

Rick Warren's Introduction to the Celebrate Recovery Program

Taken from www.celebraterecovery.com

The following link is provided as evidence firsthand how Rick Warren introduces Celebrate Recovery in "his own words". The link is taken from the official CR website. A few comments follow:

http://www.celebraterecovery.com/?page_id=1916

Here is what Rick says in the opening paragraph:

"The Bible clearly states *"all have sinned."* It is my nature to sin, and it is yours too. None of us is untainted. Because of sin, we've all hurt ourselves, we've all hurt other people, and others have hurt us. This means each of us need repentance and recovery in order to live our lives the way God intended."

The very few opening statements actually sound good at first until Rick does two things:

1. He brings up the issue of "hurts". The terminology he uses for "hurts" is part of CR's watered-down terminology for "sin" as "hurts, habits, and hang-ups". He started out Biblical by introducing sin but then proceeds to contradict himself by introducing "hurts". In his introduction, he repeatedly uses the phrase "hurts, habits, and hang-ups" instead of "sin".

2. He says, "Each of us need repentance and recovery". Rick, explain to me in appropriate Biblical terms how a person can accurately "repent" AND "recover" at the same time? Repentance of sin focuses on the "here and now". It takes immediate responsibility for any sins of the past, forsakes those sins entirely, and presses forward by faith. "Recovery" focuses entirely on the past. People in 12 step recovery programs including Celebrate Recovery are given an indication they must repeatedly "return to their past" in order to heal themselves "in the present". To put the terms "repentance" and "recovery" in the same sentence is contradictory. It is like attempting to mix oil and water. The two terms are in direct opposition to each other.

Rick Warren makes the following claim about the nature of the Celebrate Recovery program, "What we need is a biblical and balanced program to help people overcome their hurts, habits and hang-ups. *Celebrate Recovery is that program.* Based on the actual words of Jesus rather than psychological theory, our recovery program is unique, and more effective in helping people change than anything else I've seen or heard of."

Rick claims, "Based on the actual words of Jesus rather than psychological theory". However, in an investigation conducted by The Berean Call ministry at Celebrate Recovery's 2005 summit conference, listen to what T.A. Macmahon discovered about this claim by Rick Warren, "CR is highly promoted as completely biblical and not psychological, yet the key speakers for CR

Summit 2005 were clinical psychologists Drs. John Townsend and Henry Cloud. Psychologist David Stoop, the editor of *Life Recovery Bible* (CR participants' mandatory paraphrase Bible, polluted with psychotherapy commentary), is a favorite speaker at Saddleback's CR Large Group meetings. The CR leadership manual advises, "Have Christian psychotherapists volunteer their time to help instruct and support your leaders."⁴ You can't have it both ways, Rick Warren. You simply have made one claim which was proven to be nothing more than an outright contradiction in its exposure.

Additionally, Rick claims the following feature of Celebrate Recovery, "*This recovery program addresses all types of habits, hurts and hang-ups*. Some recovery programs deal only with alcohol or drugs or another single problem. But Celebrate Recovery is a "large umbrella" program under which a limitless number of issues can be dealt with. At Saddleback Church, only one out of three who attend Celebrate Recovery are dealing with alcohol or drugs. We have dozens of other specialized groups too." "Hurts, habits, and hang-ups" are psychological terms used by psychologists and psychotherapists to counsel their clients. Again, Rick Warren has contradicted himself by using psychological terminology instead of addressing behaviors as "sin" according to God's word, the Bible. Interestingly, addressing a person's "hurts" focuses on a person's past which plain and simple equalizes the correct definition of "recovery" when God's word instructs us to press forward and not dwell upon our past (see note on #2 under "This recovery program is based on God's word").

Rick Warren also says, "*This recovery program is based on God's Word, the Bible*. When Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount, he began by stating "Eight Ways to Be Happy." Today we call them the Beatitudes. From a conventional viewpoint, most of these statements didn't make sense. They sounded like contradictions. But when you fully understand what Jesus is saying, you'll realize that these eight principles are God's road to recovery, wholeness, growth, and spiritual maturity."

The recovery program is based on God's word, the Bible? I have a very difficult time accepting that statement considering the following:

1. Several days ago, I sent an e-mail exposing the distortions of the 12 steps and Biblical comparisons. A "Biblically-based, Christ-centered" program does not distort Biblical scripture by incorrectly placing scriptures where they do not belong and entirely misinterpreting their meanings using the 12 steps.
2. Additionally, if it was truly based on God's word, members would be encouraged to constantly move forward in their walk with Jesus Christ, not repeatedly focusing on the past. 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Philippians 3: 12-13 make it clear we should not dwell on the past in order to get to where we need to be in Jesus Christ.
3. A point which will be briefly discussed shortly is that this program has components of psychology and psychotherapy involved. A program cannot be based on God's word that utilizes psychotherapy in small group settings, not to mention that the CR program itself has simply taken psychological concepts from Carl Jung and Bill Wilson, the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Rick Warren also says, *"This recovery program is forward-looking.* Rather than wallowing in the past, or dredging up and rehearsing painful memories over and over, Celebrate Recovery focuses on the future. Regardless of what has already happened, the solution is to start making wise choices *now* and depend on Christ's power to help me make those changes.

As mentioned at the start, the term "recovery" is meant to repeatedly focus on one's past. An illustration - I recently saw a sign in my hometown in front of the parking lot to the electric department. It was a sign for "The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009." The idea is that America must "recover" from the financial mistakes of its past in order to reinvest and get back to where it needs to be financially. How can a program be "forward-looking" when it repeatedly holds members accountable for past sins and conduct?

Rick Warren claims, *"This recovery program emphasized spiritual commitment to Jesus Christ.* The 3rd principle calls for people to make a total surrender of their lives to Christ. Lasting recovery cannot happen without this step. Everybody needs Jesus. Celebrate Recovery is thoroughly evangelistic in nature. In fact, the first time I took our entire church through this program over 500 people prayed to receive Christ on a single weekend. It was an amazing spiritual harvest. And during the ten week series that I preached to kick-off this program, our attendance grew by over 1,500 people! Don't be surprised if this program becomes the most effective outreach ministry in your church. Today, nearly 73% of the people who've been through Celebrate Recovery have come from *outside our church.* Changed lives always attract others who want to be changed."

"Lasting recovery" cannot occur without total "surrender"? How do you expect people to totally "surrender" their lives to Jesus Christ when they are told they will never, ever "recover" from their past? People who do totally surrender their lives to Jesus Christ once and for all are completely forgiven of their sins (read Hebrews 10:14) - they have recovered once and for all, and any attempts to constantly bring up their past is nothing more than a tactic of Satan to keep them in bondage to their sins.

Rick boasts how 500 people prayed to "receive Christ" as their personal Savior the first time he took the entire church through the program. He then claims how the attendance numbers skyrocketed to 1,500. Sadly, the truth is that this is just one example of the "fruit" of modern evangelistic techniques. It is safe to say the majority of those 500 people who "prayed to receive Christ" backslid and were nothing more than false converts. I am not saying that is true of every single one of the 500 people who prayed, but making a "quick-decision" for Jesus is not Biblical. The attendance growth was over 1,500? Rick, are you more interested in numbers or are you more interested in the number of people who are genuinely and soundly converted in Jesus Christ? From your claims, it seems you are more interested in the "numbers game". Larger numbers have never proven to equalize the number of people who are faithfully serving the Lord. In fact, the truth is the exact opposite. Most people today who make "quick decisions" for Jesus Christ fall away entirely, and many churches cannot account for the many converts who left their churches due to a watered-down gospel message.

RW also says, "73% of the people who've been through Celebrate Recovery have come from outside the church." Where did he obtain this statistic? Where and how was this data obtained?

Furthermore, since he doesn't state precisely how this statistic was obtained, is the percentage truly accurately representative of the more than 4,500 churches that host a CR ministry? Let us also look at the phrase "outside the church." Does he mean "outside" the Christian church as a whole or simply outside the specific churches where individual CR ministries are operated? Sorry to say, but during my 2 1/2 years in Celebrate Recovery, no one in CR ever polled me to find out if I was from outside the specific church where the CR ministry was operated. Likewise, I never recall the leaders of the CR ministries where I attended ever taking a poll to discover and validate this statistical claim of Rick Warren.

Any ministry that is truly "Biblical" and "Christ-centered" will ONLY use the Bible as the final authority - not the 12 steps, not psychological professional authority, and certainly not psychotherapeutic techniques.