

THE BOOK INTENDED TO CHANGE YOUR THINKING —

Rick Warren's Book: The Purpose Driven Life

— THE BOOK SOME WANT TO INDOCTRINATE YOU ON

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: REPLACING THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY / BOOKS OF A NEW ORDER

Rick Warren is senior pastor of the Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California. Located in a wealthy suburb of Greater Los Angeles, it has an enormous membership. In the past seven years alone, his congregation has taken in 9,100 new members (page 167 of his book).

Warren is remarkably gifted in the use of words and phrases; and **his latest book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, has sold over 6 million copies. The leaders of our denomination have decided that this is the book which all our members should study; and that they should read it with extreme care.**

The current objective is to get each local church to carefully go through it in study groups, very slowly over a period of 40 days during Lent, culminating in a grand Easter celebration. We keep getting closer to the world, its forms, ceremonies, celebrations, and teachings.

“Lent is the period of six and one half weeks from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday. During Lent, for 40 days, excluding Sundays, fasting is recommended for all Catholics . . . Lent readies the faithful for celebrating the paschal mystery after a period of closer attention to the word of God, and more ardent prayer.”—*Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 346.)

As announced on the dust jacket and introduction to the book, **this in-depth 40-day study of the book is Warren's plan for everyone. He hopes that this will help bring all the churches more fully together.** Apparently, our leaders consider this a great idea.

Although clothed in most beautiful language, this is a typical Baptist devotional / doctrinal book. **Our people should be studying the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, not a Baptist book!**

Southern Adventist University, on its radio station, has been urging everyone in Greater Chattanooga to take part with the students and faculty of SAU in this 40-day lenten study of Warren's book. The study began on January 10 in 72 locations on the campus and nearby Collegedale.

A friend living in Washington State phoned to tell me that the pastor and conference president wanted their congregation to go on the 40-day lent study program. But they refused so resolutely, that it was dropped.

So I purchased a copy of *The Purpose Driven Life* and read nearly all of it. You will want to know what I found. It may help you refuse insistent urging for your congregation to read the book. Italics are his:

“This is more than a book; it is a guide to a *40-day*

spiritual journey that will enable you to discover the answer to life's most important question: What on earth am I here for? By the end of this journey you will know God's purpose for your life.”—Page 9.

Why are you here on earth? **What is God's plan for your life? According to Warren's book, it does not include obedience to the Ten Commandments.**

“Having this perspective will reduce your stress, simplify your decisions, increase your satisfaction, and, most important, prepare you for eternity.”—Page 9.

By using a 40-day study plan, **Warren wants to fully indoctrinate you into his brand of Protestant theology.** For some reason, there are those among our leaders who very much want us to undergo this re-education program.

“The next 40 days will transform *your* life . . . I strongly urge you to read only one chapter a day, so you will have time to think about the implications for your life . . . Make it *your* book.”—Page 10.

Each chapter concludes with thought questions for personal use and group discussion; plus, at the back of the book, additional “discussion questions” are keyed to each chapter.

George Bernard Shaw, one of the most famous atheists of the 20th century, is quoted by Warren as providing us a worthy example of how to live:

“George Bernard Shaw wrote, ‘This is the true joy of life: the being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force in nature.’”—Page 33.

According to Warren, you are supposed to be a “mighty one, a force in nature.” I can assure you, that is not God's plan for your life.

In chapter 13, entitled “*Worship That Pleases God*,” Warren explains his view of worship:

“A Samaritan woman once tried to debate Jesus on the best time, place, and style for worship. Jesus replied that these external issues are irrelevant.”—Page 100.

Jesus did not tell the woman that the time, place, and style of worship was irrelevant. **Keep in mind that Warren is writing for Baptists, Episcopalians, Pentecostals, Catholics, and anyone else who will buy his book.** That is why 6 million copies have already been sold. There are few things that Christendom argues over more than the manner and location of worship. About all they can agree on is the time: Sunday morning. But, since the day does not matter either, our people are

welcome to get involved and absorb his views. After **slowly going through this book, some of our members may conclude, “When the great day of judgment convenes, will it really matter what day we were keeping?”**

“Where you worship is not as important as why you worship and how much of yourself you offer to God when you worship.”—Page 100.

Our people are being taught that sincerity and wholeheartedness in worship is all that counts.

Warren slips in a little more theology on the next page. **There are two of you living together: a body and a spirit.** He introduces the point with these words:

“When Jesus said you must ‘*worship in spirit*,’ he [sic.; Warren never capitalizes the pronouns of Deity] wasn’t referring to the Holy Spirit, but to *your* spirit.”—Page 101.

Do you believe that the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with your spiritual worship of God?

He then immediately says this:

“Made in God’s image, you are a spirit that resides in a body.”—Page 101.

This is a foundational error in the monstrous edifice of natural immortality. According to this error, as soon as you die your spirit flies to heaven, hellfire, or (if you are Catholic) to purgatory.

Is this what our people should be studying for 40 days? Is there no Word of God in Israel, that we should go to one of the books of Ekron? (Read these powerful statements about natural immortality: *Great Controversy*, 545:1-2, 549:2, 588:1).

A few pages later, Warren returns to this subject:

“You have heard people say, ‘I can’t make it to the meeting tonight, but I’ll be with you in *spirit*.’ Do you know what that means? Nothing. It’s worthless! **As long as you’re on earth, your spirit can only be where your body is.**”—Page 105.

Warren urges the reader to consider methods of worship which are new and previously untried:

“My friend Gary Thomas noticed that many Christians seem stuck in a worship rut—an unsatisfying routine—instead of having a vibrant friendship with God, because they force themselves to use devotional methods or worship styles that don’t fit the way God uniquely shaped them.”—Page 102.

He not only says that we should we try aping all kinds of worship patterns used by other churches—but **he considers it a good objective if some of us end up worshiping God in ways mutually objectionable to one another.** As Warren sees it, variety is the spice of worship.

“If God intentionally made us all different, why should everyone be expected to love God in the same way?”—Page 102.

Warren then lists “being outdoors,” “singing,” “dancing, creating art” as some of the different methods of worship (page 103). He does not mention some of the controversial ones, such as speaking in tongues; but

you can know that they would all be included in his arena of worship patterns.

But **Warren is careful to include pleasing the senses, rituals, liturgies, symbols, celebration, and asceticism as among the best forms of worship.**

“In his book, *Sacred Pathways*, Gary identifies nine of the ways people draw near to God . . . *Sensates* love God with their senses and appreciate beautiful worship services that involve their sight, taste, smell, and touch, not just their ears. *Traditionalists* draw closer to God through rituals, liturgies, symbols, and unchanging structures . . . *Enthusiasts* love God through celebration.”—Page 103.

So, according to Warren, gorging on potluck together is part of worship for some people while Gothic cathedrals and Catholic processions are needed by others. **As Warren explains it, individualism is needed in order to have a satisfying worship; express yourself by satisfying your whims.**

“There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to worship and friendship with God. One thing is certain: **You don’t bring glory to God by trying to be someone he never intended you to be. God wants you to be yourself.**”—Page 103.

So you needn’t try to adapt yourself to imposed standards of clothing, cosmetics, and diet if they don’t seem to fit your personality. Just be yourself.

In chapter 21, “*Protecting Your Church*,” Warren is careful not to warn us against false doctrines. Apparently, all the churches have the right ones. **All that matters is protecting the unity of your church,** regardless of which one you belong to.

“It is your job to protect the unity of your church.”—Page 160.

In fact, **guarding your church and its beliefs is so important—that it is more important than whether or not it will lead you to the right place:**

“Unity in the church is so important that the New Testament gives more attention to it than to either heaven or hell.”—Page 160.

The Spirit of Prophecy tells us that we can unify only on the basis of truth (I do not recall the specific reference; if someone sends it to me, I will print it in *Checkpoints*). See *Christ Calls for Unity*, p. 175 of *Selected Messages*, volume 1. But **Warren says that unity in the church is more important than all else.**

“Unity is the soul of fellowship. Destroy it, and you rip the heart out of Christ’s Body. It is the essence, the core, of how God intends for us to experience life together in his church.”—Page 160.

Leaders in every denomination love it when their members place unity as foremost; for, when unity is more important than Scriptural truth, it invariably results in unquestioning submission to church policies and high-level committee decisions.

It is Satan’s studied objective to control the minds of God’s people, as they yield servile obedience to others who consider submission to duly constituted hu-

man authority as of greater importance than obedience to God's Inspired Writings.

The sincere child of God recognizes that humans are always fallible and that God's Word is the only safe guide.

But, Warren explains that we should not concern ourselves with such matters, since **perfection is impossible in this life.**

"Disillusionment with our local church is a good thing because it destroys our false expectations of perfection. The sooner we give up the illusion that a church must be perfect in order to love it, the sooner we quit pretending and start admitting we're *all* imperfect and need grace . . . Every church could put out a sign 'No perfect people need apply.'"—Page 163.

We can agree with part of that; yet the Protestant slant on character "perfection" is different than that which God's Word presents to us. Genuine perfection is founded on obedience to God's moral law. Only historic Advent believers recognize the importance of this. The Protestant world happily believes they will remain in their sins till Christ returns. We were commissioned, in Revelation 14:6-12, to teach them that this belief is error. **Instead we are now being urged to read books that teach something quite different.**

In chapter 22, "*Created to Become Like Christ*," **the thousands of 40-day study groups are going to be taught that their souls are immortal.**

"In all of creation, only human beings are made 'in God's image.' This is a great privilege and gives us dignity. We don't know *all* this phrase covers, but we do know some of the aspects it includes: Like God, we are *spiritual beings—our spirits are immortal and will outlast our earthly bodies.*"—Pages 171-172.

Why do our church leaders want us to learn that? It is Satan's original lie (Genesis 3:4-5).

In chapter 27, "*Defeating Temptation*," we are given a mixed bag of ideas. Some good; some not so good.

"It may surprise you that **nowhere in the Bible are we told to 'resist temptation'** . . . Instead, we are advised to refocus our attention because resisting a thought doesn't work."—Page 210.

You and I know that the above statement includes a hideous error. *Both* resistance and refocus are needed. We are to directly resist temptation as we cry to Jesus for help.

"**Repeating 'I must stop** eating too much . . . or stop smoking . . . or stop lusting' **is a self-defeating strategy.** It keeps you focused on what you don't want. It's like announcing, 'I'm never going to do what my mom did.' You are setting yourself up to repeat it."—Page 211.

"The more you focus on 'I don't want to do this,' the stronger it draws you into its web."—Page 211.

There is a half truth here. We should not dwell on the temptation; yet, when it comes, we should resolutely resist it as we turn to Christ for enabling strength. In this way, each of us can come off "more than con-

queror." The grace of Christ is powerful enough. "We can do all things through Him who strengthens us." Christianity works. Through trust in His empowering merits, we can obey the law of God!

In chapter 35, "*God's Power in Your Weakness*," **the reader is told that he need not concern himself about his weaknesses and imperfections.** It is true that we can learn to live with many of our weaknesses and drawbacks; but we do not have to stay with them all. There are flaws and mannerisms we should rise above and overcome.

"Paul gives us several reasons to **be content with our inborn weaknesses.**"—Page 274.

Warren erroneously applies Romans 7 to the converted man:

"Paul modeled vulnerability in all his letters. He openly shared his failures: 'When I want to do good, I don't, and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway.'"—Page 276.

In chapter 36, "*Made for a Mission*," **Warren carefully instructs the reader that he should totally ignore all preparation for Christ's Second Coming** (and, of course, the final judgment):

"When the disciples wanted to talk about prophecy, Jesus quickly switched the conversation to evangelism. He wanted them to concentrate on their mission in the world. He said in essence, 'The details of my return are none of your business. What is your business is the mission I've given you. Focus on that!'"—Page 285.

Warren has never read Matthew 24:1-3 and the 94 Bible verses which follow the asking of that question (chapters 24 and 25) and go into elaborate detail on future events, His Second Advent, and how we need to prepare for both.

"What we do know for sure is this: Jesus will not return until everyone God wants to hear the Good News has heard it."—Page 286.

Do you believe that our kind Father only wants certain persons to hear the truths about salvation?

In chapter 37, "*Sharing Your Life Message*," Warren explains that **Christians are only to share their personal experience in finding Christ; they are not to present doctrinal studies to anyone. They are not even to urge a decision to accept Christ** as their Saviour.

"This is the essence of witnessing—simply sharing your personal experiences regarding the Lord. In a courtroom, **a witness isn't expected to argue the case, prove the truth, or press for a verdict;** that is the job of attorneys. Witnesses simply report what happened to them or what they saw. Jesus said, 'You will be my witnesses,' not 'You will be my attorney.'"—Page 290.

That concludes this brief overview of Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Life*.

The situation steadily becomes more difficult for the faithful, as they attempt to retain the solidity of their faith and do the work that needs to be done at this time. Surely, it is a time for earnest prayer. —*vf*

A NEW WAY TO GET RID OF ELLEN WHITE'S BOOKS —

Replacing the Spirit of Prophecy

Well, you have been expecting it for years; and it has finally happened: They are starting to rewrite the Spirit of Prophecy—and doing it in a way that entirely replaces them.

I am not referring to an abridged edition in her own words, which is clearly stated as such. Our own *Basic Steps to Christ*, which is in the front of our 1888 *Great Controversy* is such a production. Every basic point in the book is included, *but only in her own words*. This enables the reader to read the complete pathway to Christ—without making our *Great Controversy* over a thousand pages in length. Many have compared our *Basic Steps to Christ* with the complete book and no one has found any problem with it.

What I am referring to is the new book, *Messiah*, written by Jerry Thomas and published by Pacific Press. —It is a total rewrite! Thomas, a book editor at Pacific Press for 10 years, has produced a book which, it is hoped, will be read by our people—and everyone else—instead of *Desire of Ages*.

Thomas' book is being heavily promoted by Pacific Press in local Adventist churches throughout North America, with videotaped endorsements by well-known church leaders and with featured "camp-meeting" dis- counts.

Obviously, only her words are inspired; so such a rewrite would appear to be an attempt to get rid of one of the primary inspired books which God has given for our time in history.

More rewrites will probably follow.

The advantages of such books for our church publishing houses is that the new books provide them with

clear copyright control, something they no longer have on the Spirit of Prophecy books. Pacific Press will own this book; and not even the E.G. White Estate can dictate any requirements they must follow.

The advantages for the liberals are many. This is a new step away from the books they so much dislike.

To whom should you send your protests? Friends working there in the mid-1980s told me that Pacific Press had to please the General Conference, or it could withhold permission for them to print certain books, including certain Sabbath School materials. So if you wish to write protests, it would be good to send them to the General Conference (not only to Pacific Press). The Press is a General Conference institution.

Here is Thomas' rewrite of *Desire of Ages*, 83:4-5. Compare it with the original. His rewrite reduces two paragraphs of eight sentences to one differently worded paragraph of four sentences.

"It would be good for us to spend an hour every day thinking about the life of Jesus. We should use our imagination to put ourselves in each story, especially the stories from the last week of His life. The more we think about His great sacrifice for us, the more confidence we'll have in Him, and the more love we will feel. The more we study and think and talk about Jesus, the more like Him we will become."—*Messiah*, p. 54.

In addition, not one Bible quotation in the entire book, *Messiah*, is from the King James Version. Add to that the fact that a very large number of Scripture quotations have been totally omitted. Her books are a treasure-house of Bible quotations—but both must go.

BOOKS OF A NEW ORDER

"The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the sup- position that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error. A new organization would be established. Books

of a new order would be written. A system of intellec- tual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonder- ful work. The Sabbath of course, would be lightly re- garded, as also the God who created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their depen- dence on human power, which, without God, is worth- less. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure."

— *1 Selected Messages*, 204-205