

THE PURPOSE DRIVEN *Life*

A Critique

Following are T.A. McMahon's brief notes and comments on *The Purpose-Driven Life* [TPDL] as of 12/10/04. He is in the process of doing a further review of the book, to which he will add contents periodically. Check back for updates.

My first introduction to Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose-Driven Life*, was through input given to me by a missionary (a former Roman Catholic) who had been unsuccessfully witnessing to his Catholic relatives. His Catholic brother and sister-in-law borrowed TPDL from him without his offering it to them. He said it was the only time they were ever interested in any of his "Protestant" material. They loved the book, although it did nothing to dissuade them from their Roman Catholicism. I can only surmise that what they read reinforced their Catholic meritorious works orientation for salvation. TPDL does stress "doing" and "submission" to the church (or Church, in their case). The gospel presented in the book is not clearly at odds with the gospel of Rome, and therefore does not present a threat that Catholics would turn from their faith. Some Roman Catholic Churches offer TPDL and related church-growth materials.

Generally speaking, *The Purpose-Driven Life* is a pastor's dream. Rick Warren issues exhortations that most pastors rarely challenge their congregations with, but with which most pastors would very much like to have their members comply. Warren offers some teachings that are biblically sound when used in scriptural context. Throughout the book, the reader will find many things to challenge him in his walk with the Lord.

On the other hand, there are also a number of teachings and other content found in the book that could easily lead the reader *away* from the truth of God's Word. My chief concern is that the undiscerning reader will buy into much of what Rick Warren presents that is unbiblical. Given his worldwide influence, he is sowing much error among the sheep, in spite of (and possibly because of) the good content he presents.

Additionally, I had a sense of uneasiness that transcended the particular problems with the book. I felt that I was being ushered into a developing program that has an agenda beyond just helping the Christian to grow in his relationship with the Lord or teaching the local church to glorify God and to bear fruit as it functions as a body in obedience to the Scriptures. Many of Rick Warren's church-growth developments are reminiscent of movements within the church during the latter part of the 20th century, e.g., the Latter Rain movement, Kingdom Now theology, Dominionism, and Christian Reconstructionism. All of these promoted the religious humanistic idea that Christianity, through the application of biblical principles or signs and wonders, would transform the earth into a paradise and thereby convert the majority of its population to Christ.

Following are, in my opinion, some of the more troubling aspects of the book. Bear with me if some of the things pointed out seem inconsequential. Although I purposefully tried to avoid nit picking, nevertheless,

some seeming “nits” are recorded because they reveal a tendency on Rick Warren’s [RW] part that indeed has critical consequences. For instance, if it were a rare exception that RW misrepresented a Bible verse as a proof text for a concept he was teaching, it would be unfair to him to make an issue out of it. However, he does that with great frequency throughout *The Purpose-Driven Life*. Sadly, there are many other such “nits.”

In attempting to encourage the reader to complete the book in “40 days,” Rick Warren cites the significance of that time period in the Bible. However, he takes liberties by imposing his own ideas on the Scriptures in order to support what he is saying. Although his interpretations give the impression of being biblical, often they are not. For example, he gives a list of individuals from the Bible who were questionably “transformed” through a 40-day experience. That is an overstatement at best. However, he also includes the temptation of Jesus, of which he says: “*Jesus was empowered by 40 days in the wilderness.*” This is a definite misrepresentation in attempting to validate one of the book’s opening premises (pp. 9-10).

Although Rick Warren seems to the reader to be applying the Scriptures, his preference for paraphrase Bible versions throughout the book is definitely counterproductive to understanding the Word of God. In addition, his encouragement to memorize Scripture verses (normally a good thing), when applied to the paraphrase verses he lists, is not a memorization of God’s Word at all, but rather someone’s subjective interpretation of the Scriptures. That’s not good (p. 11).

On page 11 he also states, “*Real spiritual growth is never an isolated, individualistic pursuit. Maturity is produced through relationships and community.*” Although I don’t find that idea in the Bible, it is a concept related to General Systems Theory, a concept contrary to a biblical worldview.

“*The best way to explain God’s purpose for your life is to allow the Scripture to speak for itself*” (p. 11). RW’s use of so many subjective paraphrase interpretations makes it impossible for “the Scripture to speak for itself.” A Bible paraphrase is an individual’s *interpretation* of what he thinks God is saying. Many examples follow. Page 13 presents a very obvious problem: the “covenant” signing between the reader and Rick Warren serves as a contract committing the individual to reading the book. This is *unbiblical, absurd* (i.e., what kind of covenant can you have with the author of a book?), and potentially *spiritually harmful* (what if the person breaks the covenant?).

Page 15 begins with a verse from Eugene Peterson’s paraphrased Bible version, *The Message (Msg)*: “*A life devoted to things is a dead life, a stump; a God-shaped life is a flourishing tree*” (Proverbs 11:28). Here (and throughout) Peterson seems more interested in poetic language than in accurately rendering God’s Word. Read what the *KJV* actually says: “He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.”

This first chapter is tremendously puzzling. Although Warren says the right things about man’s purpose being found only in God and not in himself, the drift in the rest of the book is definitely humanistic, or man-centered. Another curious item is the Purpose-Driven website’s promotion of this book by mentioning numerous secular organizations that use it, such as the President’s staff, Coca Cola, WalMart, NASCAR, the Oakland Raiders football team, as well as schools, civic clubs, and prisons. Did these entities seriously consider the prescript in the first chapter that only God can reveal a person’s purpose?

Although RW says the book is “*not about you*” (p. 17), much of the focus is indeed about “*you*.” He continually appeals to the reader’s self-interests.

Notice the serious distortion of God’s Word via *The Message*. Romans 8:6: “*Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life*” (p. 18), versus the *KJV*: “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Rick says, “*Every other path leads*

to a dead end,” using Peterson to reinforce his point. It’s this kind of “management language” that reinforces the view on the part of many that *TPDL* is simply a “how to be successful in life” book. “*It is about becoming what God created you to be*” (p. 19).

Page 19 also reveals a major humanistic distortion of Matthew 16:25 from *The Message*: “*Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self,*” versus *KJV*: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” “For my sake” is out; “Your true self” is in.

Although RW attempts to point the reader to the Bible by calling it “*our Owner’s Manual,*” he actually points one to paraphrases, which give very subjective and distorted interpretations of God’s Word (p. 20).

RW tells us that God “*has clearly revealed his five purposes for our lives through the Bible.*” Five? Are these what God has specifically declared? (p. 20).

In interviews, Rick has stated unequivocally that *The Purpose-Driven Life* is *not* a “how to” or “self-help” book. Yet, it is loaded with all the kinds of things that are common to “self-help” books. For example, each chapter concludes with a “Point to Ponder,” a “Verse to Remember,” and a “Question to Consider.” Throughout the book he gives “how to” helps such as “keeping a journal,” “discovering your S.H.A.P.E.,” “how to make God smile,” etc. Why does RW deny that *TPDL* is a self-help book?

On page 20, we find another man-centered *Message* interpretation: 1 Corinthians 2:7: “*God’s wisdom...goes deep into the interior of his purposes....It’s not the latest message, but more like the oldest—what God determined as the way to bring out his best in us,*” versus the *KJV*: “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: [and verse 8] which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” Where is “his best in us” to be found here?

Peterson’s Bible “version” is incredibly humanistic throughout, and that, along with RW’s own humanistic overtures, heavily influences *The Purpose-Driven Life*.

RW states unequivocally: “*To discover your purpose in life you must turn to God’s Word, not the world’s wisdom. You must build your life on eternal truths, not pop psychology, success-motivation, or inspirational stories*” (p. 20). While that would bring a rousing “amen” to those who look to the Bible as their authority and sufficiency for living a life pleasing to God, RW hardly backs up what he says throughout the book. In fact, numerous passages verge on *doublespeak*. On page after page, one finds Bible verses used out of context, paraphrase versions that drastically alter what God’s Word actually says, psychotherapeutic concepts introduced throughout, success and self-oriented encouragements added continually, and contradictions (including the recommendation of “inspirational stories” over preaching) that are confusing at best, and deceptive at worst.

Chapter 2 is problematic throughout. RW more than implies a fatalistic or Calvinistic emphasis on God sovereignly determining every detail of a person’s life (though I doubt RW is a Calvinist). In this chapter, he seems to deny the reality of free will and the resulting consequences of sin, and he also seems to have God involved in the evil that pervades the world. This is nothing less than a form of divine determinism, that is, that God causes everything to take place, including blessings and sin.

On page 23 he states, “*God knew that those two individuals possessed exactly the right genetic makeup to create the custom ‘you’ he had in mind. They had the DNA God wanted to make you....Every plant and every animal was planned by God, and every person was designed with a purpose in mind.*” Such a statement would have to include Hitler, Stalin, Osama Bin Laden, etc.

The emphasis is on “you” and your “value” on page 24: “*We are the focus of his love and the most valuable of all his creation.*” *The Bible says, “God decided to give us life through the word of truth so we might be the most important of all things he made.”*(James 1:18 *New Century Version*) However, the *KJV* says, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” Hardly a “valuable” or “most important” emphasis there. Nevertheless, RW adds, “*You were created as a special object of God’s love!*”

On page 25, RW quotes a poem that reinforces both the self-orientation and divine determinism of *TPDL*. It states, “*You are who you are for a reason. You’re part of an intricate plan. You’re a precious and perfect unique design, Called God’s special woman or man... You’re just what he wanted to make. The parents you had were the ones he chose, And no matter how you may feel, They were custom-designed with God’s plan in mind, And they bear the Master’s seal.*” Following such logic then, this must include any rape or incestuous situation.

The “Verse to Remember” ending Chapter 2 is another example of forcing a verse to say something that it clearly does not: “*I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born*” (Isaiah 44:2). This verse, quoted from the *Contemporary English Version* is a poor translation at best; however, RW compounds the error by quoting it completely out of context. It has nothing to do with God caring for a person before he was born. Isaiah 44:2 has God addressing the nation of Israel: “Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, *which* will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen” (p. 26).

Chapter 3 opens with the very thing that RW says he rejects: “pop psychology.” He acknowledges Freudian pseudo-scientific concepts (“unconscious belief”; “[people] unconsciously punish themselves”) and attempts to include Cain in this by explaining that “his guilt disconnected him from God’s presence.” He then tries to use this to support the thesis of his book: “*That describes most people today—wandering through life without a purpose*” (p. 28).

In view of the promotions of *TPDL* by its publisher and Saddleback Community Church listing endorsements from numerous secular corporations and organizations that are using the book, I would be fascinated to learn what has attracted them to RW’s stated objective for the reader: “*This forty-day journey will show you how to live a purpose-driven life—a life guided, controlled, and directed by God’s purposes.*” Is this really meaningful for the Coca-Cola Corporation and others? No, not the spiritual aspects, but perhaps they are gleaning other things that they believe will make their companies more successful.

On page 30, RW erroneously places Isaiah and Job among those who have no purpose to their lives.

RW refers positively to Dr. Bernie Siegel, a New Ager who has a spirit guide and advocates occult visualization for healing (p. 31). What’s the value of using reinforcing quotes from individuals who are questionable Christians or whose lives and beliefs reject the biblical gospel? Yet Rick presents many such people throughout the book in support of his ideas.

Promoting the “Purpose” theme, RW quotes Isaiah 26:3 from *Today’s English Version*: “*You, Lord, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you.*” However, the verse has nothing to do with RW’s “purpose”: “Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose* mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (p. 32).

Warren also refers positively to Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau and antichristian George Bernard Shaw (p. 32, 33).

On page 34, Rick 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?*” This is unfortunate, because it presents a low view of doctrine, the very thing that Paul told Timothy would lead

to an apostate church—the unwillingness to “endure sound doctrine.” Moreover, knowing what to “accept” regarding “what Jesus did” is clearly a matter of sound biblical “doctrine.”

It’s puzzling to read on page 48, “*God is very blunt about the danger of living for the here and now and adopting the values, priorities, and lifestyles of the world around us.*” It’s puzzling because the church-growth methods he uses at Saddleback certainly seem to reflect “adopting the values, priorities, and lifestyles of the world around” the Saddleback community in order to attract the unchurched.

One wonders how a “me generation” reader will respond to RW saying, “*God made ants to be ants, and he made you to be you. St. Irenaeus said, ‘The glory of God is a human being fully alive!’*” (p. 55).

On page 58, RW makes a “seeker friendly” attempt at presenting the gospel. One never gets the essential truth necessary for salvation that humans are *sinners under condemnation* and face God’s wrath and separation from Him forever in the Lake of Fire. There is no explanation of why it was *necessary* for Jesus to go to cross. RW explains nothing about the cross that is related to divine justice and divine love. Instead, he states that those who haven’t received the Gospel and are not in line with God’s purposes for them are “just *existing*.”

RW quotes John 3:36 from *The Message*: “*Whoever accepts and trusts the Son gets in on everything, life complete and forever!*” (p. 58). This is an interpretation that makes an obvious appeal to the flesh. Furthermore, it leaves out the “negative” remainder of the verse: “and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Although the first sentence in Chapter 1 of *TPDL* stated, “*It’s not about you,*” the emphasis on “you” (the reader) has been apparent and now rears its head with a vengeance in Chapter 8: “*...the moment you were born into the world, God was there as an unseen witness, smiling at your birth* (p. 63)...*[W]hen you fully understand this truth, you will never again have a problem with feeling insignificant. 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?*” (p. 63).

This is the gospel of self-esteem that elevates mankind and *diminishes* God’s infinite love by implying that the object of His love must have value, worth, and significance. No. That’s a man-centered doctrine. God *is* love. To love something or someone because of its value or inherent worth detracts from God’s perfect love by subjecting it to a value system: Therefore, God loves me because *I’m* worth it. To the contrary, Jesus went to the cross for His enemies (Romans 5:10)—hardly an endeavor related to value, worth, and significance.

Another of RW’s church-growth marketing strategies is to attract the unchurched by offering various styles of worship music that appeal to them. Yet on page 66 he writes, “*[Worship] isn’t for our benefit! We worship for God’s benefit. When we worship, our goal is to bring pleasure to God, not ourselves.*”

RW quotes Romans 12:1 from *The Message*: “*take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.*” How does one make one’s “sleeping” an “offering”? Beyond that rather odd addition by Peterson, a literal translation says “that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service” (KJV).

TPDL often presents a view of God that has its origins in the mind of man, not the Scriptures (which certainly teach us about the unfathomable love of God). It is both anthropomorphic and humanistic, describing God from a human point of view for the purpose of making man *feel good about himself*. Does God “smile” on people? No literal translation tells us as much. Yet RW has found some versions to support his idea: “*May the Lord smile on you...*” (Numbers 6:25, *New Living Translation*— p. 69). “*Smile on me your servant; teach me the right way to live*” (Psalm 119:135, *The Message*) (p. 69). “*The Bible says, ‘Noah was a pleasure to the Lord.’*” (Genesis 6:8, *Living Bible*) RW adds, *God said, ‘This guy brings me pleasure. He makes me smile. I’ll start over with his family’* (p. 69).

RW tells us that there are “*five acts of worship that make God smile*” (p. 70). Here we have another set of “how to” principles to support an erroneous concept. He then states that “*God smiles when we trust him completely,*” adding (another idea not found in God’s Word, though he implies it is in Hebrews 11:7) that Noah pleased God “*even when it didn’t make sense.*” RW then has his readers use their imagination with his help: “*But Noah, when I look at you, I start smiling. I’m pleased with your life, so I’m going to flood the world and start over with your family*” (p. 70). Noting that Noah obeyed with the principle of “*wholeheartedness,*” RW comments, “*It is no wonder God smiled on Noah.*”

On page 74, Rick Warren quotes from the *New Living Translation* stating, “*The Bible tells us, ‘the steps of the godly are directed by the Lord. He delights in every detail of their lives’*” (Psalm 37:23). “He delights in every detail of their lives” is a humanistic addition to the Scriptures.

RW also seems to be encouraging the reader’s self-orientation and self-esteem: “*You only bring [God] enjoyment by being you. Anytime you reject any part of yourself, you are rejecting God’s wisdom and sovereignty in creating you*” (p. 75).

On page 75, Warren says, “*When you are sleeping, God gazes at you with love, because you were his idea. He loves you as if you were the only person on earth.*”

The focus on self is pushed to the point of perverting the gospel: “*If you want to know how much you matter to God, look at Christ with his arms outstretched on the cross, saying, ‘I love you this much! I’d rather die than live without you’*” (p. 79).

More: “*God wants to use your unique personality. Rather than its being diminished, surrendering enhances it*” (p. 80).

RW adds interpretations of Scripture that go beyond what the text says or implies. Referring to Luke 5:5, which has nothing to do with the “sense” of what the Lord instructed the disciples to do, he writes, “*Surrendered people obey God’s word, even if it doesn’t make sense.*” Moreover, he implies (the potentially dangerous idea) that the Lord would have the believer submit to the irrational.

Again, his commentary on Mark 14:36 using the *New Living Translation* does harm to the intent of Christ’s prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, and most particularly distorts the gospel itself. “*Jesus didn’t pray, ‘God, if you’re able to take away this pain, please do so.’ He had already affirmed that God can do anything! Instead he prayed, ‘God, if it is your best interest to remove this suffering, please do so’*” (p. 81). Literal translations use only the word “cup,” not adding “suffering.” The former implies Christ’s impending separation from His Father; the latter, His physical sufferings, which many erroneously believe were payment for the sins of mankind.

Throughout *TPDL*, RW continually feeds the reader doublespeak (i.e., persuasive contradictions) in appealing ways. For example, as we’ve pointed out, this book is “not about you” yet the focus is more often than not on “you.” Warren talks about fully submitting to God, telling us to put Christ in the “*driver’s seat of your life and take your hands off the steering wheel*” while at the same time finding a verse that implies retaining autonomy for self: “*I am ready for anything and equal to anything to him who infuses inner strength into me, that is, I am self-sufficient in Christ’s sufficiency*” (Philippians 4:13 *The Amplified Bible*), (p. 83).

On page 84, RW quotes Bill Bright, who makes a contract with God: “from this day forward I am a slave of Christ.” Again, one wonders how would corporations that RW tells us are using *TPDL* such as NASCAR or Coca Cola relate to that?

RW dabbles in Catholic contemplative prayer techniques, which border on the occult and Eastern meditation, quoting Catholic mystic Brother Lawrence and his book *Practicing the Presence of God* (p. 88).

Furthering the problem of opening the door to the pantheism (“God is in everything”) of Eastern mysticism, RW quotes Ephesians 4:6 from *The New Century Version*: “He rules everything and is everywhere and is in everything” (p. 88). The *KJV* reads: “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all [i.e., believers].”

RW presents prayer mantras verging on “vain repetitions”: “One way is to use ‘breath prayers’ throughout the day, as many Christians [actually Catholic mystics] have done for centuries. You choose a brief sentence or a simple phrase that can be repeated to Jesus in one breath: ‘You are with me.’ ‘I receive your grace.’ ‘I’m depending on you.’ ‘I want to know you.’ ‘I want to know you.’ ‘I belong to you.’ ‘Help me trust you.’ Pray it as often as possible so it is rooted deep in your heart” (p. 89).

More references to promoters of contemplative mysticism: “You must train your mind to remember God. . . . Benedictine monks use the hourly chimes of a clock to remind them to pause and pray ‘the hourly prayer’” (p. 89).

On page 90, we have another example of doublespeak. After endorsing Catholic mysticism and contemplative meditation techniques, RW confuses the reader by giving a definition of biblical meditation (also on page 190), which is the antithesis of contemplative meditation.

We also see many instances where RW contradicts the good things that he says by what he does. He tells the reader, “It is impossible to be God’s friend apart from knowing what he says. You can’t love God unless you know him, and you can’t know him without knowing his Word” (p. 90). However, he gives the reader versions that are clearly not “his Word.” Moreover, the whole thrust of the Christian contemplative movement is to know God experientially, *not* through studying the Bible.

Page 94 begins with another self-esteem-encouraging paraphrase verse that adds a word not found in any literal translations: “God said to Moses, ‘All right. Just as you say; this also I will do, for I know you well and you are special to me’” (Exodus 33:17- *The Message*). God doesn’t tell Moses that he is “special” to Him. In the *KJV*, He tells Moses that he has found grace in His sight and that He knows him by name.

RW legitimizes for the reader the very “pop psychology” he has said we are to reject: “It is likely that you need to confess some hidden anger and resentment at God for certain areas of your life where you have felt cheated or disappointed.” He seems to validate psychotherapy’s “we’re all victims” orientation: “People often blame God for hurts caused by others” (p. 94). Throughout the book, RW often refers to “hurts,” which is the psychological counseling industry’s mantra for attracting clients, e.g., “your problems are not your fault, but rather stem from ‘hurts’ you’ve suffered.” He refers to Christian pop psychologist William Backus, endorsing his Freudian “hidden rift with God” as the key to psychological and spiritual wellness. He then gives credence to psychology’s discredited “ventilation” technique: “but releasing your resentment and revealing your feeling is the first step to healing.”

RW has a penchant for picking verses from Bible versions that make them more acceptable to the flesh. Compare his use of *The Amplified Bible* with what the *KJV* says regarding intimate fellowship with God in Philippians 3:10: “My determined purpose is that I may know Him—that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly.” Now the *KJV*: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” The verse of RW’s choice adds “purpose” and drops “the fellowship of his sufferings.”

At the end of Chapter 12, RW is summing up his thesis of developing a friendship with God. However, he cites a “supportive” verse (1 Timothy 6:21) from the *Living Bible* that couldn’t be further removed from what the text literally says: “Some of these people have missed the most important thing in life—they don’t know God.”

Paul is warning Timothy (and us) that for the sake of his life in the faith he needs to avoid the philosophies and pseudo-sciences of the world by which some have had their faith undermined. It's ironic that RW gives no thought in his book to the need for discernment, and thus no Scripture verses, yet when he does cite a "discernment" verse, he completely misapplies it (p. 99).

On page 101, RW says, "*To 'worship in truth' means to worship God as he is truly revealed in the Bible.*" While we would agree, sadly, *TPDL* seems to be prohibiting that for its millions of readers.

For Rick Warren's sake, one would like to think that more than one person wrote *The Purpose-Driven Life* because of the continual contradictions. You'd hope that it's the product of two or more people having communication problems. If not, it raises the issue of either ignorance or integrity. How can one write some very helpful biblical statements and then seemingly reverse himself on the next page? For example, he states that "*God-pleasing worship is...deeply doctrinal*" (p. 102), then cites worship that is experiential, ritualistic, and methodological. He rejects worship that "*focus[es] on our feelings*" yet cites favorably the feelings-oriented worship of "*sensates,*" "*ascetics,*" and "*contemplatives*" (p. 103).

RW validates any and all kinds of religious rituals, methods, and means of developing a closer relationship with God: "*...Gary [Thomas] discovered that Christians have used many different paths for 2,000 years to enjoy intimacy with God....In his book Sacred Pathways, Gary identifies nine of the ways people draw near to God: Naturalists are most inspired to love God out-of-doors, in natural settings. 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. Ascetics prefer to love God in solitude and simplicity. [Yet on page 130, RW contradicts this by stating that "The Bible knows nothing of solitary saints or spiritual hermits isolated from other believers and deprived of fellowship."] Activists love God through confronting evil, battling injustice, and working to make the world a better place. Caregivers love God by loving others and meeting their needs. Enthusiasts love God through celebration. Contemplatives love God through adoration. Intellectuals love God by studying with their minds*" (pp. 102, 103).

RW on various translations and paraphrases: "*It is so much easier to offer clichés in worship instead of making the effort to honor God with fresh words and ways. This is why I encourage you to read Scripture in different translations and paraphrases. It will expand your expressions of worship*" (p. 104). In addition to the problems with paraphrases already noted, the use of such a "Bible" makes it nearly impossible to be a Berean (Acts 17: 10-11) or to recognize sound doctrine. Why? Because it is not a literal translation of the meaning of the words from the Hebrew or Greek but rather an *interpretation by an individual* of what he believes God is saying. Using *The Message* for example, you cannot read a verse and say, "This is what God's Word says." The best you can say is, "This is what Eugene Peterson says that God's Word says." In order to be a Berean (who searched the Scriptures daily to see if what the Apostle Paul was teaching them was true), one would have to have a literal translation of the Bible and compare it with what Peterson wrote.

RW says, "*One thing worship costs us is our self-centeredness. You cannot exalt God and yourself at the same time... you deliberately shift the focus off yourself.*" However, while that is true, it is also inconsistent with RW's use of music that appeals to the lost in order to attract them to church, as well as his affinities for the humanistic, self-oriented verses and practices he lists in his book (p. 105).

On page 108, RW quotes two Roman Catholic Mystics, St. John of the Cross and priest Henri Nouwen. Both represent the false gospel of Rome, advance mysticism, reject the authority of Scripture alone, and deny salvation by grace alone through faith alone, in which RW says he believes (p. 120, 121). What then is the value for the reader in quoting them?

Moreover, after endorsing these Catholic mystics whose tradition advances the *experiential* with its emphasis on

spiritual “intuition, emotions, and feelings,” on the next page RW writes, “*The most common mistake Christians make in worship today is seeking an experience rather than seeking God. They look for a feeling, and if it happens, they conclude that they have worshiped.... Faith, not feelings, pleases God*” (pp. 109, 110).

On page 120, RW says, “*Baptism doesn't make you a member of God's family; only faith in Christ does that.... The only biblical condition is that you believe.*” Although what he says is biblically true, nevertheless Purpose-Driven Life seminars for the purpose of growing churches are offered to and held at Roman Catholic Churches whose congregations *must* believe that Baptism is necessary for their salvation or be condemned to hell. How does he reconcile that? How do *they*?

RW admits to “*our self-centered nature,*” yet seems oblivious to the self-centered influences and even encouragements throughout his book (p. 123).

He pushes the biblical teaching on “relationship” to an extreme, making it more important than *doctrine*: “*Why does God insist that we give special love and attention to other believers? Why do they get priority in loving? Because God wants his family to be known for its love more than anything else. Jesus said our love for each other—not our doctrinal beliefs—is our greatest witness to the world*” (p. 124). Without biblical doctrinal beliefs, we can't know how to live a life pleasing to God, and therefore our witness would be no different than any reasonably moral lost person.

RW says, “*Relationships must have priority in your life above everything else.... God says relationships are what life is all about*” (p. 124,125). Jesus took another view of “relationships” in Luke 12:51-53. His truth transcends temporal relationships (John 17:17).

RW quotes Mother Teresa favorably on page 125. Why? She also believed that Baptism and good works were necessary for her to be saved.

Chapter 17 continues emphasizing relationships, but in this chapter, RW stresses church membership and commitment. “*While your relationship to Christ is personal, God never intends it to be private. In God's family you are connected to every other believer, and we will belong to each other for eternity*” (p. 130). On page 132, RW writes, “*The church is God's agenda for the world. Jesus said, “I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.”*” Time will tell, but there are subtle indications that RW's church-growth program and Purpose-Driven agenda are moving in the direction of earlier “Christian” movements whose goals were to literally take over the world “for Christ,” from the charismatic “Kingdom/Dominion theology” to the non-charismatic, Reformation-related Christian Reconstructionists.

Page 137: “*You become a Christian by committing yourself to Christ, but you become a church member by committing yourself to a specific group of believers.*” No. The church *is* the Body of Christ, of which one becomes a member when he or she is born again.

RW exhorts believers to meet together in “small groups”: “*This is where real community takes place, not in the big [church] gatherings. If you think of your church as a ship, the small groups are the lifeboats attached to it.*” (p. 139) While this can have much value, as he has indicated, there are also some caveats that he doesn't mention. Some of the down sides include the potential to more easily manipulate and transform the thinking of people within a small group environment, especially if it is not truly autonomous from the control of the church it's connected with. Good things such as relationships, accountability, community, etc., have the potential to become vehicles for manipulation when they influence people to compromise the truth of God's Word for the sake of maintaining relationships or “for the welfare” of the community.

Once again, RW ventures into the psycho-babble realm with the victim-oriented view of dealing with

emotional “hurts” and demonstrating “authenticity”: *“Of course, being authentic requires both courage and humility. It means facing our fear of exposure, rejection, and being hurt again. Why would anyone take such a risk? Because it is the only way to grow spiritually and be emotionally healthy”* (p.140).

RW psychologizes James 5:16, looking to *The Message* for support: *“Make this your common practice: Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed”* (p. 140). This has to do with becoming “transparent” by confiding your sins to others, not simply confessing your sin to the one against whom you have sinned.

Again RW endorses the psychological concepts of “authenticity” and “transparency.” He promotes a “feelings” orientation: *“Sympathy meets two fundamental human needs: the need to be understood and the need to have your feelings validated. Every time you understand and affirm someone’s feelings, you build fellowship”* (p. 141). It’s very difficult to keep from accusing Rick of “doublespeak” throughout his book. He declared earlier his rejection of “pop psychology” in favor of God’s Word—yet where in Scripture do you find “the need to have your feelings validated”?

Chapter 19 is all about developing “a healthy, robust community” (p. 145), a concept Eugene Peterson’s *The Message* manages to find in James 3:18: *“You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other.”* Here’s the verse in the KJV: *“And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”* Nevertheless, RW emphasizes “cultivating community.”

The humanistic characteristics of *The Message* come through again (James 5:16): *“No more lies, no more pretense. Tell your neighbor the truth. In Christ’s body we’re all connected to each other, after all. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself”* (p. 147). Compare this with James 5:16 in your Bible to see if it even hints at “we’re all connected” or “you end up lying to yourself.”

RW again promotes a covenant, this time “covenanting” mixed with psychological concepts: *“If you are a member of a small group or class, I urge you to make a group covenant that includes the nine characteristics of biblical fellowship: We will share our true feelings (authenticity)...”* (p. 151).

RW introduces the bogus psychological concept of *ventilation* as a biblical concept: *“As David did with his psalms, use prayer to ventilate vertically”* (p. 154).

RW offers instructions in ministering to others that have more to do with psychologist Carl Rogers than the Apostle Paul: *“Focus on their feelings, not the facts. Begin with sympathy, not solutions. Don’t try to talk people out of how they feel at first. Just listen and let them unload emotionally without being defensive. Nod that you understand even when you disagree. Feelings are not always true or logical”* (p. 155).

Again, RW leans heavily upon the *The Message*, with its humanistic perversion of the Word: *“You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family”* (p. 157-158). This is supposed to be Matthew 5:9, written in the KJV as: *“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”* No self-discovery here!

RW pushes relationship beyond the biblical teaching into the management (systems theory) concept for reconciliation, the end being compromising God’s truth: *“Emphasize reconciliation, not resolution. It is unrealistic to expect everyone to agree about everything. Reconciliation focuses on the relationship, while resolution focuses on the problem. When we focus on reconciliation, the problem loses significance and often becomes irrelevant”* (p. 158). How does this affect doctrinal differences related to the absolute truths of God’s Word?

RW presents unity almost militantly: *“It is your job to protect the unity of your church”* (p. 160). *“Nothing on*

earth is more valuable to God than his church. He paid the highest price for it, and he wants it protected, especially from the devastating damage that is caused by division, conflict, and disharmony. If you are a part of God's family, it is your responsibility to protect the unity where you fellowship. You are commissioned by Jesus Christ to do everything possible to preserve the unity, protect the fellowship, and promote harmony in your church family and among all believers... But for unity's sake we must never let differences divide us" (p. 161). Again, how does that effect issues related to sound doctrine?

"Conflict is usually a sign that the focus has shifted to less important issues, things the Bible calls "disputable matters." Is it? Or could it be a sign of concern over "important issues"? "Longing for the ideal while criticizing the real is evidence of immaturity"" (p. 162). Is it? Or could it be "evidence" of discernment?

RW on judging: *"Whenever I judge another believer, four things instantly happen: I lose fellowship with God, I expose my own pride and insecurity, I set myself up to be judged by God, and I harm the fellowship of the church"* (p. 164). What of the many times the Apostle Paul judged other believers, including Peter (Galatians 2:14)?

On page 165, *The Message* is the source of another psychological concept that is imposed upon the Scriptures: *"If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him..."* (Matthew 18:15). Are we to go to every fellow believer who "hurts" our feelings? This is the emotional swamp of self-oriented psychotherapy.

Again, RW expresses his militant exhortation to protect the unity of the church: *"I challenge you to accept your responsibility to protect and promote the unity of your church"* (p. 166).

"God blesses churches that are unified. At Saddleback Church, every member signs a covenant that includes a promise to protect the unity of our fellowship" (p. 167). Will God truly bless a church that requires a member to sign a covenant in contradiction to His Word?

RW reiterates: *"Never forget that life is not about you! You exist for God's purposes, not vice versa"* (p. 173). It's hard to take him seriously at this point, given all the humanistic ideas he has introduced. As one more example, he quotes *The Message* on Romans 12:2 which says, *"God brings out the best in you, develops well-formed maturity in you."* That's not even close to what the Scripture says! KJV: "but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Although RW says he is leery of subjective experiences versus the objective Word of God, he nevertheless scorns reason as an "unreliable authority." He gives Billy Graham's "leap of faith" as an example to follow: *"In the early years of his ministry, Billy Graham went through a time when he struggled with doubts about the accuracy and authority of the Bible. One moonlit night he dropped to his knees in tears and told God that, in spite of confusing passages he didn't understand, from that point on he would completely trust the Bible as the sole authority for his life and ministry"* (p.187).

RW favorably quotes Roman Catholic visionary and mystic (published by evangelical companies!) Madame Guyon (p. 193).

God has a purpose behind every problem (p. 193). Is he saying that God has a purpose behind every sin?

On page 206, RW encourages a psychotherapeutic problem-solving method that instructs a person who is dealing with temptation to analyze his situation: *"How do I usually feel when I am most tempted?"* This procedure is not only contrary to Scripture (2 Timothy 2:22), but practically speaking, it encourages the mind to dwell on the source of the temptation.

RW promotes the idea of having someone to hold a believer accountable. This method comes out of Christian

psychology, not the Bible. He attempts to support it by again quoting James 5:16: “Confess your faults one to another...” (p. 212).

RW advertises his own program (heavily influenced by psychotherapy) at Saddleback Church called *Celebrate Recovery*. It’s a variation on the secular (completely unproven and erroneous, even occult) 12-Steps program of Alcoholics Anonymous: “At Saddleback Church we have seen the awesome power of this [psychological] principle to break the grip of seemingly hopeless addictions and persistent temptations through a program we developed called *Celebrate Recovery*.... Today the program is used in thousands of churches” (p. 213).

“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” (p. 213-214). This is the “support group” approach of psychotherapy and is not supported by the Scriptures. Read through the entire book of Psalms and see if there is any sin or problem too big for God to handle. Did David have a support group?

RW: “There is power in God’s Word, and Satan fears it” (p. 215). How does that square with Satan actually quoting Scripture and others using Scripture out of context for evil purposes?

Mother Teresa is again quoted: “Holy living consists in doing God’s work with a smile” (p. 231). Sadly, Mother Teresa believed that “doing God’s work with a smile” would *earn* her salvation.

Pop psychology again spills onto the pages at the expense of Scriptures: “Jacob was insecure... Joseph was abused... Samson was codependent... David had an affair and all kinds of [dysfunctional] family problems, Elijah was suicidal, Jeremiah was depressed... Peter was impulsive...” (p. 233).

RW returns to his deterministic and humanistic concepts: “Each of us was uniquely designed, or ‘shaped,’ to do certain things.... You are the way you are because you were made for a specific ministry.... You are a custom-designed, one-of-a-kind, original masterpiece. God deliberately shaped and formed you to serve him in a way that makes your ministry unique. He carefully mixed the DNA cocktail that created you.... As Ethel Waters said, ‘God doesn’t make junk’ (pp. 234-235).

Chapter 30 introduces Rick Warren’s S.H.A.P.E., his main self-help tool for discovering one’s purpose in life. The acrostic stands for Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experience (p. 236). This is purely his own creation, and in numerous ways, which will be noted, is at odds with what the Scriptures teach.

RW says that believers are “commanded to discover and develop [their] spiritual gifts. Have you taken the time to discover and develop your spiritual gifts?” (p. 237). Where in the Scriptures are we commanded to “discover” and “develop” our spiritual gifts? He gives no support verses.

Regarding “Heart” (i.e., a passion for something), RW writes: “God had a purpose in giving you these inborn interests. Your emotional heartbeat is the second key to understanding your shape for service” (p. 238). “Inborn interest” is a fascinating idea but without any factual basis. Even so, RW presents it as though it was fact, and then raises it to a spiritual endeavor without the backing of Scripture.

On page 239, RW tells us that “The second characteristic of serving God from your heart is effectiveness. Whenever you do what God wired you to love to do, you get good at it. Passion drives perfection.” Does God “wire” a person to “love” to do something? Again, this is what RW believes, and it is necessary for the development of his S.H.A.P.E. thesis and for discovering one’s purpose; nevertheless, he gives no Scriptural proof.

Chapter 31 starts out with an implied proof text for the validity of RW’s S.H.A.P.E. theory: “You shaped

me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:13 *The Message*). No other Bible version that I could find uses the term "shaped." I doubt even Eugene Peterson had in mind the concept of S.H.A.P.E., but you never know.

Although Chapter 1 sets the premise that this book is against self-centeredness by opening with, *"It's not about you,"* Chapter 31 opens with, *"Only you can be you,"* and then continues with a self-esteem-building appeal reinforcing the "A" for "Abilities" in RW's S.H.A.P.E. thesis: *"If you don't make your unique contribution to the Body of Christ, it won't be made"* (p. 241). *"You are a bundle of incredible abilities, an amazing creation of God. Part of the church's responsibility is to identify and release your abilities for serving God"* (p. 242).

RW pushes the "ability" part of his thesis from absurdity to the precipice of heresy: *"All of our abilities come from God. Even abilities used to sin are God-given; they are just being misused or abused. The Bible says, 'God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well' (Romans 12:6 New Living Translation). Since your natural abilities are from God, they are just as important and as 'spiritual' as your spiritual gifts. The only difference is that you were given them at birth"* (p. 242). Romans 12:6 doesn't say, "your natural abilities are from God." The verse is referring to spiritual gifts: "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith" (*KJV*). Moreover, no scripture tells us our "natural abilities are just as important and as 'spiritual' as [our] spiritual gifts."

On page 242, RW states, *"Part of the church's responsibility is to identify and release your abilities for serving God."* This is a major development at Saddleback and includes spiritual gifts assessments and personality profiling (both questionable evaluations at best), yet there is no biblical support for Rick's statement.

RW claims, *"God gives some people the ability to make a lot of money"* (p. 243). Although that may be true, he takes a verse out of context in attempting to prove his case. He quotes Deuteronomy 8:18 from the *NIV*: *"Remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth."* But in context, God is speaking specifically to Israel: "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for *it is* he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as *it is* this day." It is misleading to use this verse to say that the ability of some individuals to make money is God-given.

RW continues to contradict his "It's not about you" premise: *"You are the only person on earth who can use your abilities. No one else can play your role, because they don't have your unique shape that God has given you"* (p. 243).

Here RW offers a solution to a spiritual problem with no biblical support: *"To discover God's will for your life, you should seriously examine what you are good at doing and what you're not good at"* (p. 243). However, in Chapter 35 he seems to contradict himself: *"God has never been impressed with strength or self-sufficiency. In fact, he is drawn to people who are weak and admit it"* (p. 273).

RW further expands his "Ability" concept: *"God doesn't waste abilities; he matches our calling and our capabilities."* Warren lists "writing grant proposals" among God-given *"special abilities"* (p. 244). Would that involve looking to the government or a secular endowment organization for funds to do God's work?

Again, the humanistic, self-esteem-building approach emerges (in spite of the oft-repeated declaration that this book is "not about you"): *"We don't realize how truly unique each of us is. . . . Your uniqueness is a scientific fact of life. When God made you, he broke the mold. There never has been, and never will be, anybody exactly like you"* (p. 244, 245).

RW launches into the "Four Temperaments" (a concept rooted in the occult, and which even psychology rejects as bogus) and other personality theories. He begins with a paragraph heading: *"Using Your Personality"* (p. 244).

Under this heading, RW continues with this theme: “*God made introverts and extroverts...thinkers and feelers... The Bible gives us plenty of proof that God uses all types of personalities. Peter was sanguine. Paul was a choleric. Jeremiah was a melancholy... There is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ temperament for ministry... Your personality will affect how and where you use your spiritual gifts and abilities*” (p. 245). These mythical classifications and concepts are an obvious distortion of the Scriptures.

RW promotes the bogus personality concepts taught by others: “*Today there are many books and tools that can help you understand your personality so you can determine how to use it for God*” (p. 246). He encourages the reader to contact Saddleback Community Church for “*Discovering Your Shape for Ministry, which includes a Shape identification tool [including Spiritual gift assessments and ability inventories]*” (“Notes” section, p. 332). However, later on pages 250-251, he reverses himself: “*Spiritual gift tests and ability inventories can have some value, but they are limited in their usefulness... Many books get the discovery process backwards.*”

RW seems to value past experiences (the “E” in S.H.A.P.E.) over the preaching and teaching of the Word, especially the “*painful experiences: What problems, hurts, thorns, and trials have you learned from?... If you really desire to be used by God, you must understand a powerful truth: The very experiences that you have resented or regretted most in life—the ones you’ve wanted to hide and forget—are the experiences God wants you to use to help others. They are your ministry!*” (pp. 246-247). This is *psychologizing* the church. RW seems to have no reservation in exploiting the Scripture to that end: “*Paul understood this truth [of sharing one’s hurts and painful experiences], so he was honest about his bouts with depression... If Paul had kept his experience of doubt and depression a secret, millions of people would never have benefited from it*” (pp. 247-248).

RW quotes Aldous Huxley, the founder of the Human Potential Movement and a drug advocate (p. 248).

RW sums up his “gifts,” “abilities,” and “personality” concepts: “*Using your shape (“how God has shaped you for service”) is the secret of both fruitfulness and fulfillment in ministry. You will be most effective when you use your spiritual gifts and abilities in the area of your heart’s desire, and in a way that best expresses your personality and experiences*” (p. 248). This is Rick Warren’s conjecture, not the teaching of Scripture.

Again: “*The best use of your life is to serve God out of your shape. To do this you must discover your shape, learn to accept and enjoy it, and then develop it to its fullest potential*” (p. 249). No. Rick Warren’s S.H.A.P.E. program is a mixed bag of the very things he denounced on page 20: “the world’s wisdom, pop psychology, success-motivation, and inspirational stories [of painful experiences]” along with distortions of the Scriptures, humanistic self-centered inducements, and myths paraded as truth.

Chapter 32 is all about “*assessing your gifts and abilities*”: “*The best way to discover your gifts and abilities is to experiment with different areas of service*” (p. 250). “*Am I more introverted or extroverted?*” (p. 251). RW’s concepts are built largely upon a mixture of false theological, philosophical, and psychological ideas of determinism: God has predetermined everything; everyone’s fate has been determined; a person’s characteristics are determined. Common sense is enough to disprove such ideas. True spiritual gifts excepted, how much of our talents, abilities, and personality characteristics are learned, developed, or even produced by sin? One could make a strong case for nearly all of them being learned, developed, or sin related. People with physical handicaps can and do achieve far beyond their “inborn” limitations. People “typed” as “introverts” or “extroverts” change. Hundreds of examples could be given to refute the deterministic myths RW has been using to support his S.H.A.P.E. program.

Nevertheless, RW continues: “*Since God knows what’s best for you, you should gratefully accept the way he has fashioned you... Your shape was sovereignly determined by God for his purpose, so you shouldn’t resent it or reject it... You should celebrate the shape God has given only to you*” (p. 252).

RW promotes “Christian” psychology’s (particularly psychologist Henry Cloud’s) concept of “boundaries”: “*We*

all have defined roles....The word boundaries refers to the fact that God assigns each of us a field or sphere of service. Your shape determines your specialty. When we try to overextend our ministry reach beyond what God shaped us for, we experience stress” (p. 253). As proof texts, RW turns to 2 Corinthians 10:13 in the *New Living Translation* and Hebrews 12:1 in the *Living Bible*: “*Our goal is to stay within the boundaries of God’s plan for us*”; “*run with patience the particular race that God has set before us.*” Neither of these verses relate to Cloud’s erroneous concept of boundaries other than the terms (“boundary” and “particular race”) found only in those paraphrases that RW selected (p. 253).

Given his continual misuse and abuse of the Scriptures, it is grievously ironic to note that on page 256, RW quotes 2 Timothy 2:15 as a “*Verse to Remember: Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*”

Another running irony verging on hypocrisy is RW’s acknowledgement of the world’s preoccupation with self which is subtly and quite often not-so-subtly fed to the reader throughout the pages of *TPDL*: “*In our self-serving culture with its me-first mentality....I am, by nature, selfish. I think most about me. That’s why humility is a daily struggle...*” [p. 257, 266].

On page 236, RW once again looks to Peterson’s humanistic *The Message* to “esteem” the reader: “*When Christ...shows up again on this earth, you’ll show up too—the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile, be content with obscurity*” (Colossians 3:4).

Again, the self-orientation of *The Message* (Galatians 5:26): “*We will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original*” (p. 268). Compare with the *KJV*: “*Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*” I don’t find “each of us is an original.”

Psychology’s “self-image” myth is introduced as related to the life of Jesus. We’re told that He served “*from a secure self-image*” and His task of washing His disciples’ feet “*didn’t threaten his self-image*” (p. 269).

Again, RW quotes Catholic priest and mystic Henri Nouwen as well as liberal “Christian” Albert Schweitzer (p. 269, 270). I am perplexed as to why these individuals who reject the biblical gospel are given credibility, and am greatly perturbed over the possibility that many readers in search of truth might be encouraged to seek out their writings.

Whether or not RW is confused, he certainly confuses the reader. He began the book by telling us that God has determined everything about us and that He has gifted us with talents, abilities, personality traits, and we’re to identify these and work out of our strengths: “*Whenever you do what God wired you to love to do, you get good at it. Passion drives perfection.... Whatever you’re good at, you should be doing for your church*” (p. 239, 244). But now we are told, “*God loves to use weak people.... God has never been impressed with strength or self-sufficiency.... Our strengths create competition, but our weaknesses create community*” (pp. 272, 273, 278).

Again, turning to “pop psychology,” RW has the reader looking within or looking to “hurts” from the past. He equates Paul’s thorn with an emotional weakness: “*It may be an emotional limitation, such as a trauma scar, a hurtful memory, a personality quirk, or a hereditary disposition*” (p. 273). “*Instead of living in denial or making excuses, take the time to identify your personal weaknesses. You might make a list of them*” (p. 274). In opposition to dredging up the “emotional scars of the past,” the Apostle Paul wrote, “*but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 3:13-14).

More psycho-babble applied to the Scriptures: “*Gideon’s weakness was low self-esteem and deep insecurities...*

...other people are going to find healing in your wounds. Your greatest life messages and your most effective ministry will come out of your deepest hurts” (p. 275). And: *“Ministry begins with vulnerability. The more you let down your guard, take off your mask, and share your struggles, the more God will be able to use you. . . . When you reveal your failures, feelings, frustrations, and fears, you risk rejection. . . . Vulnerability is emotionally liberating. . . . Humility. . . is being honest about your weaknesses”* (p. 276). Still more: *“Pretentiousness repels but authenticity attracts, and vulnerability is the pathway to intimacy”* (p. 277).

RW quotes William James, the father of American psychology, favorably (p. 285).

RW implies that a person’s eternal destiny is dependent on us (or me as an individual): *“There are people on this planet whom only you will be able to reach, because of where you live and what God has made you to be. If just one person will be in heaven because of you, your life will have made a difference for eternity”* (p. 285). He offers no Scriptures to support the idea that what I do or fail to do determines a person’s eternal destiny.

RW seems to have a low view of prophecy for whatever reason: *“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!”* (p. 285). This is very troubling. First of all, in response to the disciples questioning Jesus about the signs of His coming, He did not “quickly switch the conversation” in Matthew Chapter 24. He gave them (and us!) critical prophetic details and crucial warnings covering more than forty verses. He began by telling them to “Take heed that no man deceive you.” It is terribly disturbing therefore, that missing from this book, which will likely reach more Christians than any other book (other than the Bible) in the history of the church, is any teaching about the Second Coming and the religious deception about which Jesus Himself warned His disciples. Furthermore, there is no teaching in the book that even hints at the need for discernment in these Last Days in which the Bible declares false teaching and apostasy will be rampant. Again, it is troubling that one finds no mention of the “blessed hope,” Christ’s coming for His Church, His Bride.

RW declares throughout chapter 37 that one’s *personal testimony* is the most important element in witnessing: *“This is the essence of witnessing—simply sharing your personal experiences regarding the Lord. . . . Actually, your personal testimony is more effective than a sermon. . . .”* (p. 290). Not only does this do harm to the importance of preaching God’s Word and the necessity of teaching sound doctrine, RW contradicts his own foundational premise that we should *“turn to God’s Word”* and not to *“inspirational stories”* (p. 20).

In support of psychological “support groups” such as Saddleback’s own *Celebrate Recovery*, RW writes, *“God gives some people a godly passion to champion a cause. It’s often a problem they personally experienced such as abuse, addiction, infertility, depression. . . .”* (p. 293).

RW wants the reader to continue in *The Purpose-Driven Life*: *“I strongly urge you to gather a small group of friends and form a Purpose-Driven Life Reading Group to review these chapters on a weekly basis”* (p. 307).

Rick Warren is incredibly presumptuous at the conclusion of the book: *“Now that you understand the purpose of life, it is your responsibility to carry the message to others. . . . In this book I have passed on to you what others taught me about the purpose of life; now it’s your duty to pass that on to others”* (p. 309). Sadly, much of what Rick has gleaned from others and presented in *The Purpose-Driven Life* is contrary to the very Bible he claims to promote.