds than beliefs. The Bible, though, focuses on BOTH! You can’t have right deeds before God if they are not built upon the right doctrinal foundation.

WARREN FEATURES ROMAN CATHOLIC MARY DEVOTEE AT HIS “APOLOGETICS” CONFERENCE

Warren’s 2010 Apologetics Weekend conference featured Roman Catholic Peter Kreeft. He is an apologist, for sure: an apologist for Rome. In his book *Ecumenical Jihad: Ecumenism and the Culture War*, Kreeft says is “very likely” that there is a “hidden Christ” in pagan religions, so that Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc., will be saved “through Christ and His grace” even though they do not consciously know or worship Jesus Christ (pp. 156, 157). Kreeft urges his readers to dedicate themselves “to the Immaculate Heart of Mary,” because Mary “is the one who will win this war” and is the one “who triumphs over Satan” (p. 169). Kreeft says “Allah is not another God ... we worship the same God” (p. 160). Kreeft worships the wafer of the Catholic Mass “because it is Christ” (p. 162). He thinks that God prefers to work through the intercession of Mary and the saints (p. 154). Kreeft says that he will follow the pope “everywhere he leads” (“Hauled Aboard the Ark by Peter,” <http://www.peterkreeft.com/topics/hauled-aboard.htm>). Kreeft is a heavy promoter of Catholic contemplation, which is sweeping through evangelicalism. He attributes his conversion to Rome partly to the writings of the mystic John of the Cross.

CONCLUSION

Where are those conservative Southern Baptists who are lifting their voices to sound a plain warning about Rick Warren’s errors? The silence is deafening.

In the strongest terms we urge our readers to beware of Rick Warren and the Purpose Driven philosophy. Rick Warren’s books are accepted by the world (e.g., his “40 Days of Purpose” has been used by Coca-Cola, Ford, Wal-Mart, the NBA, PGA, NASCAR, professional baseball teams, etc.), because he is of the world.

Friends in Christ, beware. This deluded but popular man is a dangerous spiritual guide.

WAY OF LIFE LITERATURE SHARING POLICY:

Much of our material is available for free, such as the hundreds of articles at the Way of Life web site. Other items we sell to help fund our very expensive literature, video, and foreign church planting ministry. Way of Life's content falls into two categories: sharable and non-sharable. Things that we encourage you to share include the audio sermons, video presentations, O Timothy magazine, and FBIS articles. You are free to make copies of these at your own expense and share them with friends and family. You are also welcome to use excerpts from the articles. All we ask is that you give proper credit. Things we do not want copied and distributed freely are items like the Fundamental Baptist Digital Library, print edition of our books, PDFs of the books, etc. These items have taken years to produce at enormous expense in time and money, and we need the income from the sale of these to help fund the ministry. We trust that your Christian honesty will preserve the integrity of this policy.