

- The Purpose Driven Lie -

A Doctrinal Critique of Rick Warren's book 'The Purpose Driven Life'

Follow-Up

Purpose Driven Gnosticism

The background and reason as to why some of the New Testament epistles were written includes Gnostic influences upon early New Testament churches. The content and purpose of some of the epistles include rebukes and corrections against the incorporation of such ideas and teachings. In *An Introduction to the New Testament*, D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo raise the issue and influence of Gnosticism in the early church. Unfortunately, however, Gnosticism seems to be making a resurgence in the church today thanks to the likes of Rick Warren who include Gnostic practices and teachings in their books, of particular note is *The Purpose Driven Life*. Concerning Gnosticism¹, Carson and Moo write,

The most substantial cache of gnostic documents conveniently available in English translation is from Nag Hammadi². An hour or two of quiet reading of these works discloses a very different world from that of the New Testament. The Gnostic documents display ideas about human origins far removed from those in the New Testament or in the entire Bible. Usually matter is seen to be intrinsically bad; **salvation is secured**, not by the substitutionary death of a sacrifice, but **by knowledge of one's true identity**; and secret rites abound.³

D.A. Carson's comments makes one wonder whether the Gnostics were looking for a purpose and/or trying to discover their SHAPE⁴?

But what of the secret rites, you say, Rick Warren doesn't espouse any such thing? Rick Warren's SHAPE program incorporates a Shape Profiling Tool (a 24 page document, downloadable from Rick Warren's Saddleback Church website). In *The Purpose Driven Life* Warren's SHAPE program is introduced under the guise of Purpose #4, *You Were Shaped for Service God*. For those persons who are members of Warren's church, they are required to be indoctrinated into [Purpose Driven] Classes 101 and 201 before they are ready for Class 301 where this tool is utilised. In like manner, The Purpose Driven Life Secret Society (a.k.a. churches and persons undertaking Rick Warren's 40 Days of Purpose program) don't undertake Bible Studies anymore, but Purpose Driven Studies – where there is no need to bring your Bible, it's not called for.⁵ They have the source of true knowledge: *The Purpose Driven Church*, *The Purpose Driven Life* and Rick Warren's sermons on his website www.pastors.com!

No Longer Secret

But where is this leading? Rick Warren's superficial, psychologised, SHAPE profiling tools and Global PEACE Plan, etc., are one thing, but let us consider this impact of this deception on the multitudes of churches that are becoming and those that have become Purpose Driven. Of particular note, though,

¹ The *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies* says, "Gnosticism. In a broad sense, a complex religious and philosophical movement ...which claimed that a true understanding of God, the self and salvation comes through special revelation and knowledge ... when speaking of the first century, it is common to refer to Gnosticism as an early Christian heresy that stressed privately revealed knowledge above that which is generally available to everyone through the Scriptures." Arthur G. Patzia & Anthony J. Petrotta, *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 51.

² James A. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Harper, 1990). Footnote 17 in D.A. Carson & Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2nd Ed), 35.

³ D.A. Carson & Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2nd Ed), 35.

⁴ Chapter/Day 31 in *The Purpose Driven Life* is "Understanding Your Shape".

⁵ I have spoken to, and read of, persons who, in essence, have been rebuked for bring their Bibles to Forty Days of Purpose meetings. This is not to say it is the norm, but it is not unusual either. Nevertheless, proof-texting the Bible is not altogether that much better than no Bible at all – especially if you are being guided to certain unbiblical outcome.

is the negative impact Purpose Driven is having upon numerous churches, and that this impact is being observed and noted by individuals and institutions outside of the "church".

On Tuesday, 5 September 2006, the *Wall Street Journal* published Suzanne Sataline's article, "Veneration Gap - A Popular Strategy For Church Growth Splits Congregants," whose sub heading reads, "Across U.S., Members Divide On Making Sermons, Music More 'Purpose-Driven'. No More 'Wrath of God'?"⁶ The article notes the divisions arising in churches (of specific note is Iuka Baptist Church, Mississippi) where congregations are splitting according to adherence to and dissent over the implementation of Purpose Driven strategies in the church. Concerning Iuka Baptist Church, the article notes that 150 members of the church voted to "kick Charles Jones," a member of the church for 59 years, "off the deacons' board" for complaining that the pastor was "following the teachings of the Rev. Rick Warren, the best-selling author and church-growth guru". After the vote, another 40 members "quit the church to support Mr. Jones."⁷ As if such division – though necessary – isn't bad enough, the incident had to be published in the *Wall Street Journal* for the world to read.

One praiseworthy outcome arising from the *Wall Street Journal* article is **THE ISSUE** at the centre of the controversy, and hopefully the dissemination and "advertising" of **THE ISSUE** will make pastors, elders and congregants sit up and take notice.

Mr. Warren, the effusive pastor of stadium-sized Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., is best known for his book "The Purpose Driven Life," which has sold 25 million copies and urges people to follow God's plan for them. He has spawned an industry advising churches to **become "purpose-driven" by attracting nonbelievers with lively worship services, classes and sermons that discuss Jesus' impact on their lives, and invitations to volunteer.**

But the purpose-driven movement is dividing the country's more than 50 million evangelicals. Some evangelicals, like the Iuka castoffs, say it's inappropriate for churches to use **growth tactics akin to modern management tools**, including concepts such as researching the church "market" and writing mission statements. Others say it encourages simplistic Bible teaching. Anger over the adoption of Mr. Warren's methods has driven off older Christians from their longtime churches. **Congregations nationwide have split or expelled members who fought the changes**, roiling working-class Baptist congregations and affluent nondenominational churches...

The Rev. Ron Key, then the senior minister, says he objected to the church's "Madison Avenue" marketing. "I believe Jesus died for everybody," Mr. Key says, not just people in a "target audience." He says the leaders wanted church that was more "edgy," with a worship service using modern music. Mr. Key was demoted, then fired for being divisive and insubordinate.⁸

Sataline's article also notes Rick Warren's own left hand **knowing** what the right hand is doing⁹ in his gimmicky self-promotion, "Mr. Warren says he donates 90% of his money to fund philanthropy and overseas training."¹⁰ Concerning insubordination and opposition, Sataline goes on to report comments made by a speaker at "Church Transitions Inc., a Waxhaw, N.C., nonprofit that works closely with Mr. Warren's church",

"... Mr. Clyde recommended that the pastor speak to critical members, then help them leave if they don't stop objecting. Then when those congregants join a new church, Mr.

⁶ <http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB115741786888753373-IMyQjAxMDE2NTA3NTQwMTU3Wj.html> , cited 6 Sept 2006.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ c.f., Matthew 6:3

¹⁰ <http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB115741786888753373-IMyQjAxMDE2NTA3NTQwMTU3Wj.html> , cited 6 Sept 2006.

Clyde instructed, pastors should call their new minister and suggest that the congregants be barred from any leadership role."¹¹

Ironically, we are then alerted to Rick Warren's cry of innocence to distance himself from the very Purpose Driven approaches he espouses, "Mr. Warren acknowledges that splits occur in congregations that adopt his ideas, though he says he opposes efforts to expel church members." Hypocrite!

Of particular embarrassment for the (evangelical) Christian world is the article's publishing of budget figures, and the like, of churches which have been affected by "splits" over Purpose Driven. The world must shake its head in dismay when it reads that a church had to trim their "\$1.7 million budget to be able to afford adding to the sound system and new stage lights, which cost \$150,000".¹² Or that some services start, "with a piercing electric-guitar solo, boosted with amplifiers from the \$50,000 sound system,"¹³ or the impact of becoming Purpose Driven had impacted attendance figures such that "Rev. Bob Felts, pastor of Brookwood Church in Burlington, N.C., ... had to cut tens of thousands of dollars from the annual budget, which is now \$600,000"¹⁴. Where is Jesus in all this? Where is the Gospel?

Let me suggest that in the light of the packs of marauding wolves taking up pastoral and/or controlling positions within churches, congregations and denominations, God is bringing to light – for the world to see – the judgement that He is starting; and that judgement is truly starting in household of God.

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh **no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.** For the time already past is sufficient *for you* to have carried out the **desire of the Gentiles**, having pursued a course of **sensuality**, lusts, drunkenness, **carousing**, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. **In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you;** but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to *the will of God*. The end of all things is near; therefore, **be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.** Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; **so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever.** Amen.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. **If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.** Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. **For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?** And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? Therefore,

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you. To Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:1 - 5:11

We are indeed in the end times, and Jesus certainly did not say in vain,

"...However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith¹⁵ on the earth?"

Luke 18:8b

¹⁵ Faith: from the Greek 'pistis' which is faith and faithfulness.