

STRANGER DANGER

By L.L. (Don) & Joy A. Veinot

When our children started school, we were introduced to the "Stranger Danger" program. With a growing concern about strangers abducting school children, we, along with most other parents, spent time talking with our kids about Stranger Danger. "Don't talk to strangers." "Walk in a group." "Never get into a stranger's car, or go anywhere with him—even if he says he knows your parents or needs help finding his puppy."

The reason we did this is obvious. Nobody wants to talk about these dark issues—no one wants to scare their innocent little ones, but we love our children too much to let them go out unprepared to meet the dangers of life. We are in authority and are responsible for their well-being. Part of that responsibility is to guard them from outsiders who would do them harm and to provide them with strategies to protect themselves when necessary. With that in mind, our area also adopted a "Blue Star" program. Certain homes in the area, where a trustworthy adult would likely be home during the day, placed a large Blue Star in the window. If a child felt threatened by a stranger, they could run to this home to find safety and protection. The Blue Star indicated that "this house is a safe place." Ours was one of those designated homes. There was also a phone tree set up so that all the Blue Star homes could be alerted (so they could be especially vigilant and warn others) if a suspicious looking "stranger" was seen lurking about the schoolyard or the neighborhood parks.

Not just anyone could be a certified Blue Star parent. If one applied for a Blue Star, they were subjected to background checks and scrutiny to make sure that a Blue Star home was truly a "safe home." We took our responsibility very seriously, and during our

time, many perceived threats from "outsiders" were checked out by the police. A few times "a parent's worst nightmare" was, indeed, prevented by this community watchfulness.

Unfortunately, as we all know, not all dangerous predators are "outsiders." And not all of them *appear* suspicious or dangerous at all. Some predators are wolves in "sheep's clothing." They

may be teachers, clergymen, village Jaycees, coaches, Scout leaders, or other seemingly "safe" people.

When such abuse comes to light and the allegations are proven, most people expect swift action to be taken against the perpetrators. We require that people who prey on children immediately be dismissed from their positions and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. We do not expect such criminals *ever* to be allowed to work in an environment where they have access to children; and we become incensed when we find that any such abuse has been covered over or hushed up—as in the recently exposed cases of pedophile Priests who have been "reassigned" to other parishes rather than publicly reprimanded and removed from their positions. We certainly don't expect to find parents or community

leaders excusing child abuse by saying things like, "Oh, but he/she is such a good math teacher. He really helps the kids grasp the subject and learn. He gives such great sermons on Sunday! He or she is very successful in their career, or very active in community functions and programs for the needy. They have so many good things to offer and they really only have a problem in this one little area of molesting children; in light of all the good that they do, we just should forgive this one little fault and move on. After

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all, we can't throw the baby out with the bath water."

The welfare of the children and their safety takes precedence over any other considerations. Parents, school and church officials, and community leaders have an obligation to guard children from predators—from strangers and outsiders and from predatory "insiders" as well. And we must be ever vigilant in order to do this.

Guard the Flock

The Apostle Paul charged the Ephesian Elders with similar spiritual responsibilities toward the people who had been entrusted to their care. They were to guard the flock from spiritual dangers having eternal consequences.

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears."

The Apostle Paul was earnestly trying to alert these men to the danger of strangers. He had been faithfully protecting the flock from deceivers and spiritual predators. He claimed to have done so **"night and day for a period of three years...with tears."** But now, of necessity, he was passing this burden to the elders of Ephesus, and Paul seemed very anxious for these men to understand the seriousness of the task set before them. At all costs, keep the wolves OUT! In addition, he warned them to keep a sharp eye out for spiritual charlatans **"speaking perverse things"** who would arise *within* the congregation—savage wolves in sheep's clothing who would drag the unwary off with them to their destruction.

A little while later, Paul wrote to the young pastor of the church in Ephesus—Timothy. Like a concerned parent, who has entrusted the care and upbringing of his children to another, he reminds Timothy of his most important concerns:

As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at

Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines . . .²

A study of First and Second Timothy reveals the things that were important to the Apostle Paul. He laid out the type of ministry he expected this young pastor and the Church elders to perform. It is discouraging to read these letters today and contemplate the state of the contemporary church. Sadly, many church members and even pastors become incensed if one dares even to question popular teachers or movements that have wormed their way into the church. A few years back, we exposed Diet Guru and anti-Trinitarian Gwen Shamblin as being a cult leader in sheep's clothing; and before she was through, she had raked in excess of 100-million dollars from unsuspecting evangelicals and dragged many disciples out of the churches and into her cult group—Remnant Fellowship! Many people reacted with shock and consternation when faced with the truth about this very popular false teacher, but some others were downright angry—at us!

You can try this at home. Ask your Christian friend who is a Benny Hinn devotee if Hinn's false prognostications—supposedly under the Holy Spirit's direction, that did not come to pass—make him a false prophet, then stand back! ☺ Or ask him if there are truly nine persons in the Trinity—as Benny asserted that God told him. Alternatively, you can question the Word-Faith/Prosperity teachings of Kenneth Copeland, Joyce Meyers, the late Kenneth Hagin, Creflo Dollar, T.D. Jakes, Frederick K.C. Price, et al, and see what kind of reaction you get.

Of course, there is also the Neil Anderson/Bob Larsen school of demon chasers out there, looking to blame all of your problems and sins on generational curses and the underworld and to cast those demons of gluttony, greed, and lust right out of your soul. And then there is Mary K. Baxter who has been to hell and back with news you can use. ☺

In explaining to Timothy what men and what **"strange doctrines"** he was referring to, Paul writes:

...wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.³

Paul could just as well be writing about Bill Gothard and his Institute in Basic Life Principles. Through Gothard's Scripture twisting and legalistic cause-and-effect

teachings with some out-of-context Bible verses Scotch-taped to them, he manages to wreak havoc on churches and families. . . unchecked.

Where, in all of this, are the Church leaders—the Timothys, the Pauls, the elders of Ephesus? Part of the problem is, of course, that the Church—the body of Christ—is divided among different denominations, so there is no single personage (such as the Apostle Paul) or ecclesiastical body whose decisions on these matters would be honored by all. Indeed, if Evangelicals were to unify enough to set up some sort of Papal-like authority, the cure likely would be far worse than the disease. ☺ So, what we, in the Evangelical community, tend to do is to look to very popular national teachers, preachers, and radio and TV “personalities” to “show us the way”—to put their “stamp of approval” on what is good or, conversely, to publicly expose and warn us of the false and dangerous teachings and trends. If Mr. Big so-and-so accepts this man (or woman!) or that teaching, it must be okay for us to do likewise. Sadly, though, this course of action certainly is not working today—if it ever did. Our defacto Evangelical “College of Cardinals,” many of whom are good solid preachers and teachers in their own right, too often are silent about or even endorse false teachers and false teachings within the Church. Many other pastors then follow their lead and remain silent as well. After all, if “the big guys” don’t see a problem, there must not BE a problem. Evangelical leader, Pastor Adrian Rogers, has endorsed Bill Gothard and his teachings. Jerry Falwell has made alliances with the false Christ—Sun Myung Moon, and calls the false prophet and false teacher Benny Hinn his “good friend.”⁴ Oneness Pentecostal⁵ pastors—Phillips, Craig, and Dean—are played on Evangelical radio stations and sold in Evangelical bookstores. (Don’t even get us *started* on some of the spiritual humbug that is bought and sold on Christian radio or in so-called Christian bookstores.) These are only a handful of examples of so many that could be cited. It has gotten so bad in our “tolerant” age that discernment is disdained as being “divisive” or “mean-spirited.” We are admonished not to “throw the baby out with the bath water.” But what if the “baby” has horns and a tail? Should we then raise it to manhood? ☺

Some will be alarmed or upset that we do speak out against false teachers and even name names, as if false prophets and teachers should have our protection. But we do so

following the Apostle Paul’s example. He did not lie awake nights worrying about being “tolerant” or “politically correct” towards the false teachers of his day. In his warning to Timothy, he named two who:

...suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme.⁶

Would that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.⁸

Donald K. Campbell, President Emeritus of Dallas Theological Seminary, comments on this statement:

Speaking out of deep concern for the Gospel of the grace of God, Paul uttered a strong expression. He wished that the Judaizers, who were so enthusiastic about circumcision, would go the whole way and castrate themselves, as did the pagan priests of the cult of Cybele in Asia Minor.⁹

Was the Apostle Paul just being mean-spirited, intolerant, and/or divisive? No. Like a very concerned parent passing on his responsibilities to others, Paul was clear about the primary tasks of pastors and elders. Guard the flock from predators coming in from the outside. Guard the flock from predators on the inside. Teach sound doctrine in order to equip believers with the necessary tools to protect themselves by being able to distinguish between those who were watching out for their souls (Hebrews 13:17) and the wolves who would do them harm (Matthew 7:15). Counterfeit “unity” cannot be allowed to preempt truth.

Spiritual A.I.D.S.

We really believe that most pastors and elders want to serve their churches well. Pastoring is a very difficult task. Pastors are often viewed as the paid professional Christian whose job it is to grow the church. They often labor for long hours doing individual counseling of various types. Moreover, they often have to “separate the children,” who are fighting over silly issues, and attempt to bring about some sense of unity within the body. They rarely go into the ministry with visions of national notoriety or aspirations of making big bucks. We suspect that the majority of pastors are faithful men who are underpaid, overworked, and under appreciated.

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If this is true, and we believe that it is, why is doctrinal anorexia flourishing virtually unchecked in the Church? According to George Barna, only nine percent of Evangelicals have a biblical worldview.¹⁰ Why is biblical literacy at such a low ebb? It may be because, according to Barna, nearly 50% of pastors do not have a biblical worldview.¹¹ We would suggest there is a spiritual A.I.D.S. in the Church—Acquired Ignorance of the Doctrines of Scripture. This came about as a result of a few things in the past which are now bearing fruit in the present. We won't be able to fully develop this history in a *Journal* article such as this; however, we suggest there are at least two things which have influenced how the Church sees itself and its place in the world that has determined how the Church operates today.

Market-Driven Philosophy

One of the first unfortunate changes occurred with a switch from theocentric (God-centered) theology to anthropocentric (human-centered) theology.

Even books on theology changed their order of things so that the theology of man took on greater and greater importance. Theologians previous to Friedrich Schleiermacher of Germany generally considered theology to be the study of God, and that from knowing God one could gain insight into His creation, including the nature of man. However, Schleiermacher included self-consciousness in his theology, whereby subjective experience gained a foothold alongside revelation.¹²

In this shift, preaching and teaching became less about truth and sound doctrine and more about "How do we get more people into our church?" This is not a new story. We all tend to think things were better in the "old days," but it is not really so. Gary Gilley, author of *This Little Church Went to Market*, writes:

...Americans simply did not go to church in great numbers in the nineteenth century. Many estimates place church membership at around seven percent at the dawn of the nineteenth century and only 15 percent by 1850, after the so-called Second Great Awakening.¹³

Charles Finney

The hoped-for solution came in the form of a young attorney turned preacher by the name of Charles Finney:

All that began to change in the 1740s at the time of the Great Awakening and the preaching of George Whitefield. When the embers of this time or revival died down, the church went into a drought. Church attendance began to dive, theology lost its appeal, the teachings of the Enlightenment began to catch on, and Deism became popular. By 1800 the American church was in a dismal state and ripe for anything that would offer some kind of spiritual sustenance. The Second Great Awakening, which began in 1801 in Cane Ridge, Kentucky, would fill that void and forever change Christianity in America. Sermons of substance were replaced with emotional appeals. Doctrine was replaced by stories, and the preacher's performance became more important than what was taught. Music took on a central role as emotionalism became the order of the day. Ministers began to study "what worked" in order to draw a crowd. Charles Finney would perfect all of this, changing the heart and soul of the church. In other words, church services became a form of entertainment.¹⁴

Watching the seeming "success" of Finney, pastors began using his marketing principles and style. Story telling (using the Bible, of course) substituted for preaching and teaching. Preparing the environment for the consumer in order to make the final pitch of the Gospel with an altar call directed the product packaging. The *ministry* of the Church—worship, preaching, teaching and preparing the saints for the work of service (Eph 4:11-16), correcting false teachers (1 Timothy 1:3) and false teachings (1 Timothy 4:6) was replaced with the *mission* of the Church, which emphasized above all the proclamation of the Gospel. From a biblical perspective, Gospel presentation is not supposed to be the *primary* emphasis of the corporate meetings of the Church. The examples of *intentional* evangelism that we find in Scripture are that of Christians going outside the church doors where the unsaved live and gather. Please don't misunderstand—we are not saying that at no time should the proclamation of the Gospel occur in church, but only that it is not the *primary emphasis* of the corporate meeting of believers. As the Apostle Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 14:23, unbelievers may come in. (Some churches should perhaps take note of Paul's admonition that we not appear to be absolutely out of our minds to interested non-Christians ! ☺) In performing the *ministry* of the Church of teaching, edifying, training and equipping, the Gospel will come up in the natural course of sound exegetical preaching and teaching.

This major shift—of all but abandoning the *ministry of the Church* and replacing it with the *mission of the Church*—had far-reaching effects on how pastors understood and carried out their preaching task. The French Aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville, after touring the United States wrote *Democracy in America*, saw this error working itself out during the full bloom of the movement's "success:"

Alexis de Tocqueville in the 1830s wrote an insightful analysis of American character and culture. De Tocqueville argued that Americans' "self-interest" was an "irresistible force" and profoundly shaped how Christianity was presented.

De Tocqueville reported that pastors had lost all hope of contradicting American's basic self-interest. Picture Americans' self-interest as a swiftly flowing river. Instead of trying to row upstream, pastors decided to guide the boat downstream.

"They turn all their thoughts to the direction of it [self-interest]. They therefore do not deny that every man may follow his one interest, but they endeavor to prove that it is in the interest of every man to be virtuous."¹⁵

What is little recognized today is that Finney, himself, ultimately saw his own attempt as a failure.

Joseph Ives Foot, a Presbyterian minister, wrote in 1838: "During the ten years, hundreds, and perhaps thousands, were annually reported to be converted on all hands; but now it is admitted, that his [Finney's] real converts are comparatively few. It is declared even by himself, that 'the great body of them are a disgrace to religion'."¹⁶

Nevertheless, Finney's methods became part of the fabric of the Church—so firmly rooted that, today, some just assume it is the biblical way to conduct Church services. Christian doctrinal instruction went into steep decline along with personal evangelism as the Church increasingly tried to get unsaved people *into the church* through marketing and entertainment with the hope of proclaiming the Gospel message. Charles Spurgeon was

very concerned about this trend and subsequently wrote *Feeding Sheep or Amusing Goats?* in an attempt to bring the Church back to sound biblical teaching. He wrote:

An evil resides in the professed camp of the Lord so gross in its imprudence that the most shortsighted can hardly fail to notice it. During the past few years it has developed at an abnormal rate, even for evil. It has worked like leaven until the whole lump ferments. The devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the Church that part of their mission is to provide entertainment for the people, with a view to winning them. From speaking out as the Puritans did, the Church has gradually toned down her testimony, then winked at and excused the frivolities of the day. Then she tolerated them in her borders. Now she has adopted them under the plea of reaching the masses.¹⁷

His next questions are as pertinent today as they were when he first penned them:

My first contention is that providing amusement for the people is nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as a function of the Church. If it is a Christian work why did not Christ speak of it? "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." That is clear enough. So it would have been if He had added, "and provide amusement for those who do not relish the Gospel." No such words, however, are to be found. It did not seem to occur to Him. Then again, "He gave some apostles, some prophets, some pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry." Where do entertainers come in? The Holy Spirit is silent concerning them. Were the prophets persecuted because they amused the people or because they refused?¹⁸

Nevertheless, his warnings went unheeded, and by the dawn of the twentieth century, the Church had become so doctrinally and intellectually weakened that it had no real defense against the onslaught of Darwinism and liberalism. As a result, by 1930 the Church largely abandoned culture and created their own subculture to protect themselves from the heathen. We can certainly understand this. The world is a scary place, and Christians hoped that, by "circling the wagons," they could protect their children and families from the influence of the Pagans round about, not realizing that a good doctrinal education is the best protection there is from the deceitful and empty philosophies of the world!

As popular as Finney's method had become, though, over time it proved to be less and less effective. New ways of creating a market demand would eventually be sought after. Inevitably, not only did Christian instruction decline, but the Gospel, itself, had to be "softened up" and "repackaged" to appeal to the sensibilities of the unsaved.

Skinner and Maslow

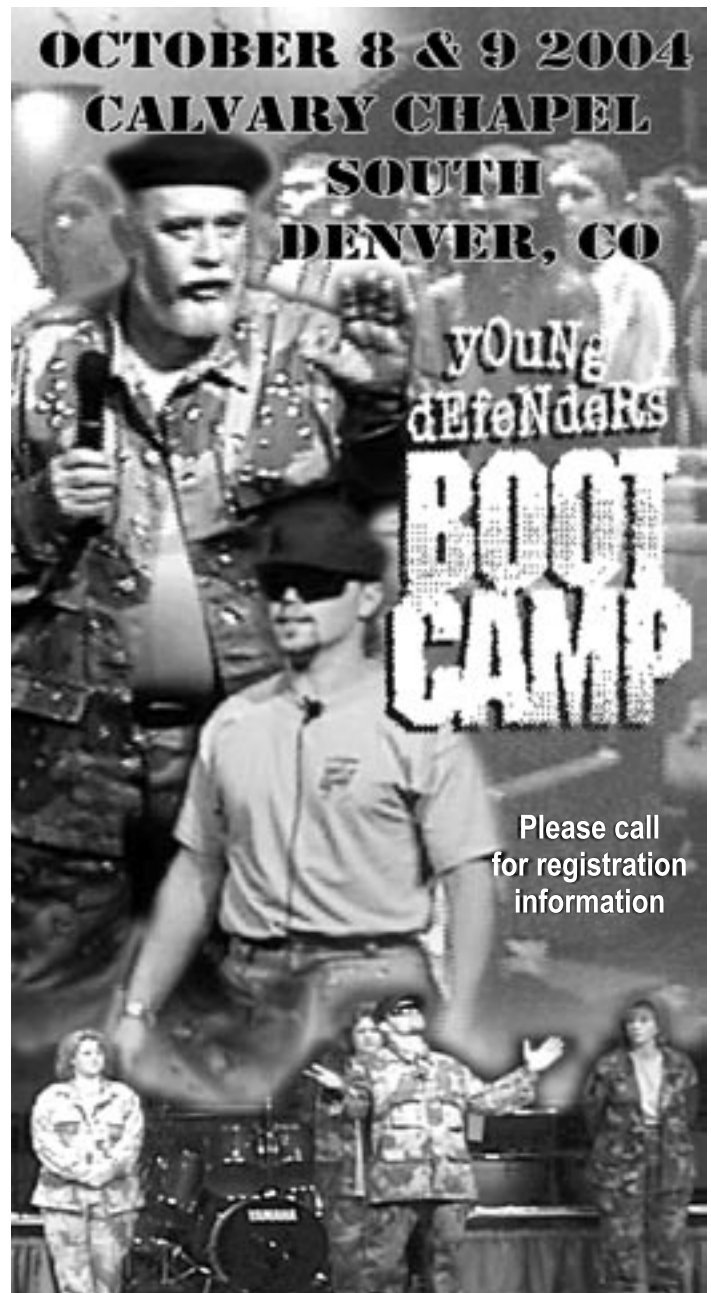
The second major change would come from even less likely sources—B.F. Skinner and Abraham Maslow. Skinner worked in the field of Behavioral Psychology:

Skinner received his PhD in 1931. In 1936 he took an academic position at the University of Minnesota where he wrote *The Behavior of Organisms* and began his novel *Walden II*, about a commune where behaviorist principles created a new kind of Utopia. He also began development of his controversial "baby box," a controlled-environment chamber for infants (his second daughter spent much of her babyhood in one). Pigeons roosted outside his office window at the University of

Minnesota, which gave him the idea to use them as experimental subjects -- they became his favorite.

With pigeons, he developed the ideas of "operant conditioning" and "shaping behavior." Unlike Pavlov's "classical conditioning," where an existing behavior (salivating for food) is shaped by associating it with a new stimulus (ringing of a metronome), operant conditioning is the rewarding of a partial behavior or a random act that approaches the desired behavior. Operant conditioning can be used to shape behavior. If the goal is to have a pigeon turn in a circle to the left, a reward is given for any small movement to the left. When the pigeon catches on to that, the reward is given for larger movements to the left, and so on, until the pigeon has turned a complete circle before getting the reward. Skinner compared this learning with the way children learn to talk—they are rewarded for making a sound that is sort of like a word until in fact they can say the word. Skinner believed other complicated tasks could be broken down in this way and taught. He even developed

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teaching machines so students could learn bit by bit, uncovering answers for an immediate “reward.”¹⁹

Skinner believed that, by following a particular set of steps and principles, humans could be programmed to live certain ways which would bring about rewards as a result of their “good” behavior.

Like Skinner, Abraham Maslow had gained national notoriety by the 1950s. Since then, psychiatry and psychology have managed to establish themselves in the Church and have been baptized as “Christian.” This, in turn, impacted how most pastors were trained to perform their tasks:

...many pastors assumed therapeutic roles and provided acceptance and understanding in place of confronting the sinner and guiding him to repentance. By the middle of the century most seminaries offered classes in psychology. These included seminaries of conservative, as well as liberal, denominations.²⁰

Maslow, like Skinner, had developed ideas that would not only be embraced by and baptized into the Church, but they would become THE way of understanding and teaching Scripture as well as “how to do church.” After all, if the primary function of the church meeting is evangelism, and there are very few unbelievers in the church to be evangelized, we need to figure out how to get them in so we can reach them with the Gospel. Maslow’s system provided the basis for this new approach:

An inborn “instinctoid drive” will lead them to grow into loving, unselfish adults *provided* they are first able to satisfy four basic levels of needs 1) physiological needs, such as food and shelter; 2) security needs; 3) belonging needs, for love and acceptance; and 4) self-esteem, which implies both actual accomplishment and recognition from others. Only after the “deficiency needs” have been satisfied are human beings free to begin the potential process of self-actualization and the maximization of creative potential – “to become everything one is capable of becoming.” Of that group, he estimated that perhaps two percent of the population achieve the ultimate goal and become fully self-actualized – or, as he sometimes preferred to put it, “fully human.” Though Maslow never expressed it in quite those terms, fully actualized men and women were the living equivalent of religious Scripture.²¹

By 1960, Abraham Maslow’s views had become largely mainstream in psychology, culture, and increasingly so in the Church as well. Self-esteem, hierarchy of need, peak experiences, and self-actualization would take slightly different manifestations inside and outside the church; but they would become the guiding principles for how we understand ourselves and, as Christians, how we understand and interpret Scripture.

Crossroads in the Church

The views of these two Secular Humanists would be embraced by different segments of the Church. In the early 1960s, a young Bill Gothard embraced the idea of behaviorism. He was concerned about holy living and created a behavioristic system of steps and principles which, if followed mechanistically, would result in rewards from God. The core of his system is his “seven non-optional principles of life,” which constitutes his “umbrella of protection.” If one gets under the umbrella and carefully follows the step-by-step mechanistic approach, the promised reward is that one will not experience sickness, financial loss, difficult

relationships, rebellious teenagers, etc. According to Gothard’s behavioristic model, a veritable Utopia could be achieved in this life by those who unquestioningly follow his method.

As he marketed his concept to the Church, he saw an overwhelmingly positive response from Christians who were quite fearful about the chaotic and rebellious world in which they found themselves in the 1960s and 1970s. A far better approach would have been a return to the biblical mandate to diligently educate young (and old!) believers in Christian thought to equip them to deal with the onslaught of a decadent and militantly secular culture; but sadly, that did not happen, and the avant-garde 1960’s philosophy destroyed many lives and continues to flourish even today.

Whereas Gothard and some segments of the Church were influenced by Skinner, another individual went in the direction of Maslow. Robert Schuller, in starting his church, seemed to have had a heart to reach the lost, and he looked for a way to get non-believers to attend. In light of the by-then “traditional” idea that evangelism is the primary function of the corporate meeting, this makes perfect sense. The route Schuller took through Maslow’s psychology had a particular focus on self-esteem—the idea being that with good self-esteem, one can become all they can be (self-actualized), know God (peak experience) and, thus, have their needs met. All four elements of Maslow’s view operate in Schuller’s theology and teachings. Over time, this influence shaped Schuller’s view of sin as well:

Sin is any act or thought that robs myself or another human being of his or her loss of self-esteem.²²

With these new tools in hand, Schuller went out and posed a series of questions to non-Christians. The answers to these would help him design a church in which they would feel comfortable. Maslow’s system fit the bill well: Promote self-esteem, minimize biblical doctrine, and use Bible verses to give the teaching an air of credibility—then market, market, market! Was any of this done with evil intentions? We cannot judge motives. But to us, it seems to be the natural progression of things—the result of beliefs which had been previously accepted into the Church fabric and brought to their logical conclusions. Schuller was arguably one of the most successful church pastors of the 1960s and 1970s. With that success, he eventually called for a “New Reformation” which would further make theology anthropocentric and minimize biblical doctrine (which was supposedly “too divisive”). He wrote *Self Esteem: The New Reformation* where he reveals his disdain for having God at the center rather than ourselves:

For decades now we have watched the church in Western Europe and in America decline in power, membership, and influence. I believe that this decline is the result of our placing Theo centric communication above the meeting of the deeper emotional and spiritual needs of humanity. We have been a church first and a mission second.²³

We have to say it is probably best to be a Christian first and a minister second.

The Advent of the Church Growth Movement

In the mid 1970s, a new movement began called the Church Growth Movement (CGM). One of the more notable leaders of this movement was a young pastor by the name of Bill Hybels. Hybels had a real heart and passion for reaching the lost. He gained a vision (largely from one of his professors by the name of Gilbert

Bilezkian) of being part of a vibrant church that would make a difference in his community.

Dr. B. would say, “I don’t see many churches like this in America in the ‘70s. I mean, I see buildings and I see programs, I see budgets and I see a lot of activity.” He said, “I just don’t see the life of what the Scriptures is [sic] talking about. I don’t see that kind of life being breathed out in a vital way in the fellowship called a church.”

And he would look off into the distance, and he would say, “Someday, someday the mold will be broken. Somebody will get serious about doing church God’s way and they’re gonna take all the risks and endure all the attacks. Someday, somebody will start a church, and it will be a lot like this; it will rock the world.”²⁴

Accepting Dr. B’s challenge, the young pastor/evangelist had a strong desire to break the mold—to radically alter the way of “doing church.” With the already-accepted idea that the mission of the Church—evangelism—is supposed to be done primarily *within the church*, he, like others before him, needed to figure out a way to get non-believers to attend. But how would that be accomplished? After all, it was a rarity for a non-Christian to attend a church where the unvarnished Gospel was preached and an altar call was given each week. While in the process of sorting this out, Hybels attended a conference which was hosted by the individual who claims to be the founder of the CGM—Robert Schuller:

Schuller claims that his shift in methodology has started a significant trend in Christianity: “An undisputed historical fact is that I am the founder, really, of the church-growth movement in this country.” The central core of his shift in method is the application of marketing ideas for the church. He claims, “I advocated and launched what has become known as the marketing approach in Christianity.”²⁵

Since psychology, by this time, had been fully accepted and baptized into the Church, there would seem to be no reason for Bill Hybels to question Schuller’s thinking and approach. We can see the impact of Maslow on Schuller, which would in turn influence how Hybels and his team would set out to “do church.” Item number three of Schuller’s six principles is:

Inventory. “You have to have what they want....Find what their needs are. You have to study psychology to know what the deep emotional needs of human beings are before you open your mouth and start talking to them.... There enters self-esteem psychology and theology.”²⁶

With a desire to reach unbelievers, draw them to Christ—the enculturation of the idea that evangelism is to be done in the church rather than equipping believers to carry out this mission outside the church—and armed with the tools of psychology, Willow Creek Community Church (WCCC) was founded. There is nothing that Bill Hybels and Willow Creek Community Church have done that is really new in a historical sense. They just have been very intentional and effective in the implementation of their plan. Rather than focusing on Maslow’s self-esteem element, Bill Hybels drew from the “hierarchy-of-needs” idea, which transformed his Gospel presentation.

Seen from this perspective, Hybel’s communication makes perfect sense as a modern update of what De Tocqueville observed pastors doing. Americans are still committed to their own self-interest. In the present context, this self-interest involves a search for fulfillment and satisfying their felt needs. If Hybels can convince [unchurched] Harry that Christianity is the best means to do this, he will get on board. Hybels has not sought to redirect the river of self-interest, but like preachers of de Tocueville’s era, argued that he has the fastest boat.²⁷

This is somewhat reminiscent of Augustine in his early writings and views:

In one of his first books, *The Happy Life*, Augustine argued that happiness consists in true learning and religion: “What else is it to live happily but to possess an eternal object through knowing it?” Since Augustine understood the source of happiness as knowing an eternal object, he concluded that happiness came from a perfect knowledge of God.

Two years later, Augustine said that people can be happy only when they are good. He believed that adoption of the classical virtues would help him achieve happiness: “The function of this virtue is to restrain and still the passions which cause us to crave things that turn us away from the laws of God and of His goodness, that is to say, from the happy life.” Augustine believed that as individuals could grow in virtue, they would restrain their passions and thus become fulfilled.²⁸

Sadly, this elevated view of self-fulfillment and meeting our needs tends to discourage sound doctrinal teaching. That is not to say that Hybels and Willow Creek do not affirm sound theological doctrine if questioned. In fact, they subscribe to a very historically orthodox statement of faith. However, is this the grid through which they carry out or understand their mission? In fact, theology does not appear to be highly regarded within

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“KNOWING”... Mormon Style

By John D. Ferrer

Read from the *Book of Mormon*, and pray to see if it is true,” the two Mormon missionaries told me as they were wrapping up our meeting. I had heard this challenge before and was not surprised to hear it again. It has come to be a standard for Mormon missionaries, at least the ones I have run into. I would find out later that it is a standard part of the first lesson Mormon missionaries are trained to give to all “prospects.”¹ I thanked them for their time. We prayed together and then closed out our session on cordial terms. They had been very friendly and warm in their approach. And they obviously believed passionately the message they shared. But I thought to myself afterwards as I pondered their closing challenge and then a statement they had made earlier about the “**burning in the bosom**.” They claimed to know that Mormonism was true because of a feeling they had—a “**burning in the bosom**.” Had I not been familiar with the King James terminology, I might have had to ask if guys even have “bosoms;” but the missionaries made their point loud and clear—spiritual truth is realized entirely by faith.

Can We Know Epistemology?

When a Protestant Christian, such as myself, is witnessing to a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), that is, a Mormon, there are several things to keep in mind. The obvious factors are vigilant prayer, a ready knowledge of Scripture, a clean and fresh understanding of the Christian faith, a gracious and respectful tone, and a genuine love for the person—whether or not they become true believers. These are generally recognized as good practice and are extremely important. But what I want to share with you is an important tactical key that everyone should know in trying to share the true faith with a Mormon. If we miss this key, we may find ourselves, like many unknowing Christians in times past, getting lost in the deceptive shared territory between Classical Christianity and Mormonism.

Somewhere in the common terminologies, the compatible ethic systems, and the shared appearances, there are major differences. Beneath the redefinitions of Jesus, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit; beneath the radically different views on apostles, prophets, and Joseph Smith, there is a core issue which can be summed up in the question, “How do people know?” This is a question of *epistemology*, which can also be defined as, the “*study of the nature of the grounds of knowing*.”² Without necessarily knowing ourselves to be philosophers, we deal with epis-

temology all the time. It crops up whenever a person says, “You can’t know that,” or “Some day you’ll understand,” or simply, “I know.” Christianity has the luxury of dignified faith. That is, our Christian worldview/religion is very much a faith system, but that faith is bolstered by an agreement with reason. In other words, in our “knowing,” we can employ, not just faith, but also reason as well.³ The interrelationship of reason and faith has been hotly debated for centuries; but for our purposes here, we need to know only that Christians are commanded by Scripture to employ both. Faith is informed by reason. And reason is applied by faith. To this end, 1 Peter 3:15-16 says, “*but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always [being] ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you...*”⁴

Isaiah 1:18 shows the LORD inviting the people of Israel, “*Come now, and let us reason together...*” And in Isaiah 5:3-4, after giving Israel a parable about a vineyard, He appeals to their ability to reason by asking them to “*...judge between Me and My vineyard. What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why when I expected [it] to produce [good] grapes did it produce worthless ones?*”

In the New Testament, Paul would compliment the Bereans for testing his words with Scripture (Acts 17: 10-11). Elsewhere, he would invite the Corinthian church to “*... judge what I [Paul] say*” (1 Cor. 10:15). Furthermore, Paul’s sermon on Mars Hill in Athens, given to an audience composed of Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, is a marvelous apologetic demonstrating the reasonableness of the Christian faith (Acts 17:22-34). My point is simply this: Christians can rely on simple blind faith and get by on that; but, while many Christians do just that, our faith also stands up to right reason. We have the luxury and the responsibility to “*study to shew thyself approved*” (2 Tim. 2:15 KJV). An unreasoned faith is a shallow and vulnerable faith.

Mormonism, on the other hand, does not have such a luxury and has only faith to support its most outrageous claims. There are many Mormon apologists with strong minds and elaborate philosophical systems; but even among these, there is a still a certain lynch-pin privilege given to the prayer of faith. For example, Daniel C. Peterson, in an article called “Evidences of the Book of Mormon” printed on the web site for the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), states:

I think the primary evidence for the Book of Mormon will always be what it always has been, mainly the spiritual witness that people receive when they pray sincerely and in faith about the Book of Mormon.⁵

The “**spiritual witness**,” therefore, is recognized as having priority over any empirical, prophetic, or historical tests. And Peterson sets this “**spiritual witness**” at the end of the prayer by faith. The spiritual witness, consequently, is achieved entirely by un-testable subjective means and only after one has already

accepted the *Book of Mormon* by faith. Blake T. Ostler, another scholar within Mormonism would say, quite tellingly:

Any religious commitment based on scientific evidence is tenuous and likely to be upset by new evidence. Because my commitment to Mormonism has greater prior epistemic probability for me than any scientific theory, it is more reasonable for me to question the acceptance of the scientific evidence as a basis of religious belief rather than reject my religious beliefs.⁶

Notice here that Ostler has implied that his faith and the broad spectrum of science are at odds. Also, note that his “**commitment to Mormonism**” is prior to his employing of science. He has not, in this statement, allowed the possibility of a mutually extended and mutually dependent combination of faith and science. For Ostler, faith comes before science or it is doomed to instability. It is quite convenient (and highly suspicious) to use or discard science based entirely upon whether it accommodates one’s prior faith commitment. And while I do not intend to launch into an extended discussion on the philosophy of science, I do want to point out that whatever truth may be perceivable through the practice of science, in Ostler’s system of knowing, it will remain suspect and disposable unless it agrees with the presumed-true Mormon faith.

Fideism Alone

When a person holds to a religious belief entirely based upon faith, it is called **fideism** (fee-dē-ism). If Ostler and Peterson, capable scholars that they are, resort to fideism, how much more necessary is it for the common laity within the Mormon Church also to resort to fideism? To be sure, many Protestant Christians will say, “I don’t have to understand it all, I just believe.” Or they will talk about Christianity as a “blind faith” or a “leap of faith.” And while it is true that no Christian—Protestant or Catholic—has all the answers or a perfect knowledge, we still have a responsibility to be prepared to answer for our faith (1 Pet. 2:15-16). That is to say, faith is not its own answer. Evangelical Christians have the privilege of knowing that our God is the author of all truth, so that any honest pursuit of truth is a pursuit of God and can only benefit right belief (John 14:6). Often for the Christian, such claims of “blind faith” are a cop out given to keep from having to study or dig at the hard truths of Christianity. But for Mormons, such “blind faith” is necessary since there has never been a single bit of archeology to substantiate the uniquely Mormon account of the history of

the Americas.⁷ Nor does their physically-material God stand up to thoroughgoing philosophy or science.⁸ I do not intend to discuss the lengths to which Mormon theology is illogical. Many other authors have done a terrific job in pointing out such inconsistencies already.⁹ This study is more a look at one aspect of how Mormonism is generally practiced.

Heart Versus Mind

Truth tests such as “**Pray to see if it’s true**” or the equally subjective “**burning in the bosom**” are troublesome, particularly because they bypass the mind. It must be noted, however, that both of these popular tests come with a reasoning facet. As has been said, the first challenge usually comes only after the challenge to “**read in the Book of Mormon.**” The “**burning in the bosom**” likewise comes from Mormon scripture and is couched in a context of reason, but note the fence put around that reasoning:

But behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore you shall feel that it is right. But if it is not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a “stupor of thought” that will cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given from me” (D&C 9:8-9, italic mine).¹⁰

Mormons time and time again use the phrase “**burning in the bosom**” in reference to this passage. And some of the more studied adherents will even point to the phrase in the first line, “**you must study it out in your mind.**” I applaud such a suggestion. But that study is useless if it is to be accepted or denied entirely because of a feeling. Whatever study a person may do, truth here remains trapped beneath the impetuous and fitful fancy of the heart. The heart has overridden the mind even though, as the Prophet Jeremiah would say, “*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*” (Jer. 17:9, NIV). Truth is not a feeling. It may inspire feelings. It may quell feelings. But it stands outside of feelings. Whether we like it or not, love it or hate it, feel it or forget it, truth is what it is regardless of our subjective experience.¹¹

Truth tests, such as that of the “**burning in the bosom,**” are prone to error for the following reasons. First, as already inferred, something can *feel* true and not be true. Second, it is empirically obvious that emotions and sensations are fitful and, thus, misleading. The mother who hates getting up at 3AM for early feedings has

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“Knowing” Continued from page 9

not ceased loving her child because she is *feeling* hateful and grumpy, nor has the truth of her motherhood faded because she is not *feeling* very motherly. Almost any married couple who has stayed together for a long time can attest that one does not have to *feel* love sensations to be in love. Third, feelings are, by nature, subjective and, thus, unstable. Only objective realities can be shared because they are objectively true between people. If the “**burning**” being spoken of were in a bush, and this burning bush appeared every time a true believer walked into the room, then the “burning” would be an objective truth. But because this burning is internal and contained entirely within the subject, it remains personal and subjective. Fourth, this subjective experience is vulnerable to foreign intrusions. For example, if I prayed to see if Mormonism was the true faith and I felt a throb in my kidney—is that “bosom” enough to justify faith in Mormonism? What if my kneecap began to burn during that prayer because I was kneeling at the time? And we all should know that bad pizza from an hour earlier does not make Mormonism true. Another Mormon might feel a warmth in their chest like drinking warm milk, but does mine have to be like theirs for it to be true? Fifth, feelings are also subject to psychological manipulations. Many people can attest to how they talked themselves into or out of loving someone. I can make my stomach burn with hunger if I just think about food long enough. It is quite possible to talk oneself into the “**burning in the bosom**” by sheer will power and psychological effort. These may seem like absurd examples, but it really is important to recognize how subjective and manipulatable are our feelings.

If It Feels Good, Believe It

With this said, if you find yourself in an extended discussion with a Mormon about their faith, there likely will come a point in which you will find yourself in the same position I was in when I tried to “reason” with a Mormon friend. It was a coffee house environment, and two Mormon missionaries sat on the couch diagonal to me. I was trying to bridge the gap between them and myself by establishing that we are all fellow truth seekers; and if we are honest and cordial, we can probably learn something from each other. They were perfectly willing to accept this premise. But when I showed them evidence of error in Mormon doctrine, it flew right past them. As we journeyed deeper into the “why” questions of our beliefs, I was finding that they had tested their own faith only slightly. They had accepted Mormonism because of the niceness of some Mormons they knew or because of their Mormon upbringing. In trying to refute Mormon doctrine with sound reasoning, I found myself trying to nail jello to the wall.¹² My very categories of thought were different from theirs. For them, it was “belief then reasoning;” while for me, it was “believe while reasoning.” To put it another way, I was finding myself trying to keep the discussion within the realm of objectively testable and discernible truths, while they were trying to get the discussion into the realm of the un-testable and the subjective. As long as we stayed in the subjective realm of feelings, then my classical Christian faith was not distinguishable from their Mormon faith. And Hinduism, Buddhism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, or “Trash Canism” likewise are equally viable faiths.¹³ I experienced powerful emotional feelings when I first made a profession of faith. I have since wept, laughed, and felt the gamut of feelings in response to

Christian truth. But none of those feelings ever *made* anything true. Rather, I have the responsibility to conform my emotions to the objective spiritual truth of Christianity.

The discussion ended in a stalemate between us—one saying, “**come let us reason together**” and the other saying “look for the ‘**burning in the bosom.**’ ”

Application

What do we do, then, if we know that Mormonism generally puts faith before and above reason? Well, there are several things to note in answering this question.

1) We must first look at our own Christian faith and ask: To what extent have we been loving the Lord our God with all our minds (Matt. 22:37)? Fideism is not common just among Mormons. With all the scientific, philosophical, and theological evidence on our side, countless Evangelical Christians still practice their faith with little to no brain power and could not tell Abraham from a ham sandwich.


2) We should put ourselves in their shoes. Imagine how you would think and respond if your whole worldview was being challenged by some witness from another church. Such sympathy can really help to motivate our own patience, sensitivity, and tact.

3) Soften your jab, but sharpen your sword. In other words, refine and develop the content of your message, but approach them with the most genuine and loving manner. I try to establish common ground—interests, religious pursuits, goals, etc.—and use these as bridges to earn their trust. I use humor to lighten the mood so that incisive questions do not come off as attacks but as questions from a friend. And that is my first goal—to be their friend. Even if they never convert, I will have succeeded on a lesser level by loving them, plain and simple. My second goal is to earn their permission to extend challenges to their beliefs or give expressions of my own belief. You will probably have to soften your language so as not to sound too philosophical, theological, or preachy. If you can put scholarly thoughts into laymen’s terms, you will be much more fit to share the true Gospel.

4) Appeal to their subjective experience. As you approach them with gentleness and love, appeal to their feelings. One former Mormon, Derwin Gray, advises that Christians bring their Mormon friends to an Evangelical worship service—especially one with some stirring worship music. That Mormon may very well feel a “burning in their bosom” and start to lose their Mormon faith right there. Another approach is to appeal to emotional issues like, “How does a Mormon know that they have worked hard enough to reach the highest level of exaltation?” After all, a common expression in Mormonism is that after you work your hardest, God’s grace covers the rest. But the question remains: How does a person know that they have worked their hardest?¹⁴ Be careful though. In employing subjective emotional tactics, you are plucking their heart strings. You do not want to pluck too hard and make an enemy. Nor do you want to win them based entirely upon a song. If they come to the true Christ entirely by emotionalism, then they can just as easily turn away from Him in the same manner.

The Moral of the Story...

I hope you can see that Mormonism has fideism at its practical core, and this issue deserves to be addressed. This issue must first be attacked where it exists within the true Church. But it also must

be identified and understood as it applies to Mormonism if we are to have the most effective and sensitive evangelism to Mormons. As Evangelical Christians, we have a God who has shown Himself through history, theology philosophy, and science. We, therefore, can worship Him even as we are studying to better demonstrate the reasonableness and wisdom of the Christian faith. Why accept a system that appeals to the heart at the exclusion of the mind? Our God bids us to, “*...Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.*’ *This is [the] first and great commandment*” (Matt. 22:37-38, NIV). Why love Him with only our hearts when we have the rest of ourselves to give in loving sacrifice to Him? And why not extend faith and reason together by letting them inform each other and together fuel a holistic worship, a sacrificial service, and a generous sharing of the one God of Truth? 

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Endnotes

¹The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints authors and publishes a six-lesson teaching series in which each Mormon Missionary is trained. On page four of the accompanying instruction manual called *Instructions for Discussion: Uniform System for Teaching the Gospel*, the full-length commitment challenge is: “**Read in the Book of Mormon and pray to know that the Book of Mormon is true and that Joseph Smith was a prophet.**” The line is mirrored in the associated *Discussion 1* pamphlet (pg 1-1) and the *Plan of Our Heavenly Father Study Guide 1* (pg 6), (United States: Intellectual Reserve, 1986).

²Merriam Webster, *Webster’s Dictionary 9th Ed.* (Springfield, MS: Merriam Webster, 1984).

³J.P. Moreland, William Lane Craig, Ravi Zacharias, and Norman Geisler are all formidable apologists, and each has multiple works demonstrating the viability and truthfulness of the Christian faith.

⁴All Scripture references are from the NASB (New American Standard Bible) unless otherwise noted.

⁵The full article is available at <http://farms.byu.edu/free/transcripts/pf.asp?content=petevidences>

⁶Ostler, Blake T. *The Doctrine of Creatio Ex Nihilo is a Big Fuss over Nothing: Part II: The Inductive Argument*. <<http://fair-lds.org/apoli/TNMC/TNMC05.html>> (Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research: 7 July 2002), Accessed: 23 September 2002.

⁷The Smithsonian Institute officially denied the existence of any evidence to support the uniquely Mormon account of the history of the American continents. See the Frank H. H. Roberts’ letter from the Smithsonian Institute Feb. 16, 1951, in Dee F. Green, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (1969), 76-78.

⁸See Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, gen. Eds., *The New Mormon Challenge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 95-152, 193-218. And, Francis J. Beckwith and Stephen F. Parish, *The Mormon Concept of God: A Philosophical Analysis* (Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991).

⁹For a strictly Scriptural discourse see, Ron Rhodes and Marian Bodine, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Mormons* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995). For a wider but shallower dealing with Mormon history and theology, see John R. Farkas and David A. Reed, *Mormonism: Changes, Contradictions and Errors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); also, *The New Mormon Challenge* is an excellent book dealing with contem-

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Speaking Schedule

August 14

Liberty Celebration
Hartsville, TN
Multiple Topics

August 19-23

Calvary Chapel Lake City
Cour d’Alene, ID
Multiple Topics

August 29

Community Fellowship
Carol Stream, IL
Islam-Peaceful?
(Sunday School Hour)

September 12, 19

New Song Community Lutheran Church
Aurora, IL
World Religions
(Sunday School Hour)

September 25-26

Word of Life Community Church
Grandview, MO
Multiple Topics

October 3-6

Memorial Baptist Church
Beckley, WV
Multiple Topics

October 8-9

Young Defenders Boot Camp
Calvary Chapel South Denver
Littleton, CO

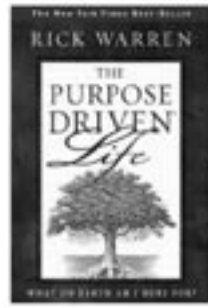
October 16-17

Westside Baptist Church
Billings, MT
Multiple Topics

October 22-24

Witnesses Now For Jesus Convention
New Ringgold, PA

Contact MCOI for further information and/or registration details on any of the above events or to schedule Don to speak at your church.



THE PURPOSE DRIVEN Claim

By L.L. (Don) Veinot & Pastor Mike Mahurin

Examining The Movement Inspired By Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life*

“What have you written on *The Purpose Driven Life*?” is a question we receive by phone, mail, and e-mail several times a week. In some cases, it is folks who are wary of what they perceive as just another church fad. Other times, the question comes from individuals and couples who have been removed from their church as “divisive persons” for questioning the pastor. On a few occasions, the inquiries came as a result of a church split over the book. In some instances, we were told how wonderful and helpful the book has been in giving direction to churches that seemed to be lacking direction. Others have written reviews of the book, and we recommend reading those when deciding the proper course of action for you and your church. We highly recommend Berit Kjos four-part series, “Spirit-Led or Purpose-Driven?”¹

Due to the volume of requests, we decided to read the book to see what it is that might be causing the wide and varied reactions. We have no doubt that Rick Warren has a heart to reach the lost, train believers, and help churches grow. We are aware that any written material can be distorted and used in an abusive way by leaders who are fearful and/or controlling. As we read the book, we had several reactions, but we will only address two of them.

First, the popularity of the book probably says more about the overall state of the church than it does about the quality of the material in the book. What we mean by this is: The material that is good, and there is a fair amount of that, is so basic that anyone who has been a Christian for more than six months ought to understand it already. If they don't, it might be a sign that either the individual is simply “putting in their time” at church without paying much attention, or there is not much in the way of a real teaching ministry in the basic doctrines and practices of the church on a regular basis.

Second, it is probably the case that Rick Warren understands exegesis and hermeneutics, but that is not at all apparent in the book. Even in the cases where the points he makes are valid, the passages cited do not support the points. In other cases, grand leaps are made and serious Scripture twisting is employed to support Warren's assertions. The latter is, in fact, how he arrived at the premise of the book:

Today the average life span is 25,550 days. That's how long you will live if you are typical. Don't you think it would be a wise use of time to set aside 40 of those days to figure out what God wants you to do with the rest of them?

The Bible is clear that God considers 40 days a spiritually significant time period. Whenever God wanted to prepare someone for his purposes, he took 40 days:

- Noah's life was transformed by 40 days of rain.
 - Moses was transformed by 40 days on Mount Sinai.
 - The spies were transformed by 40 days in the Promised Land.
 - David was transformed by Goliath's 40-day challenge.
 - Elijah was transformed when God gave him 40 days of strength from a single meal.
 - The entire city of Nineveh was transformed when God gave the people 40 days to change.
 - Jesus was empowered by 40 days in the wilderness.
 - The disciples were transformed by 40 days with Jesus after his resurrection.
- The next 40 days will change your life. This book is divided into 40 brief chapters. ...”²**

A Closer Look

In order to evaluate the accuracy of this base claim of the book, which sets the tone for the rest of the work, we need to look at and examine the instances cited. We will refrain from getting into a long discussion of Warren and his “movement,” but we suggest that Warren has employed, at least in this book, an abuse of Scripture which is very similar to that employed by Bill Gothard and others. Warren's initial claim is that:

The Bible is clear that God considers 40 days a spiritually significant time period. Whenever God wanted to prepare someone for his purposes, he took 40 days. (p.9)

Okay, that is his core claim. If his assertion is true, it should be easy to support from the pages of Scripture, right? Well, let us examine the evidence one support at a time:

Noah's life was transformed by 40 days of rain. (p.10)

Wrong! There is nothing in the text of Genesis 6-9 regarding Noah being transformed by the rain. However, everyone outside the ark was (Genesis 7:21-23)! In addition, the flood was not only the 40 days of rain, but also the months of “*fountains of the great deep*” activity (Genesis 7:24). Why pick out the 40 days of rain, then? Well, how else can it be made to FIT?

Moses was transformed by 40 days on Mount Sinai. (p.10)

Wrong again. Moses was transformed at Mt. Sinai, all right, but it was NOT during those 40 days. It was during his first

encounter with YHWH on the mount before he ever returned to Egypt, and we are not told how long that encounter lasted (perhaps a few hours? Exodus 3:1-4:17). He had also spent 40 years on the backside of the desert. [Moses fled from Egypt at the age of 40 (Acts 7:23-29), and then after 40 years in the desert, YHWH appeared to him (Acts 7:30).] Perhaps *that* had something to do with preparing him. We dunno. In addition, Moses spent 80 days on the mountain the second time, not just 40. When he came down from the mountain after 40 days, he angrily destroyed the Ten Commandments (Exodus 32:19) and had to go back up again for another 40 days (Exodus 34:28). “Transformed?” When he came down the second time, his face shone, but gradually, that “glory” faded. See 2 Corinthians 3 for a good explanation of the importance of this. How much more profitable would it have been for Warren to preach that rich truth from Scripture instead of this contrived premise?

The spies were transformed by 40 days in the Promised Land. (p.10)

Again wrong. If this was baseball, Warren would be called out on strikes. Ten of the 12 spies came back fearful and warned against going up against the inhabitants of the land (Numbers 13:30-33). Only two had faith that YHWH would conquer the land for them (Numbers 14:6-9). There is NO indication that even those two spies were “transformed” by their time there; rather, they had faith in YHWH’s promise in spite of what they saw in Canaan.

David was transformed by Goliath’s 40-day challenge. (p.10)

Should we say it? Well ... wrong! What we see from the text is that the Israelites were transformed by it. They were transformed into faithless, fearful blobs (1 Samuel 17:11)! We also find that GOLIATH was transformed by DAVID in maybe 40 seconds (1 Samuel 17:49)! Goliath’s so-called “40-day challenge” had nothing to do with transforming David as far as the Scripture goes. It appears that David showed up at the end of that time. What was the difference? Was it the challenge? Of course, not. David had faith in YHWH in spite of the challenge. It was his faith and the object of that faith that are important in this story, not the time period of Goliath’s challenge.

Elijah was transformed when God gave him 40 days of strength from a single meal. (p.10)

This refers to the angel feeding Elijah in 1 Kings 19. The passage does say that he gained strength for the next 40 days, but that was not from “a single meal” as Warren mistakenly claims. Rather it was from TWO meals. However,

the point in the passage is that he had nothing more to eat for the next 40 days. A closer look at the passage, though, shows nothing about any so-called “transformation.” Elijah was running scared from Jezebel, who had threatened his life after he had slain the prophets of Baal. While on the run, the angel fed him these two meals (1 Kings 19:5-7), and then he kept on running. No transformation there.

God spoke to Elijah two more times during the following days (1 Kings 19:9-18), and He eventually reminded Elijah that there were still other faithful ones in Israel besides him (1 Kings 19:18). It was after this that Elisha joins himself to Elijah to help him (1 Kings 19:19-21). Where’s the “transformation?” It very likely only exists in the pages of Warren’s book. It looks suspiciously like Bill Gothard’s apparent methodology: Find passages that have something ... ANYTHING ... remotely connected to the claim (yep, “40 days” are mentioned). Then just claim it. Point to the 40 days, and the average undiscerning reader will accept that the assertion proves the claim.

What a way to treat the Word of God! It is sad, indeed, that so many seem to be unaware or, worse yet, not care about this and truly think this is “deep spiritual truth.”

The entire city of Nineveh was transformed when God gave the people 40 days to change. (p.10)

This one is true ... well sort of. It wasn’t the 40 days that transformed them. That is, after all, what Warren has been attempting to demonstrate. They were given 40 days as a deadline (Jonah 3:4); it was not a “process of transformation.” As a side note, they also were given a deadline about a hundred years later by the Prophet Nahum; and that time, they didn’t make it. Oops!

Jesus was empowered by 40 days in the wilderness. (p.10)

Somehow the word “wrong” doesn’t seem strong enough to us on this one. There is *nothing* in the Bible indicating that Jesus was transformed or “empowered” at all (or, as Abraham Maslow, from whom much of this thinking comes from, would say: self actualized) much less “BY” those 40 days. Well, perhaps that isn’t completely accurate. We would concede that in at least one way Jesus was transformed by those 40 days; he was transformed into a STARVING MAN! The Scripture says that after those 40 days, he “... became hungry,” (Matthew 4:2) and it was after this that Satan tempted him.

Jesus successfully resisted Satan—after the 40 days were over—and returned from the wilderness “in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14). The Scripture does not say that the testing produced that power (which, like Rick Warren,

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In order to evaluate the accuracy of this base claim of the book, which sets the tone for the rest of the work, we need to look at and examine the instances cited. . .we suggest that Warren has employed, at least in this book, an abuse of Scripture which is very similar to that employed by Bill Gothard and others.



By Ted Brooks

After years of screaming at the Devil, standing in faith, and seeking deliverance through God's anointed leaders, when I stopped fighting, I finally found some peace. Since I have ceased my daily hyper-prayer routine and picked up my Bible, I have found what I was missing all along.

When I abandoned my efforts to defeat the Devil through spiritual warfare, the battle was over. I was expecting hordes of demons to break through upon my family, my property, and my mind, but nothing happened. Finally, I realized that all of my efforts to attain victory were driven by nothing more than cult-like teaching and religious peer pressure.

It seemed strange to me, but when I stopped such praying, the Devil halted his attacks. His fiery darts fell from the sky. His accusations ceased, and his lies no longer tormented me. What happened? Why did freedom come so easily?

I made a seemingly half-witted decision to cease spiritual warfare with the Devil, and I used the time to search for some answers in the Bible. I had some nagging questions about what in the world my peers and I were trying to do. An incredible motivation kicked into gear, and I truly wanted to understand who God was, who the Devil was, and where human beings fit into the scheme of things. It all was right there in the written words of Scripture. At long last, there were some answers.

At first, I didn't notice my lack of engagement in spiritual warfare. My studies distracted me from the battle. I was too busy to notice the subtle changes in my thinking. My biblical findings were interesting, to say the least. The Bible was full of answers. This was exactly what I was looking for. Though my mind was busy taking in the wisdom of the Word, it was peaceful. Where was the Devil?

In our hyper-charismatic culture, we had been trained to believe that if we gave the Devil an inch, he would take a mile. If we stopped praying for our family, his fiery darts would make it through. If we ceased praying for protection, it was like leaving the door open for his ugly destructive demons to waltz into our lives. If we forgot to plead the blood over our belongings, even for one day, something would break down or end up missing. If we did not remain vigilant, we were inviting disaster.

But when I took a prolonged break from the battle to study

the Word, I felt that the knowledge I would gain somehow would compensate for the lack of vigilance. During that time, I was desperate for answers and didn't care what happened to my church or my family. It had become too much for me to carry by myself. If the Devil broke through upon us, then fine. That was the price I was willing to pay to get a much needed break and some quality time in the Word. I desired answers more than I wanted to win the war.

But nothing happened! The Devil and his messengers did not show up. Spiritual warfare ceased, and my mind was no longer tormented by all the possible strategies of the enemy.

Where did the Devil go? Even after months of Bible study and research, I was still neglecting spiritual warfare and aggressive prayer. Still no attack. . . no mental torment. . . no prophetic urges . . . and no rustling of the enemy. He had always seemed so close, so relentless, always whispering in my ear urging me to give up. But now, when I ceased paying attention to him, he was gone.

Ten years after leaving all of that behind, I am still curious about 25 years wasted on spiritual warfare. All of that aggressive activity did nothing for me. . . except give me an excellent reputation as an energetic warrior among my peers.

In contrast, the knowledge I gained from my Bible studies had done more for me than the sum of all the hours of wrestling in warfare prayer. As a pastor, I had always desired to see results in my flock. During those years involved in spiritual warfare, my flock depended on me as an experienced warrior; and I loved it. They always came to me for prayer and counseling. The altars were full after every service. We had lots of people to pray for.

Having said that, there was always something that bothered me: These people never matured. I would have to deal with the same problems over and over again. The phone was always ringing because my "pastoral" ministry was needed more than my "teaching" ministry.

In fact, when I began to teach more and pray less, some people in our church suddenly developed a new opinion of their pastor. They were unexpectedly offended at the new approach. "He is a good teacher," they said, "but he is no longer a good pastor."

This idea is based on a false cultural assumption that teachers

and pastors are very different. Teachers teach doctrine, but pastors care for the flock. Teachers are viewed as dry, unentertaining, but painfully necessary. Therefore, pastors, apostles, prophets, and evangelists are more appreciated. Teachers are at the bottom of the power structure in our culture.

The hyper-charismatic culture (of which we were a part) does not teach that pastors are commanded to care for and feed the flock via sound teaching. However, I discovered that the Bible does. Teaching is the best way to feed and care for the church. I put this information to work and started to see excellent results.

On the other hand, some of the offended people quickly left our church and did not stay around long enough to see the benefits of long-term spiritual growth. Maturity was now evident in the remaining members of our church.

Slowly, I changed my focus from prayer and counseling to Bible study and teaching. I showed my flock how to study the Bible and instructed them in biblical discernment. We discovered the spiritual pattern of Scripture and developed a godly perspective. Our soulish preferences gave way to biblical discernment.

As I matured, my sermons were transformed from loud, long, inspirational preaching marathons to concise expository biblical presentations. I simply shared what I was learning in Scripture. We slowly decreased our need for long altar calls after each service. After a while, I noticed that members of the congregation were also maturing. They no longer needed me as their anointed spiritual father-figure. Stability replaced their ups and downs. They handled life better, and life was better to them. Promotions, opportunities, and new responsibilities came easily to these stable trustworthy people. I was proud of them. They were finally showing all the signs of Christian maturity that this pastor longed for.

The blessings of God had come in a very different way from how I had been trained. This was all in direct opposition to what we had been trained to expect in our circles. In fact, we had been taught that immersing ourselves in hours of Bible study would make us intellectually proud and unable to “hear” the voice of the Spirit. We had often heard, “Bible thumpers cannot receive the blessings of God.”

“Put your Bibles away,” we were scolded, “and listen to what God is saying to the church today.” We were trained to “hear” the voice of God while our Bibles collected dust. It was better that way. The Bible simply got in the way. It was common knowledge among us that people who studied the Bible were unable to partake in the benefits of renewal and could not receive the new spiritual manifestations that were appearing in many churches. People who inquired “Is that in the Bible?” hindered revival.

This became very evident when several members of our church decided to travel with me to check out a new “prophet” from Texas who was holding revival meetings in Edmonton, Alberta. We had long left this type of stuff behind, but we remained curious about the emerging trends and the “cutting-edge” preachers who were rising on the scene.

I desired to keep my fingers on the pulse of the Church. Therefore, when I decided to attend these meetings, several members of our church said that they wanted to come along. They also wanted to glimpse briefly into their former culture.

The preacher was entertaining to say the least. He preached with fire and conviction—pacing across the stage and then down the aisles among the chairs where hundreds of people were ready to hear what God had to say. Suddenly, he noticed our group sitting together in a couple of rows. He seemed to shift abruptly


into “spiritual warfare” mode. Without pointing his finger, he began to preach about people who were resisting “the move” of the Spirit—people with Bibles and notebooks who could not understand the next move of God destined to come upon the earth.

I looked at my Bible and my notebook in my lap. Then I looked down the row at our group and noticed every one of them had Bibles and notebooks. As I surveyed the room, there were hundreds of people in the meeting with only a few Bibles placed on the floor, under the chairs. Oops! We were the stubborn hindrance to which he was referring. We had no idea that because we had carried our Bibles and notebooks into the meeting we were in danger of offending the Holy Spirit and holding back the “revival” these people were seeking.

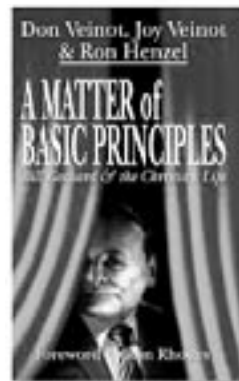
Since then, I have come to realize this idea is very common among preachers who are trying to lead people into new revival trends. In the name of “renewal,” there is a new resistance leveled against the Word of God. It no longer represents sound spiritual maturity. It has become a prevailing symbol of stubborn rebellion against the emergent “move” of God. The Bible is now viewed as the old word. The new word has arrived in the form of prophecies, visions, and dreams. They have either replaced the Bible or are considered a more progressive revelation than the written Word.

The consistent study of Scripture has taught me that bypassing the written will of God to find the unwritten will of God is a *very dangerous idea*. People have fallen into this trap throughout the ages. In fact, we can go all the way back to Adam and Eve. Like them, we have forsaken the words of God for a better-looking revelation.

Where is the Devil? He is still doing what he did in the garden. He is still asking, “... *has God said* ...?” (Genesis 3:1) Is the Word of God sufficient? Is it adequate for twenty-first century believers?

Want to deal with the Devil? The Devil vanished from my own life when I returned to the powerful words of the Book of Life. When I opened my Bible, the battle ceased. 

Ted Brooks is the author of *I Was a Flakey Preacher* (Guardian Books). He is a former Word of Faith preacher who was heavily involved in the extreme practices and teachings of the ‘hyper-charismatic movement’ for many years. A careful search of the Bible led him to abandon the movement. Now he shares his journey in apologetics conferences and biblical discernment seminars. He provides key insights into Word of Faith doctrines and practices. Ted brings discernment that provides the ability to distinguish the work of the Holy Spirit from the false teachings and practices of hyper-charisma. In addition to being the pastor of Victory Life Church in Westlock, Alberta, Canada, he is also the host of *Bible Detective Radio Broadcasts* and is a frequent guest on TV and radio talk shows as an expert on Charismatic/Word of faith doctrines and extremes.



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A MATTER of BASIC PRINCIPLES:
Bill Gothard & the Christian Life

by Don Veinot, Joy Veinot,
and Ron Henzel

“Stranger” Continued from page 7
the CGM in general:

At a crowded seminar I once heard C. Peter Wagner [Chancellor of Wagner Leadership Institute, President of Global Harvest Ministries, and one of the key leaders and spokesman for CGM] **confess that he was not a theologian, adding, only half in jest, “That is a Church Growth principle!” How sad it is that his lack of theology leads people away from the very Gospel which alone can feed the multitudes.**²⁹

This is not to say that Hybels and Willow Creek do not understand or articulate the Gospel. Bill Hybels has the ability to powerfully present the Gospel, and he does so. Having heard quite a few of Hybel’s evangelistic messages, we believe many people have been converted through the ministry of Willow Creek Community Church, which is, of course, a very good thing. We love to give credit where credit is due. There is a downside, however, to this overarching emphasis on reaching unchurched Harry and Mary. Harry and Mary need serious and intentional *teaching* as well. And they need, as Paul asserts, to be guarded—protected from the ravenous wolves—within and without the Church. This is particularly where we feel that robust remedial adjustment is needed. In much of American Christianity, some of the most popular preachers are also the most ravenous wolves. The temptation will always exist to identify with the most popular preachers, regardless of their lack of commitment to biblical truth.

For example, we cite the most recent conference promotion: The WCCC Leadership Summit 2004, to be held August 12-14, 2004, simultaneously at 80 locations with an expected attendance of 40,000 pastors, elders, and volunteer leaders. Included on its list of speakers is the popular Word-Faith teacher and Oneness Pentecostal (anti-Trinitarian), T.D. Jakes.

Oneness Pentecostals hold on to one of the oldest heresies (Sabellianism)³⁰ in church history, which was tackled and refuted by the early church fathers. The Doctrine of the Trinity to Oneness teachers is a doctrine of Pagan origin. Word-Faith theology is another egregious, more latter-day heresy—involving the idea that you and I have the same ability to create reality as does God, Himself. We simply need to name it, and claim it, and the subservient god is obligated to deliver. And, of course, Jesus died to make you rich. Jakes clearly has been exposed as a false teacher,³¹ and should not be allowed access to the pulpit of a Christian church or pastor’s conference. Period.

Wishing to give Willow Creek the benefit of the doubt, some might suppose that Jakes’ inclusion was an oversight—done without realizing that he is a false teacher. Sadly, however, that excuse cannot be afforded to the WCCC leadership, since they have invited Jakes in the past and then uninvited him when several Willow Creek staff and church members brought to the attention of the leadership the facts about Jakes’ spurious beliefs and teachings. If they recognized the problem then, why would they invite him again now?

The next logical question is: Why would the leadership of Willow Creek want to be responsible for promoting and endorsing a false teacher? After all, in this case there are potentially 40,000 pastors and church leaders, many of whom will not know that Jakes is a charlatan, who easily could be influenced to accept or endorse the man and thus, his false teachings, themselves. Make no mistake: Willow Creek is a *very* influential church. If they are

comfortable inviting Jakes, why would the attendees have their discernment antennae up? ... No danger here ... They likely will feel quite comfortable to purchase and promote his materials for use in their respective congregations. In addition to giving Jakes credibility among Evangelical churches, association with Willow Creek gives Jakes additional credibility among the members of his own church, his followers in the Word-Faith heresy, and those who buy his books in Christian bookstores.

False Prophets in Sheep’s Clothing

The Scriptures are clear on the issue of Church leadership’s grave responsibility to protect the flock. Jesus Christ was clear in Matthew 7:15-23 to **“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing...”** What is a false prophet, anyway? It seems as if it is another valuable word which has been dropped for political reasons from our collective vocabulary. The Bible gives us two clear-cut tests by which we are able to examine the prophets or leaders who might present themselves to us **“in sheep’s clothing.”**

A false prophet, according to Deuteronomy 18:20-22, is someone who gives *even one false prediction* in the name of God. Right there, we can disqualify not only such non-Christian cults as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah’s Witnesses) and the Latter Day Saints (Mormons), but allegedly “Christian” Benny Hinn as well, who assured his audiences that God was going to wipe out all homosexuals with fire no later than the summer of 1995.³² Did it happen? No? Then what has Hinn proven himself to be?

Deuteronomy 13 disqualifies even those who make *true* predictions concerning the future, but who lead others away from the worship of the true God of the Bible. Again, we can easily illustrate this concept using Benny Hinn, who said that *God told him* there are truly nine persons in the Godhead! Is Hinn’s god the God of the Bible? No! Why does this man remain so popular? Why would anyone invite him into their living room to teach his false doctrine? The same is true for Jakes—he is leading people *away* from the worship of the *true God*. Should we listen to him for any reason? Should we subject others to his falsehoods?

Not only are we to **“Beware of the false prophets”** and to **“guard...all the flock”** by exposing false teachers, but also the Apostle John unequivocally states:

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, [which had to do with sound doctrine on essential elements of the faith] ***do not receive them into your house, and do not give them a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.*** (2 John 10-11).

Churches in the first century met in private homes. In other words, according to John, we are not to turn over the pulpit nor in any way endorse false teachers. That is for the sake of guarding the flock from being confused and deceived by them.

Willow Creek has attempted to address these questions in what might be called the “fine print” of the contract. Unfortunately, we all know that hardly anyone reads the “fine print.” Willow Creek’s “fine print” disclaimer is not even found in the printed literature, but is located on their web site under the title “The WCA Speaker Policy Statement”³³ which contains four paragraphs which we paraphrase below:

1) WCCC holds to an orthodox statement of faith, which they expect that all who attend the conference to likewise affirm.

2) They (WCCC) are open to inviting and learning from those who do not adhere to the statement of faith. (This includes agnostics and false teachers.)

3) Even though they will have false teachers in the pulpit, that does not mean that they endorse them or their teaching. (Does WCCC feel no obligation even to point out who they consider to be the false teachers?)

4) WCCC acknowledges that there is risk and possible danger to the attendees as a result of the foregoing policy, but they expect that attending pastors and elders should be mature enough to straighten everything out.

To sum up, Willow Creek affirms that they hold to the historic orthodox faith and expects those who attend to likewise affirm the orthodox position. Sadly, though, as is often the case, the Devil in is in the details – 2, 3 and 4. Jesus' and Paul's admonitions to *"guard...the flock"* and *"beware of false prophets"* are rendered irrelevant by these points. Are these biblical warnings insignificant to WCCC when they say that those who are invited to teach do not necessarily affirm the statement of faith, may not even be believers, and just might be false teachers? Now we are just plain folks, but we cannot buy the disclaimer that Willow Creek will have no responsibility in the matter if someone unwittingly accepts the false teacher and/or his teachings. Tell it to the Judge, fellas. The Bible is far too clear on this matter: *False prophets and teachers are not to be allowed to present their wares to the flock!* Period. To invite them is, according to the Apostle John, to "participate in [their] evil deeds."

What could be more important than protecting those in our care? What is the supreme value that trumps truth? Is that "value" success—as defined by the world's standards? Do we need "successful" leaders and "successful" programs to build "successful" churches; with the result that whatever helps that process is good, even if it is demonstrably bad? The printed registration brochure for the conference carries the challenge to **"Develop all your team leaders as you promote a leadership culture in your church."** The preeminent desire to create "successful" churches through marketing and psychology with very little, if any, emphasis on doctrine and sound teaching naturally leads to turning to successful false teachers. "Success" is not about truth or faithfulness to our calling, but about nickels and noses. Our desire for success—as defined by the world's standards—may be the largest present-day idol in the American Church.

We might suggest that it would be far better

to "develop all your team leaders as you promote a *biblically literate culture* in your church." After all, the Willow Creek Association states that they have 9,500 member churches and had over **"100,000 local church leaders, staff, and volunteers"** attend their conferences and training events last year alone.³⁴ With such high visibility goes an even greater responsibility to practice discernment and to guard the flock. How would we react if our school system knowingly decided to employ identified pedophiles because of some perceived benefit greater than the safety of our children? They would immediately have charges brought against them and their judgment would no longer be trusted. Should the spiritual welfare of those who may be adversely influenced by popular false teachers be any less important?

Where Are We Headed?

If large numbers of pastors continue to function more as corporate CEOs seeking "success" at the expense of sound doctrine and protecting the flock, the Church will continue its trend away from a biblical worldview. As a Church, we need to take a step back, reevaluate, and repent as Augustine did:

As Augustine matured as a believer, he began recognizing that his previous preoccupation with fulfillment was not biblically grounded. As he became aware of the distortions of the platonic concepts in his earlier writings, he was willing to discard these ideas. One of these misguided ideas was his portrayal of the Christian life as the path to fulfillment.³⁵

If Robert Schuller is the father of the CGM as he claims, then Charles Finney would be its grandfather. Finney, however, saw the futility of what he had started; and in his *Letters on Revival* (1845) Finney was very straightforward about its failings and records his thoughts which are as appropriate today as when they were first penned:

Efforts to promote revivals of religion have become so mechanical, there is so much policy and machinery in them, so much dependence upon means and measures, so much of man and so little of God, that the character of revivals has greatly changed within the last few years, and the true spirit of revivals seems to be fast giving way before this legal, mechanical method of promoting them.³⁶

He also challenged the Church that **"a greater teaching content was needed in preaching."**³⁷

There is nothing inherently wrong with designing a service to attract (or, at least, not to unnecessarily repel) non-Christians,

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*What
could be
more
important
than
protecting
those in
our care?*

*What is the
supreme
value
that trumps
truth?*

*Is that
"value"
success—
as defined
by the
world's
standards?*

*Do we need
"successful"
leaders and
"successful"
programs
to build
"successful"
churches ...*

“Stranger” Continued from page 17

provided that such an appeal does not water down the truth. Unfortunately, watering down the truth to make it more “acceptable” is what too often happens when we try to tailor the Gospel to fit the times. Why is that? Because, as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1:18:

...the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. (NIV)

Furthermore, God *intended* it to be so! Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 1:20-25:


Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength. (NIV)

If God was pleased to present the Gospel as *foolishness* to the unsaved world, we cannot hope to make the Gospel message sound less foolish and more appealing to the flesh unless we incorporate the wisdom of the world into our presentation. And that is precisely what God does *not* want us to do.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human traditions and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ. (Colossians 2:8 NIV)

Christians, as we all know, are not immune to the sin of vanity. We want to appear to be wise, sophisticated, and intellectual. Therefore, one of the most effective weapons that the world hurls at us is the charge of being foolish, unsophisticated, and insignificant. It attacks our “self-esteem,” which we all have been told for decades now to cherish and protect above all. But we cannot be true to our God if our most imperative desire is to be true to our “self.”

If our aim is to be faithful to God and His Word more than to be “successful” and “wise” in the eyes of the world, we must be firmly rooted in a biblical worldview, informed by sound doctrinal teaching, based on God-centered theology, and led by pastors and elders who seriously regard their assigned job to guard the flock from predators both outside and inside the Church.

To those many *truly* successful pastors who are serving God and teaching His Word to the flock, perhaps without the public accolades or great monetary compensation, please don’t burn out or give up. We need you more than ever! If you are attending a church with such a pastor, show them your appreciation and encourage them and their wives. They may never pastor an 18,000 member church, but they are doing something far greater—fulfilling the responsibilities which God gave them—and they will receive their praise from the Lord at His return: Well done, good and faithful servant. 

All Bible quotes are from NASB unless otherwise indicated.

ENDNOTES

¹ Acts 20:28-31, NASB

² 1 Timothy 1:3, NASB

³ 1 Timothy 1:7, NASB

⁴ Video tape on file.

⁵ Oneness Pentecostals deny the doctrine of the Trinity.

⁶ 1 Timothy 1:19b-20, NASB

⁷ Bill Gothard teaches that circumcision is a moral requirement. See our book *A Matter of Basic Principles: Bill Gothard and the Christian Life* (Lombard, IL: Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc., 2003), pp.120-135.

⁸ Galatians 5:12.

⁹ John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* by Dallas Seminary Faculty: New Testament, Victor Book, A Division of Scripture Press Publications Inc., 1983; 606. (This section written by Donald K. Campbell) Emphasis in original.

¹⁰ Church Doesn’t Think Like Jesus: Survey shows only 9% of Christians have a biblical worldview; WorldNet Daily December 3, 2003; http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=35926

¹¹ Only Half of Protestant Pastors Have A Biblical Worldview: <http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=156&Reference=A>

¹² Martin and Deidre Bobgan, *Against “Biblical Counseling” For the Bible*, EastGate Publishers, (Santa Barbara, CA; 1994) 34-35.

¹³ Gary E. Gilley, *This Little Church Went to Market: The Church in the Age of Entertainment*; Xulon Press, (Fairfax, VA; 2002) 31-32.

¹⁴ Ibid., 32.

¹⁵ G.A. Pritchard, *Willow Creek Seeker Services: Evaluating a New Way of Doing Church*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1996: 251.

¹⁶ Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism*; The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, England 1994; 289.

¹⁷ “Feeding Sheep or Amusing Goats,” Charles H. Spurgeon; http://christianunplugged.com/amuse_goats.htm

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ A Science Odyssey: People and Discoveries, B.F., 1904-1990; <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aso/databank/entries/bhskin.html>

²⁰ Op. Cit., Martin and Deidre Bobgan, 42.

²¹ Joyce Milton, *The Road to Malpsychia: Humanistic Psychology and our Discontents*, Encounter Books (San, Francisco, CA; 2002) 49.

²² Robert H. Schuller, *Self Esteem: The New Reformation*, Word Books, Waco, TX, 1982; 14.

²³ Ibid., 12.

²⁴ Op. Cit., G. A. Prichard, 44-45.

²⁵ Ibid., 51.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 252.

²⁸ Ibid., 253.

²⁹ Curtis A. Peterson, “A Second and Third Look at Church Growth Principles,” paper delivered at the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod’s Metro South Pastors Conference, February 3, 1993, Mishicot, Wisconsin, 13.

³⁰ The idea that God manifests Himself in different modes was first proposed by Noetus of Smyrna in the late second century and was popularized by Sabellius and Praxius in the early third century. Early Church Father Tertullian responded to this heresy in his work *Against Praxeas*.

³¹ See Dr. Jerry Buckner’s article, “The Man, His Ministry, And His Movement”; http://www.christianity.com/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID236518|CHID438620|CIID1016140,00.html

³² “The Lord also tells me to tell you in the mid 90’s about ‘94 or ‘95 no later than that, God will destroy the homosexual community of America” Benny Hinn as quoted by M. Kurt Godelman, G. Richard Fisher, in *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn (1995: St. Louis, MO: Personal Freedom Outreach, Seventh edition, 2002)*, 199.

³³ http://www.willowcreek.com/events/speaker_policy.asp

³⁴ http://www.willowcreek.com/wca_info/

³⁵ Op. Cit., G. A. Prichard, 253.

³⁶ Op. Cit., Iain H. Murray quotes Finney, 294.

³⁷ Ibid.

“Purpose” Continued From page 13

Bill Gothard claims), nor does it say that the 40 days had anything to do with that power.

A bit of trivia might be helpful here: Jesus was the Son of God before going into the wilderness. He was the Son of God during the testing. And He was the Son of God when He came back and began His ministry. He did not need to be transformed—much less **“by 40 days!”**

The disciples were transformed by 40 days with Jesus after his resurrection. (p.10)

We really don’t want to come across as being mean, but the big game show buzzer is going off again to inform us that this is **WRONG!** Scripture says nothing of the sort. It appears, from the evidence we **DO** have, that they were transformed by the events of Resurrection Sunday—including the events on the road to Emmaus and His appearing in the upper room that evening. Before that, they were demoralized and bewildered. Afterward, they “turned their world upside down” (cf. Acts. 17:6). Sure, the 40 days were important as a teaching time (Acts 1:3); but it appears to us that the importance of the time period is that it spans the gap between Passover and Pentecost. (That, however, is another long discussion.)

How Long Oh Lord?

If it is true that **“whenever God wanted to prepare someone for his purposes, he took 40 days”** (p.10), then shouldn’t Warren be able to find some passages that say so ... and show so ... instead of having to resort to this kind of twisting and eisegesis?

We feel the need here to remind the reader of a basic principle of logic and interpretation: Even if something is true, it is still wrong to twist Scriptures that do not support that truth in order to make them seem to support that truth. And even if that truth is supported in Scripture, it is still wrong to use passages from Scripture that do not support it, just because they have some of the words we need. If it really is supported by Scripture, then it should be a simple matter to cite those passages that actually do support it. If all we have to go on are passages twisted out of context, then maybe we need to be suspicious that perhaps there is no real scriptural support for the claim to begin with. We will concede that the *number* “40” does seem to be a recurring theme in Scripture, but it is a leap of Grand Canyon proportions from that to Warren’s claim.

What about Job? How did God “transform” him in 40 days? How about Abraham? Did God have a purpose for him? Where’s the 40 days of “transformation” for him? We simply cannot find it! Where do **“40 days”** transform Isaac? Jacob?

What about the children of Israel who escaped from


Egypt. Did God have a purpose for them? How long did it take to “transform” them? 40 days? How about 40 YEARS? The entire generation that left Egypt, except for Caleb and Joshua, were transformed into CORPSES! Now THERE’S a transformation for ya!

What about Samuel? Did God have a purpose for him? Where’s his “40 days?” All we find is God calling him while he was serving Eli. What about David? Isaiah? Jeremiah? Ezra? Nehemiah? If it’s true that **“Whenever God wanted to prepare someone for His purposes He took 40 days,”** then where are all those 40-day references for all these people for whom the Scriptures prove to us that God had a definite purpose?

What about the Apostle Paul? Is there anyone more important to Gentile believers than Paul (excepting our Lord, of course)? How did God “transform” Paul? Wasn’t it in a FLASH on the road to Damascus? (Acts 9) And how did God prepare Paul for His chosen purpose? Did He do it in just 40 days? No, perhaps Paul was a much tougher case—it took three years in the wilderness to get him ready! (Gal. 1:15-18) Whoops! Can’t use that one, it doesn’t “fit” the pattern.

Is there anything wrong with asking people to set aside 40 days ... or 30 days ... or a week ... or any amount of time ... to prepare for ministry or to get to know the Lord better? Of course, not! Time with the Lord or preparation for ministry is not that to which we are objecting. What we do object to—with Warren, with Gothard, and with anyone else who does this kind of thing—is the disrespect towards the Word of God which shows disrespect for the God of that Word. It amounts to telling God what we wished He had said, instead of doing our real job—which is to work at understanding and explaining what He has said.

Our job, as teachers who are subject to the greater judgment (James 3:1), is to present the truths of Scripture as clearly and carefully as possible. Believers need to do everything we can to derive *from* the text the meaning intended *IN* the text, rather than always looking for so many “neato-Frito” ways to twist it and make it “sound” oh-so spiritual. Some may not be as good at it as others, but that should be our obsession:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the Word of Truth. (2 Tim. 2:15) 

Endnotes

All Scripture quotes are taken from the New American Standard Bible.

1. <http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/2003/1-purpose.htm>
2. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002). All page references contained within parenthesis are to this publication.

“Knowing” Continued from page 13

porary Mormonism and *The Mormon Concept of God* is a philosophical handling of Mormon theology proper. Many more authors could be cited including the much-acclaimed Jerald and Sandra Tanner.

¹⁰ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. The Doctrines and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: LDS, 1981).

¹¹ For a brief but strong survey level analysis of the nature of truth, see

Norman Geisler, “Truth, The Nature of” *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 741-45.

¹² I am indebted to Dr. Norman Geisler for this expression.

¹³ This is a hypothetical (IE: un-real) religion. Please do not start worshipping trash cans ☺.

¹⁴ Derwin Gray also recommended this latter approach of appealing to their works-based salvation. Derwin is a Christian speaker and evangelist as the founder and president of One Heart at a Time Ministries (www.oneheartatatime.org).

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