

Rick Warren, The Purpose-Driven Death & Celebrate No Recovery from Jesus Program



Rick Warren is the founding pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, one of America's largest and best-known churches. His previous book, *The Purpose-Driven Church*, has sold over a million copies in 20 languages. (back inside dust jacket of *The Purpose-Driven Life*, copyright 2002 by Rick Warren)

Rick Warren is a false teacher who,

I. Denies The Holy Spirit (Jude 4 "the only Lord God")

In his book *The Purpose-Driven Life*, which is primarily written to Christians, on page 212 Warren writes,

Let me be clear: If you're losing the battle against a persistent bad habit, an addiction, or a temptation, and you're stuck in a repeating cycle of good intention-failure-guilt, you will not get better on your own! You need the help of other people.

Here Warren denies the power of the Holy Spirit that is resident in every believer's life (John 7:39). In the context of speaking to believers, he says "You need the help of other people" in order to overcome "a persistent bad habit, an addiction, or a temptation." Scripture nowhere says any such thing. On the contrary, Scripture says,

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

All any believer needs is the Holy Spirit, as God also says,

Walk by the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16)

As a believer walks by the Spirit of God he will have self-control, since this is part of the fruit of the Spirit, and he will not have sinful bad habits, or addictions.

In the context of Warren's statement above, Rick supports his statement with Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, but he misuses these verses. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 is not speaking of the salvation that comes only through Christ (Acts 4:12). But, Warren deceitfully uses these verses and,

II. Denies Our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 2:1; Jude 4)

On the same page in *The Purpose-Driven Life* Warren writes,

God's plan for your growth and freedom includes other Christians. Authentic, honest fellowship is the antidote to your lonely struggle against those sins that won't budge.

The Bible *never* gives fellowship as an antidote against sin that won't budge. On the contrary, Jesus said,

Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. (John 8:34-36)

Jesus declares that *He* is the antidote against sin. Scripture says to those who have Christ that "**sin shall not have dominion over you**" (Romans 6:14). Why? Because Jesus has set them free (John 8:31-34).

Yet, in denial of Jesus Christ and His holy word Rick Warren writes,

Some problems are too ingrained, too habitual, and too big to solve on your own. You need a small group or an accountability partner who will encourage you, support you, pray for you, love you unconditionally; and hold you accountable. (ibid., p. 213-214)

In other words, some sins are too hard for the Savior, Jesus Christ, to solve. "You need a small group." Yes indeed, you do need a small group if you do not have the Savior, and you want to end up in hell being cursed forever with your trust in man (Jeremiah 17:5). This is where Warren's "Purpose-Driven Life" leads. It leads to eternal death (Revelation 21:8). It is a Purpose-Driven Death, because the trust, the faith, is not in the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, but rather in man and his man-made way of dealing with sin.

This is well illustrated by Saddleback's "Celebrate Recovery" program. Warren writes,

At Saddleback Church we have seen the awesome power of this principle to break the grip of seemingly hopeless addictions and persistent temptations through a program we developed called Celebrate Recovery. (ibid., p. 213)

Here it is admitted that a man-made ("we developed") program is used to "break the grip of . . . addictions." In other words, a man-made program has been developed to do what Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit does - "break the grip of" sin. This is a flat-out denial of our Lord Jesus Christ, as 2 Peter 2:1 and Jude 4 declare men like Warren will do.

Warren goes on and says,

In the past ten years over 5,000 lives have been set free from all kinds of habits, hurts, and addictions. Today the program is used in thousands of churches. I highly recommend it for your church. (ibid., p. 213)

Jesus says He is the one who sets free (John 8:31-36). Warren lies and says his program sets free.

III. Denies The Power of Godliness (2 Timothy 3:5)

All of this reveals that Warren denies the power of godliness. When someone denies the Holy Spirit, and denies Jesus Christ, as Warren does, the fact of the matter is, they deny the power of godliness; that is, the power that is resident in the salvation of Christ. Scripture is not unclear on this matter (e.g. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21). When Christ saves a person, they are set free from the dominating power of sin (John 8:31-34). They no longer live in a pattern of habitual sin. This distinguishes real believers from false believers, as 1 John 2:3-5 says,

By this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

Likewise, Ephesians 5:5-6 says,

This you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words.

Warren deceives with empty words by declaring that Christians would even have any need to be set free from addictions and "sins that won't budge" (ibid., p. 212). His lewdness (Jude 4) is even more manifest when one realizes that when Warren speaks of addictions and "sins that won't budge" he believes there are such things as Christian sexual perverts, Christian drunks, Christian drug addicts etc.. This is particularly articulated by the words of one of Saddleback's pastors, John Baker, who declared himself to be an elder of Saddleback church and "a believer who struggles with alcoholism." In this same testimony Baker proclaimed concerning Celebrate Recovery,

Some of the groups include codependent relationships, eating disorders, smoking addiction, sexual and physical abuse victim's groups, groups for adult children of alcoholics, sexual and relationship addictions, and veteran's group for those dealing with post traumatic stress syndrome.

Then, speaking of these people, Baker says,

All of us have several things in common. We love Christ, we're willing to turn our lives over to Him, and we're praying that we can begin to break the cycle of dysfunction for our families.

Baker declares they "love Christ"! This is such a lie. None of them love Christ, because not only are they still lost (caught) in their sin, but they are in a man-made program to overcome their sin or problems. Therefore, they reveal their trust is in man (Jeremiah 17:5) and not in the Savior, the Rock of refuge (Psalm 31:2; 46:1; 94:22).

This lewdness goes so far as to include homosexuals! Homosexuals are included in their "sexual . . . addictions" mentioned above. In other words, Warren and Saddleback church believes there is such a thing as a homosexual Christian, which is totally absurd (Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). This we know, because they openly admitted this as of June 22, 1999, and we have a hard copy of their files. But, as soon as we exposed this folly on the public sidewalks outside their church, they restricted access to these pages. This is what the web page said:

Celebrate Recovery is committed to help strengthen and support Christians who struggle with homosexual feelings and behaviors or who have a desire to leave the homosexual lifestyle. (old web address, <http://web.archive.org/web/19990203041850/http://www.celebraterecovery.com/reclaim.htm>, hard copy on file).

"Christians . . . who have a desire to leave the homosexual lifestyle" (i.e. christian homosexuals)? That is lewd! There is no such thing as a christian homosexual (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Now, lest some fool argue, "Are you perfect?" Or, "All Christians struggle with sin." Warren is not talking about any struggles with sin that every Christian lives with the rest of their life (as in Romans 7). Warren promises a cure. He claims this Celebrate Recovery can set a person free. The problem is, he is speaking of the very freedom Christ offers (John 8:31-34), which, by the way, neither Warren nor his program can deliver. Anyone who follows his folly will never be free, because this deceit leads to nowhere but eternal death (2 Corinthians 11:14-15; Revelation 12:9; 21:8).

People are deceived by Warren, in part, because he mixes "Jesus" into his man-made program. As Warren states,

You are going to see lives changed in dramatic ways. You are going to see hopeless marriages restored and people set free from all kinds of sinful habits, hang-ups, and hurts as they allow Jesus to be Lord in every area of their lives.

Salvation is only attained via submitting in every area of your life to Christ (Luke 14:26-33; Romans 10:9-10), and once this is truly done, Christ sets free from all kinds of sinful habits (John 8:31-34; Romans 10:10). No program or fellowship is needed or even helpful for this. Some might argue such a program is not needed, but can be helpful, but it is not helpful for any soul to be set free via a man-made program. Why? Because through such an approach, the trust is not truly in Christ, but in a program that cannot and will not truly save.

The only time Scripture describes a need for one another (i.e. fellowship), is in the context of the functioning of the body of Christ (e.g. 1 Corinthians 12:21), or the serious benefit of two or more in everyday living, as in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. When it comes to having self-control and being saved from the dominating power of sin, it is Christ, and Christ alone who saves (Acts 4:12; 1 John 2:27).

IV. Denies The Fear of God

On page 95 of *The Purpose-Driven Life* Warren writes,

We obey God, not out of duty or fear or compulsion, but because we *love* him and trust that he knows what is best for us.

On page 228 he writes,

We don't serve God out of guilt or fear or even duty, but out of joy, and deep gratitude for what he's done for us.

To say that we don't serve God out of fear, is to direct people down the same damning path they have been on: "**There is no fear of God before their eyes**" (Romans 3:18).

Hebrews says,

Let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and *godly fear*. For our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28-29)

The Bible describes godly fear as terror (Job 23:16; 31:23; 37:1; 2 Corinthians 5:11), trembling (1 Chronicles 16:30; Ezra 10:3; Psalm 96:9; 99:1; 114:7; Isaiah 66:2, 5), and being afraid (Psalm 76:7, 11; 89:7; 96:4; 119:120; 130:4). Warren says we are not to serve God out of fear, but this is a lie. Even Jesus served God out of fear, as it is written,

Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear. (Hebrews 5:7)

Jesus Christ was heard because of His godly fear. You will not be heard, and you will not be saved from death, eternal death, if you don't serve God out of fear, because,

The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death. (Proverbs 14:27)

You will not be turned away from the snares of death, if you do not serve God out of fear, because,

By the fear of the Lord one departs from evil. (Proverbs 16:6)

If you do not fear the Lord, you will not depart from evil, and you will therefore reap the wrath of God, as it is written,

I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity. (Isaiah 13:11)

But, those who serve God out of fear, they shall have eternal life.

The fear of the Lord leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will not be visited with evil. (Proverbs 19:23)

By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life. (Proverbs 22:4)

Now, lest anyone think otherwise, believers are also to serve God out of love (Mark 12:30). The love of God and the fear of God are not mutually exclusive. The Bible clearly teaches both, and the Psalmist well illustrates both exist simultaneously (see Psalm 119:20; 97, 120).

V. Denies The Wrath of God Upon ALL Who Live Ungodly

Consistent with his denial of the Holy Spirit, his denial of Christ, and his denial of the salvation of God, is Warren's denial of the wrath of God upon *anyone* who lives for themselves. On page 232 in *The Purpose-Driven Life* Rick writes,

The Bible warns unbelievers, "*He will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves,*" [Romans 2:8] but for Christians it will mean a loss of eternal rewards.

This is such a destructive lie! It will not only mean a loss of eternal rewards, it will mean the loss of their eternal soul (Mark 8:36). God makes no distinction whatsoever upon those who "*live for themselves.*" He will pour out his anger and wrath on *all* those who live for themselves. Note the context of the passage to which Warren refers:

He will give eternal life to those who persist in doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers. But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and practice evil deeds. There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps sinning - for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who do good. (Romans 2:7-10 NLT)

True Christians do not live for themselves, as Romans later declares,

None of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. (Romans 14:7-8)

Therefore, a true Christian would never come under such wrath, lose any rewards, or anything else, because if they did, if they did live for themselves, they would no longer be a Christian (Romans 14:7-8, "none"), and Romans 2:8 would be fulfilled even upon them (Ezekiel 3:20; 33:12-13;

VI. Denies James 4:4

Consistent with all of the above is Warren's denial of James 4:4. On page 297 in his Purpose-Driven Death book Warren writes,

You have a choice to make. You will be either a *world-class* Christian or a *worldly* Christian.

Worldly Christians look to God primarily for personal fulfillment. They are saved, but self-centered. They love to attend concerts and enrichment seminars, but you would never find them at a missions conference because they aren't interested. Their prayers focus on their needs, blessings, and happiness. It's a "me-first" faith: How can God make *my* life more comfortable? They want to use God for their purposes instead of *being* used for *his* purposes.

James 4:4 says,

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

James declares even a simple desire to be a friend of the world makes one an enemy of God. Warren speaks of a "Christian" who is downright *worldly*. In either case, both the "Christian" who simply desires to be a friend of the world, or the "Christian" who *is* a friend of the world (i.e. worldly), both are an enemy of God. They are in *no way* saved, for this is what God has to say about His enemies:

Your hand will find all Your enemies; Your right hand will find those who hate You. You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger; the Lord shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them. (Psalm 21:8-9)

For behold, Your enemies, O Lord, for behold, Your enemies shall perish. (Psalm 92:9)

The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad! Clouds and darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. A fire goes before Him, and burns up His enemies round about. (Psalm 97:1-3; see also Deuteronomy 32:41-42; Isaiah 1:24; 42:13; 59:18; 66:6, 14)

VII. Denies 1 Timothy 4:1-3

In *The Purpose-Driven Life* Warren reveals that he does not believe Catholics have departed from the faith, give heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, and speak lies in hypocrisy (1 Timothy 4:1-3). He quotes Catholics as if they were in the faith. For example, on page 88 Warren writes,

The classic book on learning how to develop a constant conversation with God is *Practicing the Presence of God*. It was written in the seventeenth century by Brother Lawrence, a humble cook in a French monastery. Brother Lawrence was able to turn even the most commonplace and menial tasks, like preparing meals and washing dishes, into acts of praise and communion with God.

So Warren describes this Catholic (www.catholicapologetics.0catch.com), who according to God was involved with demons (1 Timothy 4:1-3), as one who had communion with God. Paul said,

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

There is no way this man was anything but a liar and a wicked man with demons in his life (1 Timothy 4:1-3). Yet Warren recommends his book. Why? Because Warren rejects 1 Timothy 4:1-3 (as well as 2 John 9, etc.).

In this same book, Warren cites "St. John of the Cross" (a Catholic, p. 108), Madame Guyon (a Catholic mystic, p. 193), and Mother Teresa (p. 125, 231). It is apparent Warren has no problem with those who are not in the faith and are involved with demons. Of course, this fits well with Warren since he follows the worldly wisdom of the AA 12 step approach in dealing with sin in his Celebrate Recovery program.

VIII. Denies The Gospel

The 12 step approach came from another man involved with demons, Bill Wilson (see *Pass It On*, p. 275f). Baker in his testimony notes,

The Christ-centered 12 steps are included because so many of those attending Celebrate Recovery have come from a 12 step background. You will see how the 12 steps fit and are covered by Celebrate Recovery's Eight Recovery Principles, based on the Beatitudes.

Baker lies in hypocrisy when he says it is "Christ-centered," because the very fact that they feel they need 12 steps (or 8 steps) to go through to overcome the power of addictive sin proves it is not only not Christ-centered, but it is a rejection of Christ. If it was Christ-centered *it* (Celebrate Recovery) would not exist, because it would not be needed; because Christ would have already set free (John 8:31-34) all who come to Him (John 1:12-13).

Celebrate Recovery is another gospel, and Warren, Baker, and all who promote such a thing are to be cursed because of it (Galatians 1:8-9).

IX. Denies True Humility

On page 148 of Warren's death book, after quoting Philippians 2:3-4, he writes,

Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less. (ibid., p. 148)

Warren speaks directly against the very words he quotes. Warren quotes out of the NCV in which it says,

Give more honor to others than to yourselves.

The NKJV reads, "**In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.**" Giving more honor to others than to yourself and esteeming others better than yourself is certainly thinking less of yourself. Warren perverts what humility is and diverts people away from it. His warped view of humility is further displayed when he writes,

Humble people are so focused on serving others, they don't think of themselves. (ibid.)

This also is a lie, since the very verse Warren quotes states,

Do not be interested only in your own life, but be interested in the lives of others. (NCV)

In other words, you can be interested in your own life, just don't be interested *only* in your own life.

This perverted teaching on humility goes well (for deceiving people) with his self-worth teaching. On page 63 of *The Purpose-Driven Life* Warren promotes self-worth. He writes,

Bringing enjoyment to God, living for his pleasure, is the first purpose of your life. When you fully understand this truth, you will never again have a problem with feeling insignificant. **It proves your worth.** (bold added)

This is a lie. Anyone given the awesome privilege to bring enjoyment to God (e.g. Proverbs 15:8; 2 Corinthians 5:9) should realize any such privilege is totally by God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-10) and has nothing to do with them (Romans 9:11-22). It has *nothing* to do with any worth. It has everything to do with God's great mercy and kindness to undeserving unworthy sinners (Romans 5:8-10).

Someone may argue, "But Warren speaks of the worth God places upon a person, as Warren writes immediately after this:

If you are *that* important to God, and he considers you valuable enough to keep with him for eternity, what greater significance could you have?"

What about the people God has chosen to spend eternity in hell (Proverbs 16:4)? Are they worth less to God? Are they worthless? Are they insignificant? Does not the Scripture say, "For God so loved the world . . ." (John 3:16)? Are the elect somehow worth more?

When it comes to salvation, this whole "worth" and "significance" push by Warren is not found anywhere in Scripture, but what is found is the fact that God chooses people for salvation completely apart from anything to do with them. Election, salvation, is according to "the purpose of God," not some worth factor (Romans 9:11-23).

Warren's teaching gets people to focus on themselves (your worth, your significance), and Scripture gets people to focus on God, and His great love toward mankind (Ephesians 2:4). Warren's teaching is perverted, and encourages people away from true humility. Scripture is not perverted, and encourages people toward real humility, as it is written,

Lord, what is man, that You take knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him? Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow. (Psalm 144:3-4)

Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales. (Isaiah 40:15)

All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless. (Isaiah 40:17)

With Isaiah 40:15-17 in view, it should be clear that the value God places upon men (e.g. Matthew 6:26; 10:31; Luke 12:7, 24) is a matter of God's mercy and kindness and has nothing to do with man's "significance." As David wrote,

My goodness is nothing apart from You. (Psalm 16:2)