

Spirit-Led or Purpose-Driven?

Part 1

by Berit Kjos, November 2003

www.crossroad.to/articles2/2003/1-purpose.htm

"There are some really good things and points that Rick Warren brings out. But they always seems to be mixed with so many confusing and theologically weak points that you go crazy trying to keep it all straight. You will read a great point and then he'll throw in a quote from Mother Theresa or Aldous Huxley and your mind reels. There's a push to paint God as a smiley face in the sky - but you have to ignore His justice and anger! Plus, when you are the only 'naysayers' in a group it gets old - especially when no one else seems to have anything but praise for the book." *David, a visitor to our website*

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: **Preach the word! Be ready** in season and out of season. **Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you **be" watchful in all things** - 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Our website began to receive requests for information about *The Purpose Driven Life* last year. So Andy and I bought the last year. So Andy and I bought the book, read it quickly and were troubled by some of its claims, promises and paraphrased "Bible" references. But we also found many true and encouraging pages. Since we didn't want to criticize Rick Warren or confuse those who apparently were helped by his book, we left it on the shelf.

By this fall, Rick Warren's manual on the Christian life had become the topic of discussion in churches around the world. The letters from concerned visitors multiplied. After reading the book again, we could no longer ignore its subtle distortions, its half-truths, its conflicting messages or its pragmatic permissiveness: if it works (i.e. brings people into the church), it's okay! "God loves variety!"^[2]

Nor could we accept Pastor Warren's "rules for growth" which tells us to "never criticize what God is blessing."^[3] Implying that church growth and changed lives prove God's delight in our human methods, it cancels His call to "be on guard" and to discern deception. Some may say, "don't touch God's anointed," but we don't believe any leader is so "anointed" that his teaching is beyond Biblical accountability. While only God can [judge](#) the heart of a person, we are called to help each other *follow* His guidelines, not be *driven* by today's new management systems. [see [Driven or Led?](#)] Praying that God would guide us, we began our response with the following background information.

As most of you know, Rick Warren, the founding pastor of Saddleback Church in Southern California, has been leading the way and breaking new ground in today's [Church Growth Movement](#). With over 50,000 names on his church roll, he models the success of the church management process he outlined in his earlier book, *The Purpose-Driven Church*.

He also founded pastors.com, "a global Internet community that serves and mentors those in ministry worldwide." This [website](#) tells us that "over 60,000 pastors subscribe to *Rick Warren's Ministry Toolbox*, a free weekly email newsletter."^[4] Then it summarizes his ministry:

"Rick Warren is well known as the pioneer of **The Purpose-Driven Church paradigm** for church health. More than 250,000 pastors and church leaders from over 125 countries have attended Purpose-Driven Church seminars in 18 languages. [Peter Drucker](#) calls him '*the inventor of perpetual revival.*' Rick's previous book, *The Purpose-Driven Church*, has sold over a million copies in 20 languages. Winner of the Gold Medallion Ministry Book of the Year, it is used as a textbook in most seminaries, and was selected as one of the *100 Christian Books That Changed the 20th Century.*"^[4]

Notice the reference to Peter Drucker. What this legendary management guru began teaching large corporations decades ago has now been applied to God's churches as well as to communities and governments around the world. Since the new methods seemed to "work" equally well for churches as for corporations -- and since the measured results offer statistical "proof" of "success" -- pastors from countless nations have embraced and implemented Drucker's marketing approach to "doing church."

In a 2002 article in *Business Week* titled "Peter Drucker's Search for Community," Ken Witty describes the world view that drives Drucker's plans and purpose:

"He brings a [communitarian](#) philosophy to his consulting.... He said that what he's all about is this search for community, the search for where people and organizations find community for noneconomic satisfaction....

"A lot of his ideas have become so accepted that it's hard for anyone to understand how original they were at the time he introduced them. It's sort of like Freud and psychoanalysis. Peter was the first, for example, to help managers understand that they had to define their businesses from *a customer's perspective.*"^[5]

Focusing on the "customer's perspective" brings success. People *feel* satisfied. They come and they buy. When this process is applied to churches, it works! With polls and surveys, a church can easily uncover the "felt needs" of the unbelievers in the local community -- then target their services to their intended consumers.

Why focus on the *felt needs of unbelievers* rather than the true *needs of God's family*? Doesn't this strategy turn God's principles upside down? Yes, but it also attracts the spiritual diversity needed for the [dialectic process](#) -- the heart of today's transformation in churches as well as in business, education, government and other organizations. Dr. Robert Klenck summarizes it in his report on "[The 21st Century Church](#):"

"...in this movement, **it is imperative that unbelievers are brought into the church; otherwise, the process of continual change cannot begin.** There must be an *antithesis* (unbelievers) present to oppose the *thesis* (believers), in order to move towards *consensus*. (compromise), and move the believers away from their *moral absolutism* (resistance to change). If all members of the church stand firm on the Word of God, and it's final authority in all doctrine and tradition, then the church cannot

and will not change. This is common faith. Soon, we will see why these "change agents" are pushing so hard for change to occur in the church."

Pastor Warren's current tutor in this management process is [CMS](#), a "full-service custom marketing and communications agency head-quartered in Covina, California." It's [website](#) shows its mission:

"At CMS, we view it as our mission to help our clients **grow their businesses**. We do this by working with each client identifying opportunities and developing innovative, creative and profitable services which assist them in the execution of effective marketing, sales and communications program.... We are best able to serve clients when they allow us to act as **partners**.... CMS is made up of a team of talented individuals whose dedication and expertise have earned them a solid reputation for **creating results**."^[6]

Shouldn't we credit God, not clever marketing, with "creating results?" After all, the Bible tells us that the "[wisdom of this world is foolishness with God](#)." Man's "wise" ways may fit our human purpose, but they clash with God's purpose. [[1 Cor 3:19-20](#); [Prov. 3:5-7](#)]

While [CMS'](#) partners includes secular giants such as Quaker and Isuzu Motors America, it also serves [clients](#) such as the City of West Covina, "Purpose Driven Ministries," "Saddleback Valley Community Church," "Smalley Relationship Center" and "Walk Thru the Bible."^[7] The latter was founded and led by Bruce Wilkinson, author of the well marketed bestseller, [The Prayer of Jabez](#).

Part of [CMS' success](#) lies in the surveys, polls and tracking that characterize the 21st Century management systems:

"...collecting, organizing and managing data is essential to understanding, evaluating and planning of any successful promotion. That is why we developed our CMS Intelligent Redemption System. It is sophisticated proprietary software that allows us to program and initialize data.... Our purchasing standards and fulfillment procedures build-in tracking and accountability.... CMS Fulfillment Center specializes in direct mail projects, new product introductions, and promotion launches."^[8]

No wonder curious visitors are flocking to Purpose-Driven churches. Small wonder pastors around the world are watching, listening, ready to follow.

This fall, "over 13,000 ministers and students" heard Pastor Warren explain the ways of a purpose-driven church at SuperConference 2003, held at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University. Speaking on 'Attracting a Crowd to Worship,' Warren shared some basic principles behind church growth. He aimed his words at those who were "stuck in the past:"

"I believe that one of the major church issues [of the future] will be how we're going to reach the next generation with our music,' he said, admitting, 'You can make more people mad with music than anything else in church....

"To insist that all good music came from Europe 200 years ago; there's a name for that - racism.... Encourage members to re-arrange and rewrite.

New songs say **God is doing something awesome.**"^[9] *Emphasis added*

Do they? Or might the new songs reflect man's desire to please the crowds? It's all too easy to justify our attempts to meet "felt needs" and demonstrate success. We simply reinvent God's character and will, claiming that *our* purpose is *His* purpose. Assuming that He loves the same things we love, we assign Him an image more like our own. But in [Psalm 50:21](#), God warns us against such shortsighted assumptions about God's nature. "*You thought that I was altogether like you,*" He told His people, "*but I will rebuke you....*"

Pastor Warren again claimed divine approval during a "Building a Purpose-Driven Church" seminar held at Saddleback Community Church in January, 1998. Basing church growth strategies on personal wants, not on the guidelines of God's Word, he said,

"Now, at Saddleback Church, we are unapologetically contemporary... I passed out a three-by-five card to everybody in the church, and I said, 'You write down the call letters of the radio station you listen to.' I wasn't even asking unbelievers. I was asking the people in the church, 'What kind of music do you listen to?' When I got it back, I didn't have one person who said, 'I listen to organ music.' Not one.... So, we made a strategic decision that we are unapologetically a contemporary music church. And right after we made that decision and stopped trying to please everybody, Saddleback exploded with growth....

"I'll be honest with you, we are loud. We are really, really loud on a weekend service.... I say, 'We're not gonna turn it down.' Now the reason why is *baby boomers want to feel the music, not just hear it....* **God loves variety!**"^[2]

Does God *really* love today's cultural "variety?" I doubt that God is pleased when we feed our cravings and strengthen our "need" for emotional stimuli. When ancient Israel became bored with God's Word and embraced a wide variety of cultural and spiritual thrills, God disciplined them severely. He even compared his wayward people with a "[wild donkey... that sniffs at the wind in her desire.](#)" Jeremiah 2:24

When church leaders use energizing music, emotional stimuli and short, light messages to satisfy the flesh with its "felt needs," they tend to obscure our deeper spiritual needs. Fed a diet of simplified sermons designed to please everyone, both seekers and believers may lose their appetite for the solid Biblical teaching which -- by His Spirit -- produces conviction of sin, genuine repentance, actual regeneration, true spiritual renewal and the continual joy of walking with Jesus.

Widening the gate to the Kingdom

The phenomenal success of Rick Warren's books and [marketing skills](#) has both popularized and accelerated the Church Growth Movement (CGM). Around the world, seekers and believers are reading *The Purpose Driven Life* and discussing its 40 chapters. Following its guidelines, they share their thoughts, express their feelings and "bounce ideas off each other." [\[1, page 11\]](#) They sign contracts and hold each other accountable to the social and spiritual ideals of the 21st Century Church community. And,

says Pastor Warren, their lives are being transformed. [see [note: transformation](#)]

I am sure many are. Pastor Warren has written some encouraging pages about God, His glory, our walk with Him and our fellowship with one another. I especially appreciate the sections that show the delight of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. But I was a little concerned when he invited all his readers to "quietly whisper **the prayer that will change your eternity**: 'Jesus, I believe in you and I receive you.'" [[1, page 58](#)]

You might ask, what could possibly be wrong with that short prayer? Why question his promise that it would open the gate to God's Kingdom and "change... eternity" for all who prayed? Don't we want to bring as many as possible into God's eternity?

Yes, of course we do! And God could surely use those nine words to draw His chosen ones to Himself. But the **promises** and **assumptions** that accompany the prayer could also produce serious problems in the church. For many will pray the prayer with little or no awareness of the holy nature of God, of the unholy power of sin, or of the deep chasm between the two. In our times of easy believism and Biblical illiteracy, anyone can personalize and claim God's promises without any prompting by the Spirit, genuine conversion (spiritual rebirth) or lasting inner change. Where people learn to tolerate evil and flow with the crowd, true repentance is rare and faith often becomes presumption. Still unregenerate, many happily accept the group's consensus: *You prayed the prayer, therefore you must be a Christian.*

Pastor Warren agrees. "If you sincerely meant that prayer, congratulations!" he tells the reader. "Welcome to the family of God! You are now ready to discover and start living God's purpose for your life! [[1, page 59](#)]

Thousands of small groups using Saddleback's study guide and Teaching Video for the 40 Days of Purpose are led in a slightly longer prayer. They hear Pastor Warren speak these words:

"Do you have a relationship with Jesus Christ? If you aren't sure of this, I'd like the privilege of leading you in a prayer to settle the issue. Let's bow our heads. I'm going to pray a prayer and you can follow it silently in your mind:

'Dear God, I want to know Your purpose for my life. I don't want to waste the rest of my life on the wrong things. Today I want to take the first step in preparing for eternity by getting to know You. Jesus Christ, I don't understand it all, but as much as I know how, I want to open my life to You. I ask you to come into my life and make yourself real to me. Use this series to help me know what You made me for. Thank you. Amen.'

"If you just prayed that prayer for the very first time, I congratulate you. You've just become a part of the family of God."

Is this a response to the gospel? Where is repentance, acknowledgement of need, or confession of personal sin? Where is the cross? The Bible tells us that saving "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." [Romans 10:17-18] But none of the Scriptures that show the gospel are mentioned in this first lesson. Biblically illiterate friends and neighbors who join the group would pray this prayer without any real knowledge of the cross, of the Savior, or of God's view of sin. In fact, the concept of *salvation* isn't included in the first lesson. And if it *had* been there, the context of the lesson would suggest that we are merely saved from a purposeless life -- not from

bondage to sin.

For the first lesson deals with "the consequences of not knowing your purpose" -- not with Jesus Christ. It warns the group that "without knowing your purpose, life will seem TIRESOME... UNFULFILLING... UNCONTROLLABLE." And it repeats the positive (but not particularly Biblical) promise that "knowing the purpose of your life will -

- "give your life FOCUS."
- "SIMPLIFY your life."
- "increase MOTIVATION in your life."
- "PREPARE YOU FOR ETERNITY."

Even so, all who pray the prayer will be affirmed and celebrated as new members of the family of God. But are they? We don't know. Yet, statistics suggest that most people who call themselves Christians have little understanding of the gospel.

It's not surprising. Today's "positive" gospel emphasizes love, minimizes doctrine and ignores divine justice. The essential Biblical truths that prepare hearts for genuine conversion no longer fit. A postmodern "believer" may be full of self-confidence but woefully short on spiritual awareness. A recent study by pollster George Barna bears this out:

"...relatively few people have a biblical worldview - even among devoutly religious people. The survey discovered that **only 9% of born again Christians have such a perspective** on life. The numbers were even lower among other religious classifications....

"For the purposes of the research, a biblical worldview was defined as believing that **absolute moral truths** exist; that such **truth is defined by the Bible**; and firm belief in six specific religious views. Those views were that **Jesus Christ lived a sinless life; God is the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator** of the universe and **He stills rules it today; salvation is a gift from God** and cannot be earned; **Satan is real**; a Christian has a responsibility to share their faith in Christ with other people; and the **Bible is accurate** in all of its teachings.....

"Upon comparing the perspectives of those who have a biblical worldview with those who do not, the former group were 31 times less likely to accept cohabitation; 18 times less likely to endorse drunkenness; 15 times less likely to condone gay sex; 12 times less likely to accept profanity; and 11 times less likely to describe adultery as morally acceptable. In addition, less than one-half of one percent of those with a biblical worldview said voluntary exposure to pornography was morally acceptable (compared to 39% of other adults), and a similarly miniscule proportion endorsed abortion (compared to 46% of adults who lack a biblical worldview).[\[10\]](#)

"At least Christians are not the only ones addled by their culture into holding contradictory beliefs," writes Gene Edward Veith. "Atheists are just as confused about their theology. ... They believe that accepting Christ can bring eternal life, even though they don't believe in Jesus Christ. Just like 'nonevangelical born-agains.'" [\[11\]](#)

But they're all coming together under the worldwide ecumenical umbrella of the Church Growth Movement. As I wrote in [Re-Inventing the Church](#), the 21st century vision of global oneness is drawing diverse churches and people into vast "Christian" networks that provide trained leadership and management consultants. Rick Warren's

communitarian management guru, Peter Drucker, described it well. Quoting him in a 1994 report, the "Leadership Network" wrote,

"The Spirit is moving.... there is a substantial critical mass of people and churches that are already moving.' ... While acknowledging that there are **still many unhealthy churches** [those that don't conform to the new, inclusive pattern], there is a justified **'change in basic premises**, basic attitudes, **basic mindset**... on the whole, we are on the march...."^[12]
[emphasis added]

As you saw earlier, this diversity is essential to the [mind-changing dialectic process](#) that Drucker has helped establish in organizations everywhere. (We will take a closer look at it in Part 7 of this series) Remember Robert Klenck's words: "...in this movement,

it is imperative that unbelievers are brought into the church; otherwise, the process of continual change cannot begin. There must be an *antithesis* (unbelievers) present to oppose the *thesis* (believers), in order to move towards *consensus*. (compromise), and move the believers *away from their moral absolutism* (resistance to change)." If the church member continues to resist change, they may be asked to leave. Many concerned and uncompromising Christians can testify to the pain of being expelled under the banner of "church discipline."

Unlike some church leaders today, Pastor Warren does try to define sin. Before introducing his salvation prayer, he wrote, "All sin, at its root, is failing to give God glory. It is loving anything else more than God. Refusing to bring glory to God is prideful rebellion, and it is the sin that caused Satan's fall--and ours, too. In different ways we all lived for our own glory, not God's. The Bible says, 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'" [\[1, page 55\]](#)

That's true. But this general sin which applies to all of humanity will hardly cause postmodern unbelievers to sense any genuine guilt or a personal need for the cross. Unlike former generations of Americans, few have been taught the basic truths about our Biblical God and His moral standards.^[14] Many simply dismiss the notion of "sin" as old-fashioned legalism and shut their eyes to its corrupting power in their own lives. When faced with today's non-offensive teaching on sin, many translate it into a more comfortable half truth: "*Sin is a normal part of life, and I'm just as good as everyone else - - maybe a little better. Besides, God understands and loves me as I am.*"^[15] In other words, there's no sense of guilt, fear or brokenness before our eternal Judge! Like ancient Israel, "They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush." [Jeremiah 6:13-15](#)

In contrast to this postmodern norm, Jesus shows us a heartfelt response that pleases Him. While dining at the home of the self-satisfied Simon, He explains the blessing of a truly repentant heart:

"Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. **But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.**" Luke 7:37-47

This precious woman was familiar with God's [moral law](#) -- what the Bible describes as "our tutor to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith." [[Gal 3:25](#)] While that uncompromising law [[14](#)] exposed her guilt and depravity, it also caused her to treasure God's wonderful forgiving grace with all her heart. Unlike those who ignore God's standard and their own sinful inclinations, she was overwhelmed with gratitude to the One who forgave her sin and set her free from the weight of the law and from bondage to her "flesh" (sinful human nature).

God had prepared her heart and she humbly gave herself to her beloved Lord -- heart, mind and soul. Jesus, in turn, held her up as an example to others.

Her response to God's loving mercy illustrates the fourth category in Jesus' parable of the sower. Remember, the *sower* (God) scatters the *seed* (the "word of the kingdom") which fall into four types of *soil* (or heart conditions):

Type 1. By the wayside: The person "**hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it**, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart."

Type 2. On stony ground: "he **hears the word and immediately receives it with joy**; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles."

Type 3. Among thorns: "he who **hears the word**, and the **cares of this world** and the **deceitfulness of riches** choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful." The gospel of Luke adds "the **desires for other things**."

Type 4. On good ground: "he who **hears the word and understands it**, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." Matthew 13:20-23

All four *hear* the life-giving word of truth, but only two *receive* it. Both the second and the fourth *appear* to have entered into the Kingdom, but only the fourth proves faithful and wins the prize: God's gracious sufficiency and His abundant fruitfulness. Only the last group "understands" God's Word, demonstrates His enduring strength and *knows* the hope of eternal life with Christ. Those gifts are **only** given to those who are **truly "born,** not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, **nor of the will of man, but of God.**" John 1:13

This saving faith will be tested. New believers will face struggles, temptation, suffering and persecution -- all normal for those who are called to share in the suffering of Christ. They will fall, fail, grieve and repent, but they will always return to the One whose Word and Spirit have transformed their hearts. In contrast, others will leave this narrow way when life gets tough or the world too tempting -- not because God has revoked His saving grace, but because they were not truly changed in the first place. Look at the next Scripture:

"And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast...." Col 1:21-23

Pastor Warren seems to minimize the sobering reality behind God's warnings and inflate God's promises. To back his assertion that all who pray his prayer are automatically transformed by the Holy Spirit, he quotes a phrase from a "Scripture" from [The Message](#), a paraphrased Bible translation by Eugene Peterson that promises, "Whoever accepts

and trust the Son gets in on everything, life complete and forever!" [John 3:36a] The chart below shows the whole verse in the three standard translations (the second half is italicized):

KJV	NKJV	NIV	Message
"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : <i>and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.</i> " John 3:36	"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life ; <i>and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.</i> " John 3:36	"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life , <i>but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.</i> " John 3:36	"Whoever accepts and trust the Son gets in on everything , life complete and forever!" [John 3:36a] [1, page 581]

Do you wonder what the open-ended phrase, "gets in on everything," means? Written in "present tense," it could mean just about anything someone might imagine. To contemporary seekers who *think* they know God, it could imply an exciting and irresistible heavenly life here on earth -- a blissful offer that few would reject.

But when you compare that version of John 3:36 with any standard translation, you find that Mr. Peterson had added that alluring phrase in spite of God's repeated command *not* to add to -- or delete from -- His unchanging, Spirit-breathed [Word. \[16\]](#) The result is another misleading half-truth that obscures the fact that walking with Jesus means sharing His suffering. We forget that some of God's most faithful servants have faced poverty, hardships and torture that defy our comfort-centered Western comprehension, yet they endured the pain for the greater joy of serving their beloved King now and forever.

Pastor Warren starts the next chapter (8) in his book with this feel-good assurance for all who prayed the prayer:

"The moment you were born into the world, God was there as an unseen witness, smiling at your birth.... You are a child of God and you bring pleasure to God like nothing else he has ever created." [\[1, page 631\]](#)

This "positive" gospel will surely meet man's "felt need" for affirmation, identity and a sense of belonging. The masses are more than willing to believe in this new tolerant, non-judging God who fits their postmodern culture. But God doesn't promise to make us comfortable and pamper our feelings. While He does promise the resources needed to meet each day's challenges, some of those spiritual resources have little to do with today's "felt needs." Instead His path for us may be lonely and rough, full of steep climbs and "impossible" challenges. Yet, as we persevere in faith, we will hear His sweet voice whispering, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in your weakness." [2 Cor 12:9]

Did you hear that? God will use our weakness, not our strengths! No need for management consultants and surveys that measure our natural abilities in order to discover our spiritual gifts [\[1, page 57\]](#) and God's purpose for us! The Shepherd will lead us along His chosen ways, narrow and winding paths that may differ radically from our human plans and purposes!

But those who have not yet been "crucified with Christ" and filled with the Holy Spirit will neither hear the Shepherd nor "comprehend the Scriptures." [\[17\]](#). That's one of the reasons

why today's spiritual diversity demands simplified Bibles that have been paraphrased, reinterpreted and made appealing to the natural mind.

Softening God's Word

Unregenerate "believers" who love the ways of the world will want a church that fits that world. To make them feel at home -- and to satisfy curious seekers -- the church must now re-invent itself. Since no one can really understand God's truth unless the Holy Spirit reveals it to their hearts [see

[1 Cor 2:9-16](#)], God's Word must be simplified so that everyone -- Christian or not -- can relate to it.

It's not surprising that Pastor Warren quotes passages from [The Message](#) (a paraphrased "version" of the Bible by Eugene Peterson) over ninety times. Many of those simplified passages alter both the words and the meaning of the Scriptures. But they fit the points Pastor Warren is trying to make. So do other paraphrased Bibles that he uses.

Please compare *Today's English Version's* interpretation of Isaiah 26:3 with the corresponding passages in three generally accepted Bible translations: the King James Version (KJV), the New King James Version (NKJV) and the New International Version (NIV). While I don't personally use the NIV, the three translations illustrate the gap between standard translations and modern paraphrases. Today's English Version's (TEV) seems to fit Pastor Warren's need here -- perhaps because it uses the word "purpose."

KJV	NKJV	NIV	TEV
"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee : because he trusteth in thee." Is 26:3	"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You , because he trusts in You." Is 26:3	"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast , because he trusts in you." Is 26:3	"You, LORD, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you." Is 26:3 (page 32)

"Knowing your purpose focuses your life," he assures us. "It concentrates your effort and energy on what's important. You become effective by being selective."[\[1, page 32\]](#)

But the early Hebrew documents promised peace to those "whose minds were stayed on" God, not to those who "kept their purpose firm." Think about it: Wouldn't God's actual Word be a more reliable focus for our lives? Won't He lead us when, by His Word and Spirit, we keep our

minds stayed on Him? Doesn't His Word suggest we be [led, not driven](#), by our wonderful Shepherd?

Pastor Warren might agree, since he encourages us to memorize and meditate on God's Word. But he suggests that we select Bible verses out of *his* book which begins and ends with quotes from *The Message*. On page 325, he explains why:

"...we often miss the full impact of familiar Bible verses, *not* because of

poor translating, but simply because they have become so familiar! We *think* we know what a verse says because we have read it or heard it so many times. Then when we find it quoted in a book, we skim over it and miss the full meaning. Therefore I have deliberately used paraphrases in order to help you see God's truth in new, *fresh* ways.... [emphasis in the original]

"Also, since the verse divisions and number were not included in the Bible until 1560 A.D., I haven't always quoted the *entire* verse, but rather focused on the phrase that was appropriate. My model for this is Jesus and how he and the apostles quoted the Old Testament. They often just quoted a phrase to make a point." [\[1, page 325\]](#)

His first argument doesn't match reality. Those who are truly "born again" treasure God's Word as it is written. The more familiar it becomes, the more precious it is! He brings the words we have "hidden in our heart" to our awareness day and night as we need it for comfort, strength and joy in Him. "[Your words were found, and I ate them,](#)" said Jeremiah, "[and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Lord...](#)" Jeremiah 15:16

Second, are we free to attribute the authority of the actual Scriptures to short sound bytes of paraphrased passages in order to validate our own points? Yes, Jesus, who was Himself the Living Word, had the absolute authority to speak His own message as He willed. But we are not God! That's why He warns us repeatedly *not* to alter or add to His holy Word in any way.

"If anyone [adds to these things](#), God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book," He tells us in the Book of Revelation (22:18-19), "and if anyone

[takes away from the words of the book](#) of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life...."

Those are strong words. That's why many postmodern leaders consider them intolerant and exclude them from their teaching. But God considers the accuracy of His Word so vital to our walk with Him that He repeated this warning several times throughout the Bible.

"You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it," He told us through Moses in Deuteronomy 4:1-2. And in Proverbs 30:5-6, He warned: "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. [Do not add to His words](#), lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar."

Yet, man's incessant quest for "*new, fresh ways*" has always made us vulnerable to temptation. From the beginning, Satan has offered both pleasure and wisdom to those who would rephrase or revise God's timeless Word -- blending lies with truth that hide the deception. Back in the garden, it led to Eve's disobedience and the alienation of humanity. Through the Middle Ages, it led to horrendous heresies and cruel persecution of those who took their stand on God's unchanging Word. In our times, the rise of pragmatism and postmodernity has led to another round of revisions. And with the postmodern rejection of unchanging absolutes, there is no end in sight.

See how *The Message* has altered the meaning of God's Word in the following passages. Though the first two references are not mentioned in the *Purpose Driven Life*, their

precious familiarity helps us discern the contrast and realize how human additions and deletions distort His truths. The third reference is the last "Bible" verse Pastor Warren quotes in his book. Notice its new tone and attitude:

KJV	NKJV	NIV	Message
"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. " Matt. 6:9	"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. " Matt. 6:9	"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. " Matt. 6:9	"Our Father in heaven, reveal who you are. " Matt. 6:9
"my Father is greater than I. " John 14:28	"My Father is greater than I. " John 14:28	"... the Father is greater than I. " John 14:28	"The Father is the goal and purpose of my life." John 14:28
" Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power...." Rev 4:11	" You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power...." Rev 4:11	" You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power...." Rev 4:11	"Worthy, Oh Master! Yes, our God! Take the glory! the honor! the power!..." [1, page 319]
"For to be carnally minded is death ; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Romans 8:6	"For to be carnally minded is death , but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Romans 8:6	"The mind of sinful man is death , but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace." 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." [1, page 18]

Ponder the last section. To be "carnally minded" means far more than "obsession with self." It involves the spiritual blindness and death of a person who lives and thinks according to his own capricious human nature -- separated from God's grace and Spirit. He may claim to be a Christian, but his finite mind cannot grasp God's truths, heart or will. A simpler, modified Bible, stripped of its deeper and harder truths, doesn't help. God never intended that the Bible should be understood apart from His supernatural work in the hearts of His chosen people. [Matt 13:13; Luke 8:10; Jer 5:21; Acts 26:18]

The other parallel follows. To be "spiritually minded" means that, through the Holy Spirit, the believer's mind has been opened to understand Scriptures. God's life-changing Truth has renewed his heart and enabled him to know and love God. It has given him the joy and endurance needed to follow the Shepherd -- not along that spacious highway that draws the crowds -- but on the narrow unpopular way which draws us ever closer to Him. Matt 7:13-14

Since the Bible is the foundation of our faith, we had better follow its clear and timeless guidelines. They alone enable us to maintain the purity and accuracy of His Word even as we translate it into all the world's different languages. In its totality, the Bible reveals the nature of God, the nature of man -- both in Christ and apart from Him. Made alive by His Spirit, it reveals His guidelines for our lives, His promises of each day's challenges, His hope for eternity. It is the foundation of our faith and the standard for our lives.

But Pastor Warren sees a slightly different foundation. As in *The Purpose-Driven Church*, his format shows us five purposes:

1. You were planned for God's pleasure.
2. You were formed for God's family.
3. You were created to become like Christ.
4. You were shaped for serving God.
5. You were made for a mission. [\[1, contents\]](#)

Those statements are all true, but they are incomplete as guidelines for all of life's challenges. Later he tells us:

"Knowing your purpose simplifies your life. It defines what you do and what you don't do. Your purpose becomes the standard you use to evaluate which activities are essential and which aren't. You simply ask, 'Does this activity help me fulfill one of God's purposes for my life?'

"Without a clear purpose, you have no foundation on which you base decisions, allocate your time, and use your resources." [\[1, page 31\]](#)

What does Pastor Warren mean by "a clear purpose?" A blend of his five stated purposes?

Neither the five purposes, nor any other single purpose, can replace Jesus Christ, the Living Word, as the "foundation on which you base decision, allocate your time and use resources." Christ's Life in us -- speaking through His Word revealed to us -- is our supreme, unrivaled foundation and guide. The Living Word remains "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" no matter where His chosen purposes or unseen paths might take you and me for the duration of our lives on earth.

The Spirit of Worship

In *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren wisely points to the importance of worship and surrender. "Worship must be based on the truth of Scripture, not our opinions about God," he writes. [\[1, page 101\]](#) That's so true! Yet, his book offers both opinions and illustrations that undermine that truth -- including some misleading assumptions about God and what He loves.

"Worship must be both accurate and authentic," he writes on page 102. "God-pleasing worship is both deeply emotional and deeply doctrinal.... The best style of worship is the one that most authentically represent your love for God, based on the background and personality God gave you." He then gives the following illustration:

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

"Gary wondered, If God intentionally made us all different, why should everyone be expected to love God in the same way?... 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..... **Ascetics** prefer to love God in solitude and simplicity. *[Later in the book, Warren tells us that only those who participate in today's organized church can grow spiritually.]... Activists* love God through confronting evil, battling injustice, and working to make the world a better place...." [\[1, page 103\]](#) *Emphasis added*

Does Pastor Warren equate "activists" with the social and political activists that push churches and nations toward a global welfare system based on UN standards for social solidarity? Liberal churches and the World Council of Churches are major forces in this accelerating movement of "faith-based partnerships" that -- under the banner of love and tolerance -- serves the needy while silencing the gospel. [\[18\]](#) But Jesus said, "My kingdom

is not of this world." John 18:36

"There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to worship and friendship with God," continues Pastor Warren. "God wants you to be yourself." That's true. Then he validates his point with a quote from *The Message*: "That's the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before him in their worship." Compare the three standard Bible translations below with Eugene Peterson's paraphrased *Message*. Notice the clash of words and meaning:

KJV: "...the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall **worship the Father in spirit and in truth**: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." John 4:23

NKJV: "...the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will **worship the Father in spirit and truth**; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him." John 4:23

NIV: "...a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will **worship the Father in spirit and truth**, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." John 4:23

Message: "That's the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are **simply and honestly themselves** before him in their worship."
(page 103) *Emphasis added*

While God demands absolute honesty from His people, the word "truth" here implies far more than being "simply and honestly themselves." The central truth tells us about our wonderful Lord. Worship is our response to what His Word and Spirit have revealed to us about His glory and goodness. And Pastor Warren knows that very well. In spite of his pragmatic promotion of cultural compromise under the banner of church growth, he also includes some beautiful descriptions:

"Where is the glory of God? Just look around. Everything created by God reflects his glory in some way. We see it everywhere, from the smallest microscopic form of life to the vast Milky Way, from sunsets and stars to storms and seasons.... The Bible says. 'The heavens declare the glory of God....' [\[1, page 54\]](#)

"We cannot add anything to this glory, just as it would be impossible for us to make the sun shine brighter. But we are commanded to recognize his glory, honor his glory, declare his glory, praise his glory, reflect his glory and live for his glory. Why? Because God deserves it! We owe him every honor we can possibly give." [\[1, page 56\]](#)

So true! But while Warren reminds us that "Worship is a lifestyle," he bases his description of God on his own personal presumptions, not on Biblical revelation:

"Worship has nothing to do with the style or volume or speed of a song. **God loves all kinds of music** because he invented it all -- fast and slow, loud and soft, old and new. You probably don't like it all, but **God does!**" [\[1, page 65\]](#)

He does? Including the throbbing beat of hard rock? [See [Popular Music with Pagan Roots](#)] Or the pulsating sensuality of other forms of rock and hip hop? Or the hypnotic tones of New Age music?

While all parts of the universe were created by our sovereign Lord, he lets us use His raw materials according to our own inclinations -- whether they honor or profane his name. But when we become part of His family and Kingdom, He holds us accountable to His high and holy standards -- and to what He has revealed about Himself in His Word.

Again Pastor Warren seems to agree. He says, "I must choose to value what God values. This is what friends do -- they care about what is important to the other person. The more you become God's friend, the more you will care about the things he cares about, grieve over the things he grieves over, and rejoice over the things that bring pleasure to him."

That's a great summary. Warren goes on to say that "Paul is the best example of this. God's agenda was his agenda and God's passion was his." Then he backs his statement with another quote from *The Message*, one that leaves out a key point: that God is a "jealous God." His holy jealousy is expressed through Paul in his concern for the church. To show you the context, we included the next verse as well:

KJV: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. *3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted....*" 2 Cor 11:2-4

NKJV: "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. *3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted....*" 2 Cor 11:2-4

NIV: "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. *3 But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray....*" 2 Cor 11:2-4

Message: "The thing that has me so upset is that I care about you so much--this is the *passion of God burning inside me!*" 2 Cor 11:2
(page 97) *Emphasis added*

Probing God's "passion," Warren asks: "What does God care about most? The redemption of his people. He wants all his lost children found! That's the whole reason Jesus came to earth. The dearest thing to the heart of God is the death of his Son. The second dearest thing is when his children share that news with others. To be a friend of God, you must care about all the people around you that God cares about."

Yes, that *sounds* right. But it's only a half-truth. Pastor Warren apparently quoted the above words from *The Message* to validate his point about "passion."¹⁹ But the standard Bible translations based on early Greek sources actually refer to a different issue: God's zeal for purity and holiness in the Church. Paul was warning the Corinthians against corruption in His Body -- a major concern in both the Old and New Testament. The apostle highlights this purpose again in his letter to the church in Philippi:

"...that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain." Philippians 2:15-16

In other words, God calls us to be different from the corrupt world around us. He has made us a holy people -- set us apart for Himself. "They are not of the world," said Jesus,

"just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." John 17:15-18

Pastor Warren's emphasis on passion hides this point. The issue of purity is replaced with the more contemporary issue of personal relationships. Thus feel-good relational guidelines become more important than the spiritual need for repentance and holiness in Christ.

Please don't think I would diminish the all important command to "love one another" as Christ loves us. But when corruption and worldliness seep into the church, God's *agapao* love -- an expression of the Holy Spirit in us -- is quenched. We may replace it with more human love such as *phileo* (friendship, affection, brotherhood) love, but it no longer fulfills the above command. (In spite of Pastor Warren's frequent reference to our "friendship with God," the Bible never uses the word *phileo* in any of the commands that we love God. It always uses the word *agapao*, God's supernatural love flowing through His faithful people.)

In the context of Peter Drucker's management and marketing philosophy, Pastor Warren's emphasis makes perfect sense. The new relational guidelines are designed to build group loyalty, teach "respect" for all opinions, and block unpopular truths that expose error and corruption. The latter are simply too divisive. "Fellowship" between spiritually diverse people is all important, even if it clashes with God's Word [2 Cor 6:14-18] and forces believers to compromise. That's why many committed but heartbroken Christians are leaving the "seeker-friendly" churches they have faithfully served. They simply cannot agree to discard "offensive" Biblical guidelines in order to pursue the new vision of unity and community.

God's people must heed their Spirit-taught conscience. If we claim His name and promises, we had better follow His ways rather than our feelings or popular marketing schemes. If our worship is an expression of our human nature rather than His truth and Spirit, it is worthless. It's all too easy to "quench the Spirit" and become blind to His light. Trying to make Christianity more acceptable to the world, we may forget Jesus' sobering warnings to His disciples:

"If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you...." John 15:19-21

"Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it." 1 Thessalonians 5:19-24

Music-driven evangelism

"The style of music you choose to use in your services will be one of the most critical (and controversial!) decisions you make in the life of your church," wrote Rick Warren in an article titled [Selecting Worship Music](#). "You must match your music to the kind of people God wants your church to reach.... The music you use 'positions' your church in your

community. It defines who you are.... *It will determine the kind of people you attract, the kind of people you keep, and the kind of people you lose.*"^[20] Emphasis added

Pastor Warren's choice in music flows with today's major currents of change -- in culture and business as well as churches. Our world is becoming increasingly uniform even as our choices multiply. While we have countless options in food, books, religions and music, the vast networks of corporate management systems around the world follow the same marketing strategies. Their key to "measurable success" is monitoring and manipulating the "felt needs" of the masses -- a shrewd strategy that requires continual polls, surveys, assessments and digital data systems. Together, as parts of a holistic *system*, they not only expose the wants and vulnerabilities of "consumers" everywhere but also nurture and manipulate those "needs" and cravings.

And it works! That's why governments, schools, medical systems and large churches are all reinventing themselves in order to follow the established tracks of corporate America. They may call their particular version of this system Total Quality Management, Outcome Based Education or Purpose Driven Churches; it doesn't matter. All follow the same pragmatic blueprint, aim for "measurable results," call for teams, dialogue, facilitators, "lifelong learning," contracts and continual assessments of "progress" toward the planned outcome. All must conform or leave the system.

In Part 1, you saw that Pastor Warren polled his congregation to discover the most popular contemporary music.^[2] Now he uses more sophisticated surveys and tracking software. As you saw in Part 1, one of his management consultants is [CMS](#), a "full-service custom marketing and communications agency" that helps its "clients **grow their businesses**."^[6] It explains that "...collecting, organizing and managing data is essential to understanding, evaluating and planning of any successful promotion."^[8]

So when Pastor Warren offered the music most people wanted, they flocked to the church. But "measurable success" doesn't prove that God ordained or inspired this particular plan. In fact, God warns us not "to seek to please men" [Galatians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:4]. Popularity in the world has never been a sign of God's approval. More often -- throughout the Bible as well as history -- popularity proves the opposite. "If you were of the world, the world would love its own," said Jesus. "Yet because **you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.**" John 15:19

When Pastor Warren tells us that "*God loves all kinds of music*" and that "*God loves variety*,"^[2] do you wonder where he would draw the line? Would that vital dividing line bend with our changing culture? Or with the growing tolerance for all kinds of spiritual and Scriptural variations? These are crucial questions, for music has become a driving force in the Church Growth Movement. As Pastor Warren says,

"Music is an integral part of our lives. We eat with it, drive with it, shop with it, relax with it, and some non-Baptists even dance to it! The great American pastime is not baseball - it is music and sharing our opinions about it!"

"...when I read about biblical worship in the Psalms, I see that they used drums, clashing cymbals, loud trumpets, tambourines and stringed instruments. That sounds a lot like contemporary music to me!"

"Saddleback is unapologetically a contemporary music church. We've often been referred to in the press as 'The flock that likes to rock.' We use the style of music the majority of people in our church listen to on the

radio."[\[20\]](#)

These statements beg at least two responses. First, Pastor Warren wrote: "...in the Psalms, I see that they used drums...."[\[20\]](#) None of the standard Bible translations mention drums, but they do mention *timbrels* which are sometimes translated *tabrets* or *tambourines*. Apparently, these were small, round wooden rings or frames covered with animal skin and usually carried by women or "maidens" in dance, praise or "merriment." Some Bible commentaries describe them as small hand drums, "examples of which have been found in Egyptian and Mesopotamian excavations." Obviously, they were not like today's large, throbbing percussion instruments which the Bible neither forbids nor approves. Nor were they listed in 1 Chronicles along with other instruments prescribed for temple worship.[\[21\]](#)

Second, our Father Himself prepares the hearts of His chosen ones to respond to the saving truth of the gospel and the demonstration of His love. He doesn't need our clever business schemes. "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him," said Jesus. [John 6:44]

But can't God use contemporary music to draw us to Himself? Of course He can! He can use anything He chooses! Again and again, He brings blessings out of our human choices, be they wise or foolish or in between. But His wonderful grace and mercy never justify our disobedience. He repeatedly warns His people to guard against the seductive forces of the world system [Rom. 12:2, 1 John 2:15; Psalm 1:1-3], and "Christian" music now rests squarely in the hands of the world's corrupt entertainment establishment.

Two of the most popular Christian musicians are Michael W. Smith and Amy Grant. Both are under contract to Word Music Company which is owned by Word Entertainment, the Christian Music division of Warner Music Group, a **Time Warner** company. This may explain why some of the popular pied pipers of the church cross over to the other side, drawing millions of fans with them. When that happens, the emotional highs that had been linked to God are transferred to the new themes that exclude God and exalt lust.[\[22\]](#)

Steven Curtis Chapman may be the most famous artist with Sparrow Records, a part of the Sparrow Label Group owned by the British EMI Music Publishing, the world's largest secular music publisher. Having introduced America to the Beatles back in the sixties, it now owns labels such as Capitol, Angel, Blue Note, Priority and Virgin. Featuring approximately 1,500 artists, it markets every kind of popular music: rock, rap, jazz, Christian, country...[\[23\]](#) According to [Music Publishing](#),

"EMI [owns the] rights to more than one million musical compositions and has offices in 30 countries.... Composers and writers represented by EMI include David Bowie, Janet Jackson, Carole King, Queen, ... Savage Garden, Sting, ... Aerosmith....

"A&R, the art of identifying the next great writer, the next great song, is the single most important function EMI performs."[\[24\]](#)

EMI's website features a page on [Social Responsibility](#) which tells us,

"At EMI we believe business should be both profitable and beneficial to society. ... We are committed to equal opportunity for all employees regardless of gender, ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, age, marital status or sexual orientation.... We support and uphold the principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...."[\[25\]](#)

If you read our article, "[Trading US Rules for UN Rules](#)," you will find that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is hostile -- not helpful -- to Christians and others who question the UN philosophy and its blueprint for global [solidarity](#).

In April, 2003, both EMI and Time-Warner executives participated in a conference dealing with topics such as "Things you need to know to get noticed" and "The spiritual future of Christian music." The goal of the first "roundtable," moderated by the Senior Director of A&R, Warner Brothers Records, Christian Division, was to "share what they are currently **looking for in a signed artist** today." ^[26] Do you wonder if the panelists -- including the General Manager of Simple Records, a Senior Director at Sparrow Label Group, and the Director of Gospel A&R and Warner Brothers Records -- would allow lyrics that expressed some of the more "offensive" truths of the Bible? Would they even consider *God's will* for Christian music and worship?

Probably not. Their concern is marketing music in cultures around the world. It's up to us to know such as 2 Corinthians 6:14-17, which warns us, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ... Come out from among them and be separate...."

In the article, "[A New Song - Part 2](#)," author and former musician Paul Proctor summarizes the meaning and purpose of Christian worship:

"As I understand it, worship is coming before the Lord as a holy and 'peculiar people', in obedience, humility, reverence, repentance and faith with an attitude of gratitude, to sing His praises, hear His Word, glorify His name and honor Him with all of our being for Who He is and what He has done.

"Contrary to popular trends, worship is NOT getting together with anybody and everybody to party in Jesus' name and feel good about ourselves with intoxicating music and psychotherapy." ^[27]

Saddleback members may not call their brand of music intoxicating, but that's not the issue here. What does matter is the nature of the driving force in the church. It's easy to list a set of Biblical purposes that seem to indicate where the church is headed. But do good purposes or "ends" justify "means" or methods that might violate the standards God gave us in His Word?

The answer doesn't matter to those who embrace pragmatism -- the belief that truth is relative and that the ends *do* justify the means. It's sad to see that within much of the Church Growth Movement, the main standard for good or bad methods -- or for what "God is blessing" -- seems to be measurable success, not obedience to His *actual* Word. The foundational management question seems to be: "Does it work?" We should be asking: "What does the Bible (not preferred paraphrases) tell us?"

The answer to the first question is, *yes, it does work*. But few church members really understand *general systems theory*, the philosophy and worldview behind the controlling systems that steer this worldwide transformation. Many of its enthusiastic supporters don't realize how it squeezes the Holy Spirit out of the decision making process. But we can recognize its [mind-changing process](#) by its innocuous labels (they should be red flags) such as *assessments, databanks, facilitator, dialogue* and *planned* or *continual change*. Lynn Stuter, a respected researcher and columnist with NewsWithViews,

summarizes it well:

"Systems philosophy or [general systems theory](#)... says that we can *create our future* by building systems and leveraging those systems into balance with all other systems in a conceptually wholistic model, (also referred to as **systemic change**) using a system infrastructure that is analogous to all systems. Scientists refer to systems philosophy as a *syllogism* — **how to bring about planned change systemically**. Under systems philosophy, the system and leveraging of the system into balance with all other systems, is paramount above all else. That leveraging is achieved via analyzing DATA FEEDBACK attained from the subjects of the system established, be it an agency, a classroom, or an individual. This explains the **privacy invasive databanks** being built on all systems — health care, education, justice, military... *[and churches]* "...you start out by developing your *vision* of the created future.... The vision is then defined in terms of *exit outcomes*. In the case of education reform, the exit outcomes are the state essential "academic" learning requirements (EALRs). *[In the purpose-driven movement, it would be related to "purpose"]*

"In the [Schools for the 21st Century](#) (the foundation of education reform in Washington state and the basis of American 2000) resource document, *content* is defined as **excellence in terms of the change agenda**; *process as the product ... the destination ... what learning is about*, and *emotionality and affectivity* as the means by which content and process will be achieved....

"The measure of that mastery is the *assessment*.... If a few children fail the assessment, they are remediated to bring them in line. The assessments also assess classroom teachers. The assessment provides DATA FEEDBACK to the system...."[\[28\]](#)

It's comforting to assume that God loves all growth-producing methods and feel-good stimuli that we love. But it isn't true.

"'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.'" Isaiah 55:8-9

Then He gives us a sobering glimpse of what He is pleased to see in His people: "But *on this one will I look*: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and **who trembles at My word**." Isaiah 66:1-2

"For since the beginning of the world,
men have not heard nor perceived by the ear,
Nor has the eye seen any God besides You,
Who acts for the one **who waits for Him**.
You meet him who **rejoices** and **does righteousness**,
who **remembers You in Your ways**." Isaiah 64:4-5

The fear of God

Long before David wrote his treasured psalms or King Solomon penned the Proverbs,

Job knew the secret of wisdom and friendship with God. In the midst of excruciating pain and loss, he said, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." Job 28:28

"The fear

of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," echoed the wise men who wrote Psalm 111:10 and Proverbs 9:10.

Centuries ago, God's rebellious and presumptuous people thought they could follow their own sensual inclinations, participate in the rituals of their idolatrous neighbors, and sacrifice their children to gain personal favors -- without losing God's favor and protection. Even the priests thought they were following His ways. They were wrong. Our holy God, who is the same "yesterday, today and forever," warned His foolish and presumptuous people,

"Therefore I will number you for the sword,
And you shall all bow down to the slaughter;
Because, when I called, you did not answer;
When I spoke, you did not hear, but did evil before My eyes, and **chose that in which I do not delight.**" Isaiah 65:12

Pastor Warren has little to say about such godly fear -- the blessed fruit of a deep awareness that God is our Judge and Avenger as well as our Father and Love. God's anger and wrath don't fit into today's affirmative, seeker friendly church environment.

Since Today's English Version, like the J. B. Phillips version, may be considered a translation rather than a paraphrase, the differences below may be less distinct. Yet, they illustrate a reluctance among many contemporary Christian leaders to use the word "fear" when referring to God. While we certainly must (by His Spirit) reverence our holy and almighty God, this more "positive" word removes any subtle (or embarrassing) reminder that our loving Father is also a "jealous" God -- an uncompromising Judge who has little tolerance for our lukewarm "obedience" and self-pleasing "worship."

KJV: "The secret of the LORD is with them that **fear him**; and he will shew them his covenant." Ps 25:14

NKJV: "The secret of the Lord is with those who **fear Him**, and He will show them His covenant." Ps 25:14

NIV: "The Lord confides in those who **fear Him**; he makes his covenant known to them." Ps 25:14

Living Bible: "Friendship with God is reserved for those who **reverence him**." Psalm 25:14a

KJV: "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that **fear him**, in those that **hope in his mercy**." Ps 147:11

NKJV: "The Lord takes pleasure in those who **fear him**, in those who **hope in his mercy**." Ps 147:11

NIV: "The Lord delights in those who **fear Him**; who put their **hope in his unfailing love**." Ps 147:11

Today's English Version: "He takes pleasure in those that **honor Him**; in those who **trust in His constant love**." [page 71]

In other words, the word "fear" clashes with today's attempt to market God to the postmodern masses. To a lesser degree, so do the words "righteous" and "merciful." Both remind us of our sin and inadequacy. They bring the discomfiting suggestion that God indeed is "holier than thou" -- an unpleasant notion for those who prefer to believe that God *is* and *thinks* like me.

Instead, Pastor Warren introduces a more likeable God -- a smiling father who resembles today's permissive parent rather than the righteous and merciful God of the Bible. Whether you are part of God's family or not, Warren speaks confusing half-truths that assure you that --

- "the moment you were born into the world, God was there as an unseen witness, smiling at your birth... your arrival gave him great pleasure." [\[1, page 63\]](#)
- "You are a child of God, and you bring pleasure to God like nothing else he has ever created. The Bible says, 'Because of his love God had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would make us his children -- this was his pleasure and purpose.'" [\[1, page 63-64\]](#)
- "God enjoys watching every detail of your life, whether you are working, playing, resting, or eating." [\[1, page 74\]](#)

Do you feel good about yourself yet? Do you feel comfortable before your holy God?

Perhaps we feel too comfortable. Maybe our holy God doesn't "enjoy watching every detail" of our lives. Although His Word assures us that He delights in us when we trust and follow Him, it also shows us that He grieves over our foolish choices. And if we indeed have been "born again" of His Spirit, we would grieve with Him whenever we obey our own lusts rather than His Word! We would repent -- turn around and run back into His arms!

Yes, He waits for us. Yes, our patient and merciful Lord continues to love us deeply and eternally. Yes, in Christ, all our sins were nailed to the cross. But He doesn't minimize our natural rebellion as we do. Instead, he tells us to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." [Philippians 2:12-13](#)

The New Testament brings some sobering reminders of a side of God we often prefer to forget. Take the story of Ananias and Sapphira. They were part of the early church community where people shared their belongings with each other. You probably remember the story:

"Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?... Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.'" Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So **great fear came upon all...**

"Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, 'Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?' She said, 'Yes, for so much.'" Then Peter said to her, 'How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of

the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.' Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. **So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.**

"And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people....Yet **none of the rest dared join them**, but the people **esteemed them highly**. And **believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes** of both men and women...." Acts 5:1-14

God didn't hesitate to judge a sin that we might easily overlook. After all, Ananias made a generous contribution to the church, didn't he?

But God's standard for holiness among His people is far higher than we are led to believe in our churches. He wants a purified Body, a holy Bride -- washed and cleansed by His shed blood. Seeker-services that bring the world into His sacred places compromise His revealed purposes. So does consensus-based fellowship between believers and unbelievers, between His purity and the world's profanity.

In the early church, God's judgment [above] spread "great fear." The surrounding community showed two typical kinds of responses. While "the people esteemed them highly," only those whom God was drawing to Himself were added to the church. "None of the rest dared join them." It doesn't sound like today's marketing strategies, does it?

The problem is not that Pastor Warren left out the "the fear of God." He can't possibly teach all God's instructions in one book. The problem is lack of balance. By emphasizing God's delight in "every detail of your life" through most of the book while rarely mentioning God's anger, holy standard or judgment, he virtually denied the less comforting side of God's nature.[\[29\]](#)

While God's love is unconditional, His promises are not. Most are linked -- often in the same passage they appear -- to guidelines and conditions for their fulfillment. But those conditions and warnings are generally left out. As presented in this book, many of God's promises to those who -- by His grace and Spirit -- follow Him become, instead, universal and unconditional assurances to everyone who reads the book. No need to "mourn" our sin, "tremble at His Word," or repent of our addiction to contemporary thrills, for everyone is okay in the eyes of Him who "passionately" loves all of us as we are.

But God calls us to know and follow **His** ways, not ours -- and to deny ourselves and let the "flesh" be put to death. In our weakness, He will enable us! Our goal must be His goal: that we would be holy as He is holy. Pastor Warren affirms that truth, but by softening God's revelation about Himself and His ways, he distorts our understanding of holiness. By trivializing the authority of God's Word, he bends our view of God's high standard for our lives in Him. Finally, when he quotes (in various forms) God's promises while ignoring His warnings, he builds presumption, not genuine obedient faith. Many readers would hardly even know what to obey!

They won't find answers when they turn to the discussion questions in the back of the book. Those questions are patterned to fit today's consensus process. This process for conforming individuals to the group's views, involves guidelines such as:

- Don't offend anyone by taking an uncompromising stand on truth or facts.

- Don't use words such as "I know" or "I believe." Instead use words such as "I think" or "I feel" which show your willingness to compromise and bend your views to fit the group consensus. [See [Twisting Truth by Group Consensus](#)]
- Show respect and appreciation for all positions, even those that clash with the Bible.

Most of the questions fit this pattern. Subjective and open-ended, they invite feeling-based opinions, not Scripture-based truths. And some of the questions beg answers that fit today's communitarian ideals more than truth.

True to form, the first two questions begin with "What do you think...." and "What do you feel..." None looks to the Bible as a reference point. None encourages the reader to seek answers from God's Word.

The natural outcome of this comfortable, relational dialogue is a group synthesis of the various opinions. In the end, everyone would feel good about themselves, about each other and about God -- no matter how He might be portrayed. No cost, no self-denial, no separation, no offense! Postmodern Christianity fits right into the changing world system. (This relational process will be discussed more fully in Part 2 of this series.)

Remember, His ways are not our ways! He is the sovereign King of the universe! To know and follow Him, we need to fill our minds with His true Word, not popular interpretations or feel-good group affirmations. Our wise and wonderful Lord says,

"He who *has* My commandments and *keeps* them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words...."
John 14:21-21

In Part 2 we will look at

▸ **Unity and community.** Pastor Warren seems to emphasize a model that reflects Peter Drucker's communitarian vision and Dr. Bernie Siegel's New Age view of the healing community. [See note](#) This new way of doing church (based on marketing strategies, human relationships and group diversity) is changing churches around the world according to a specific plan. "Traditional" Christians -- those who love God's Word and seek fellowship based on unity in the Spirit, not on human consensus -- will either leave their changing church or be asked to leave. They no longer fit! Because they take an uncompromising stand on Biblical absolutes, they block the planned transformation and hinder the needed "unity in diversity:" a new kind of fellowship, not in Christ, but through Christians and non-Christians dialoging together toward an evolving global consensus. See [The Mind-Changing Process](#)

▸ **Transformation:** Rick Warren promised, "The next 40 days will transform your life." [1. page 101](#) In many postmodern minds, this **transformation** has little to do with rebirth through the Spirit of God. Within the CGM, the word "transformation" often refers to people and churches being conformed to the new "relational" vision of "community." This change uses the latest psycho-social strategies and intrusive technologies for measuring change and individual compliance with the stated "vision."

As soon as possible, we will start a glossary of terms used by today's self-proclaimed

"change agents" who lead the way in church transformation. (see [Re-Inventing the Church](#)).

▶ **Spiritual gifts.** Pastor Warren says, "Begin by assessing your gifts and abilities. Take a long, honest look at what you are good at and what you're not good at. Ask other people... Spiritual gifts and natural abilities are always confirmed by others."

To validate his point, he quotes Romans 12:3b (Phillips). [\[1, page 31\]](#) While the Phillips translation may seem to support his conclusion, the standard translations do not. They tell us to guard against inflated views of ourselves (pride) -- a hidden sin encouraged by today's emphasis on self-esteem, mutual affirmation and reluctance to speak truths that might seem offensive. Nor do the standard translations support the contemporary notion that spiritual gifts can be identified, tried and measured according to our natural abilities or subjective opinions. God gives these supernatural gifts! If we, His sheep, "hear *His voice*" and have the faith to follow His personal guidance, we will surely know where we can best serve Him and give Him all the glory.

KJV	NKJV	NIV	Phillips
"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think , but to think soberly , as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith." Rom 12:3	" I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think ; but to think soberly , according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Rom 12:3	"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought , but rather think of yourself with sober judgment , in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you." Rom 12:3	"Try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities. " Rom 12:3 b

God often gives us spiritual gifts that have little or nothing to do with natural abilities, so that we would serve Him out of our weakness rather than our strength. That's what He taught me. Writing and speaking was totally unnatural and extremely painful for me when God first called me to communicate His gospel to children. A shy, quiet introvert, I learned to depend fully on Him. And through the years, my wonderful Shepherd proved His faithfulness again and again in amazing ways. Paul said,

"I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

[Part 2: Unity & Community](#) [Part 3: Small Groups](#) [Part 4: Dealing with Resisters](#)

See also [Re-Inventing the Church](#) and [The Shepherding Movement Comes of Age](#)

Endnotes:

1. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002). See "[Driven or Led?](#)"
2. Dennis Costella, FOUNDATION Magazine, March-April 1998.

<http://www.fundamentalbiblechurch.org/Foundation/fbcSDLbk.htm>. You can find a very similar message in Rick Warren's article titled " [Selecting Worship Music](#)" (July 29, 2002) at <http://www.pastorport.com/ministrytoday.asp?mode=viewarchive&index=18>.

The Bible warns against a musical "variety" or usage that serves paganism: "when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, *and* lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down *and* worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up." Daniel 3:7

3. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), page 62.

4. <http://www.pastors.com/aboutus/>

5. Ken Witty, "Peter Drucker's Search for Community," *Business Week Online*, December 24, 2002. http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/dec2002/nf20021224_6814.htm

6. http://www.christian-ministry.com/aboutus_who.htm

7. <http://www.christian-ministry.com/clients.htm>

8. http://www.christian-ministry.com/services_promo.htm

9. Warren on church music,

http://www.sunlandneighborhoodchurch.com/articles_view.asp?articleid=1382&columnid=

10. "A Biblical Worldview Has a Radical Effect on a Person's Life," December 1, 2003,

[http://www.barna.org/cgi-](http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=154&Reference=A)

[bin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=154&Reference=A](http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=154&Reference=A). I have been told that Mr. Barna is becoming skeptical about the Church Growth Movement, which he earlier supported. [See [Re-Inventing the Church](#)] I can see why. His own statistics show the tragic consequences of "cheap grace" and salvation prayers without a Biblical foundation.

11. Gene Edward Veith, "Unbelieving 'born-again,'" *World on the Web*, Dec. 6, 2003,

http://www.worldmag.com/world/issue/12-06-03/cultural_4.asp

12. "Peter Drucker on the Church and Denominations." This pdf file is posted on the *Leadership Network* website at <http://www.leadnet.org/allthingsin/archives/netfax/1.pdf>

13. Dr. Robert Klenck, "The 21st Century Church" at

<http://www.crossroad.to/News/Church/Klenck3.html>

14. God's moral law can neither save us nor give us the strength to obey its guidelines. But it gives us a standard for right and wrong -- and it helps us to understand God's holiness, righteousness, mercy and grace.

15. Many echo this belief: "Sin is a normal part of life, and I'm just as good as everyone else -- maybe a little better. Besides, God loves me as I am." While this statement is partly true, it's also misleading. The essence of God's character is not only love. It's also unbending justice, indescribable holiness and perfect righteousness. Without balanced information about God, we can neither know or follow Him.

16. "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." Deuteronomy 4:1-2. See also Deuteronomy 12:32; Proverbs 30:5-6 and Revelation 22:18-19.

17. "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:14

18. See "[Church Management and Global Missions](#)." In the fall of 2003, Pastor Warren introduced the Saddleback "[P.E.A.C.E. Plan](#)" --"a strategy to have every small group in our church, and then tens of thousands of small groups in other churches, become engaged in solving the five biggest problems in the world: Spiritual Lostness, Lack of Godly Leaders, Poverty, Disease, and Lack of Education."

"We believe it is part of the beginning of a Spiritual Awakening, a Global Movement, a New Reformation," wrote Pastor Warren. "The PEACE Plan will address these five 'giant' problems by Planting new churches... Equipping leaders... Assisting the poor...Caring for the sick... and Educating the next generation...."

"The bottom line is that we intend to reinvent mission strategy in the 21st century. As I stated, this will be a new Reformation. The First Reformation returned us to the message of the original church. It was a reformation of doctrine - what the church BELIEVES. This Second Reformation will return us to the mission of the original church. It will be a reformation of purpose -- what the church DOES in the world."

God calls us to share His love and resources with the poor and needy. But if Pastor Warren's PEACE Plan means training church leaders to trust and follow the world's management and marketing strategies as he does (see Part 1 and 3), he will be serving man's global agenda, not worshipping God. See [Reinventing the World](#)

19. Today's emphasis on "passion" and excitement can be misleading. In the King James Bible, passion refers to the suffering of our Lord on the cross. But other standard translations equate passion with "lust" or "inordinate affections." For examples, see Acts 1:3 (NKJ) and Colossians 3:5 (KJV or NKJV): "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

20. [Selecting Worship Music by Rick Warren](#) at <http://www.pastorport.com/ministrytoday.asp?mode=viewarchive&index=18>. Since the Bible doesn't mention drums, it neither affirms nor forbids it. But other Scriptures help us understand God's view of the use of a throbbing drum beat. Aside from numerous Old Testament warnings against imitating the enticing rituals and practices of pagan and animist "neighbors" (who might have used the speed and volume of rhythms to induce trance possession), Romans 14:15 tells us that "Yet if your brother is grieved because of *your* food, you are no longer walking in love." Pastor Warren freely admits that the introduction of rock music has been offensive to many Christians in his church. To draw young people, he chose a popular vehicle that would agonize and chase many away. That choice, in itself, seems to violate God's law of love -- a principle Pastor Warren will emphasize repeatedly in the context of small groups and building the new sympathetic consensus community.

21. 1 Chron. 15:16-24; 16:4-6, 42; 25:1-6. page 978-979. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1981), 978-979.

22. [Word Music - about](#) at <http://wordmusic.com/about/>

23. ["Nokia and EMI form strategic alliance to offer innovative range of music services"](#)

24. [Music Publishing](#), <http://www.emigroup.com/publishing/i-.html>

25. [Social Responsibility Policy](#) at <http://www.emigroup.com/enviro/srpolicy.pdf>

26. [INDUSTRY and ASSOCIATES April 5-10, 2003](#)

27. [A New Song - Part 2](#)

28. Lynn Stuter, "Who Controls at the Local Level?" <http://www.learn-usa.com/er018.htm>

29. Pastor Warren does mention God's wrath on page 232, but without a prior explanation of what might be considered "sinful." Instead, the reference to "wrath" fits into the *relational* context of "service" and "helping others" -- a Biblical command that is now being conformed to the global concept of community service and "[service learning](#)." This kind of organized "service" focuses on felt needs and dialogue and often rules out spiritual needs and Biblical truth. This will be explained more fully in Part 2.

Note: "Hope is as essential to your life as air and water. You need hope to cope. Dr. Bernie Siegel found he could predict which of his cancer patients would go into remission by asking, 'Do you want to live to be one hundred?' Those with a **deep sense of life purpose** answered yes and were the ones most likely to survive. **Hope comes from having a purpose.**" Rick Warren [\[1, page 31\]](#) This illustration suggests that a secular or New Age hope serves the same purpose as the Spirit-given hope we have in Jesus Christ. There can be no true hope or unity unless we stand on the unchanging truth of God's Word!

