

Rethinking Where God Wants Us:

(Please note that the Geocities "Sponsored Links" on the far right are automatically generated and does not imply my endorsement.)



[Purpose](#)
[Evangelicalism Now](#)
[Philosophy of Modern Churches](#)
[Doctrine of Salvation](#)
[Purpose of Sunday Gathering](#)
[Not of the World](#)
[Growing Concerns at my Present Church](#)
[Family Goals](#)
[What We Should Look for in a Church](#)

Links:

[Brookside Baptist](#)
 This is a church that knows about the dangers I write about here that we are currently attending.
[Printer Friendly Version](#)

Purpose:

May 2006:

I am torn by two concerns:

1. To be part of a church that:
 - a. Has a focus on the family as a central part of its community
 - b. Sees that the world is opposed to it and takes the bible's warnings seriously
 - c. Supports home schooling, raising a godly seed and a call to holiness
2. Leaving a church home where:
 - a. There are many that love God and are truly seeking Him and reaching out to others around them
 - b. I have friends whom I have served with and have grown with and love dearly
 - c. I will to have explain why I am leaving

I am at a cross-road and feel I have made the decision to leave at a subconscious level for many reasons yet have not been able to articulate them fully. I am in much prayer as to God's leading for me and my family. This has not come about suddenly but has been in the works for a long time. Perhaps it is a continuation of my concerns with my previous church (A Willow Creek styled church). The decision to leave that church was quickly made of necessity for other reasons. Coming to a more traditional church in 1999, as it was then, was a step in the direction of number 1 above.

In recent years I feel that my church is taking steps in the direction towards the church I left.

It is not an easy decision with many complex issues. These issues include the responsibility I have as the spiritual head of my family, philosophy of ministry in the church, responsibility of leadership, discernment. Underlying all this is doctrine upon which these issues are based.

To understand why this is a concern to me it is important to understand who I am and where I have come from. (See [My Church History](#))

The following is my attempt to organize my thoughts into some kind of cohesive assessment. It was born out of a 4 day retreat for prayer and study. It is primarily intended for me and my family, but I know there are others who might want to know why we are leaving and this can explain it better than a few quick statements.

My recent journey began late in 2003. May God bless you as you read this.

[Top](#)

Evangelicalism (now) or Aroused from my sleep:

The whole "Purpose Driven Life" (PDL) excitement began to awaken in me an awareness that Evangelicalism was changing, being influenced by men such as Rick Warren and Bill Hybels (Willow Creek) who were in turn influenced by Robert Schuller who thinks the word sin should be abolished from Christianity because it makes people "feel bad". False teaching was slowly creeping into mainstream evangelicalism, but in recent years has been accelerating.

I discovered another movement within evangelicalism called "The Emergent Church". This is a loose philosophy of teaching that has many aspects among which is that the belief "doctrine divides" so there is a de-emphasis on doctrine and that we should just love Jesus. Without doctrine and careful adherence to the Word of God, how shall we know when "another Christ" (anti-Christ) is being taught purposely by deceivers or ignorantly by the deceived?

"But evil men and seducers will go forward to worse, deceiving and being deceived."

2Tim 3:13

This anti-doctrine is coming out of post-modern thinking and the rejection of absolute truth. Adherents are saying that this is the way to reach the post-modern world. Along with this new thinking is the fruit of the ideas planted by Richard Foster 25 years ago, the whole contemplative prayer movement. Contemplative prayer is in reality eastern transcendental meditation with the result being some spiritual experience. Of course these teachers say this is God, but how would they know? They are practicing the very things forbidden by scripture and bringing apostasy into the church.

"But the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons," 1 Tim 4:1

Willow Creek has gotten caught up in this lately, inviting modern mystic teachers both so-called Christian mystic and new age.

(See <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/hybels/insider.htm>)

This also ties in with a new ecumenical movement. Spiritual leaders in this movement are finding common ground in their practices with Islamic Sufis, Hindu and Buddhist practitioners. Rather than being alarmed that they are aligned with religions that are definitely NOT Christian but clearly pagan and questioning whether what they are doing is wrong, they so believe what they are doing is right that they conclude there are many paths to God and all religions are really one. This is absurd. The Bible however clearly warns of a one world religion and this fits the bill for a vehicle to get Christians to come around.

Careful study of God's Word and of doctrine clearly warns of the dangers of this movement. I am however astonished at the list of "evangelical leaders" whose names are being associated with this movement and it is being hyped by "Christianity Today".

Rick Warren's P.E.A.C.E. plan sounds good at first glance, but it is an ecumenical movement paralleling the U.N.'s "Millennial Goals".

Evangelicalism is being led astray by undiscerning leaders. Only a few well known leaders are taking a stance against it and speaking up, among these are John McArthur and Dave Hunt.

Not only is sin de-emphasized but the Atonement is coming under attack now described in Alan Jones' book "Redefining Christianity" as "this vile doctrine". (see article: "[Evangelicals Attacking the Atonement](#)")

When I was a new believer in College and read about a time that Jesus said:

"For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders; so much so that, if it were possible, they would deceive even the elect." Mat 24:24.

Paul spoke of the “falling away” in 2 Thes 2:3, I couldn’t imagine how Satan could deceive so many. But now I see how a watered down Evangelical church that does not know its doctrine and rejects discernment could be easily be duped.

[Top](#)

Philosophy of modern churches:

As I stated in my background (see Appendix A) that I come from a position of being sympathetic (many years ago) to the Willow-Creek style teaching to make a church for the unchurched. This is what the “Church Growth Movement” is all about. The goal was to get people in the door by eliminating the barriers that kept them away. Bill Hybles used a marketing survey to start his church and applied what he learned. From the world’s perspective he was very successful. Willow-Creek is one of the largest churches in America and it formed the Willow Creek association of 1000’s of churches literally around the world following after its model, including my former church Stonebridge.

“If we can just get them in the door, then we can...” is the mantra repeated over and over. I even heard Pastor Jim say this about the time I raised concern over the Purpose Driven Life book.

In this vain these churches have looked to the world and used Hollywood, sports, music and even circuses to attract people to get people in the door with the good intentions of preaching the gospel to them that they might be saved.

If we look at scripture, this is an unbiblical approach to reaching the lost. Beyond that, I see a few logical problems with this approach:

1. What it takes to bring them in is what it takes to keep them. If people come because the music is hot or the media is cool or the sermons make them feel good or meet a felt need, then that is why they will come back. When you try to move beyond this to real Christian teaching and try to convict them of sin and there need for a savior, they are turned off. So we sugar coat it so as to keep them. We try to sneak it in. Eventually people will get bored with the same-old, same-old. Then we have up the entertainment a notch to keep it interesting. Ever notice what happened to television from the 60’s to the present? Each year things get a little more pushing the edge, a little more dicey etc until today’s television bears no resemblance to the shows I grew up with like "Andy Griffith" and "Leave it to Beaver" etc. If we are appealing to peoples flesh to get them we will continue to need to do that to keep them.
2. Bait and switch. If we intend to just get them in the door then preach the real gospel to them, they will resent being lured in under false pretenses and become even more hardened to the church.
3. Least common denominator. We get them in the door and we want to keep attracting new people so we never get around to growing up the ones who have been coming by adding more real content. That would turn off new comers. This is happening in Sunday school. Kids bring their friends who are unchurched. Spiritually they are in the world and carnal. If we teach to the level of the more mature church kids we will turn off the new comers. This keeps everyone at the least common denominator.
4. You end up with a church with of a mixture of believers and unbelievers that makes it difficult if not impossible for the church to function biblically. (see 2 Cor. 6:14-18)

Yes seeker targeted churches have found a way to grow their numbers, but are they truly making disciples?

The great commission does not say “Go into the world and use their methods to get them into the door so they can have fun and listen to some messages loosely based on my teachings”

It says: “*Therefore go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things, whatever I commanded you. And, behold, I am with you all the days until the end of the world.*”

Amen." Matt 28:19-20

Jesus also said: "...*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.*" Luke 9:23

The message of the Gospel of Christ is not to appeal to the interests of the culture, or to their felt needs as is popular in 20th and 21st century America, but to actually deny themselves. The biblical method for preaching the Gospel to the lost is not on the basis of being culturally relevant, but actually just the opposite. It calls people out of their worldly minded culture and to think and act biblically. It **strictly commands** men everywhere to repent of their sins:

"Truly, then, God overlooking the times of ignorance, now He strictly commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day in which He is going to judge the world in righteousness" Act 17:30-31a

"Then Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ to remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Act 2:38

So in the desire to reach the world for Christ, they miss the "for Christ" part. (also many numerous calls to repentance in the Gospels and in Acts 3:19, Acts 8:22, Acts 26:20, Rev 3:19)

The modern church would argue that the old methods don't work anymore. First I would say that we haven't been doing a good job in preaching the true Gospel of repentance from sin and then grace, but a gospel of what can Christ do for me here and now.

Secondly I would argue that the new methods really don't work either. Yes they get them in the door, but they don't do much with them when they get them there. How can I say this? Just look at polls by Barna and Gallup and see if today's evangelicals differ much from the average population in the areas of morality, absolute truth, existence of hell and other topics once a major point of difference. Why because they have not repented. They have not been regenerated.

A further danger I see is that these churches are ever looking for the next thing. They see polls saying that Americans are becoming more spiritual. By this I do not mean biblical spirituality, but seeking some sort of religious experience. Post Modern thinkers have rejected absolute truth in favor of relative truth based upon experience. In their minds, a spiritual experience verifies its reality. If one through "contemplative prayer" has a spiritual experience, it must be true. There is no biblical discernment here, remember doctrine divides, so doctrine is out, and discernment along with it.

One emergent leader talked about how Christianity has to be dismantled. He is not sure what must or will take the place of its creeds and doctrines, he is only sure that the old must go. As I mentioned, the emergent church is pursuing this path and following suit close behind are the likes of the mega-churches. As these large churches go, so goes the way of evangelicalism. This is what I fear will happen to all our churches if they don't wake up and start to practice Biblical discernment, recognize the signs of apostasy and the falling away that marks the end times. Look at the words of Jesus:

"He answered and said to them, 'When it is evening, you say, Fair weather; for the sky is red. And in the morning, Foul weather today; for the sky is red and gloomy. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky, but you cannot see the signs of the times!'" Matt 16:2, 3

So I see today's churches as sincerely trying to reach the lost but using unbiblical methods and a watered down or impotent gospel while growing in numbers. But the pews (or chairs) are being filled with the immature and undiscerning and whose lives are indistinguishable from the culture they live in.

(update 5/25/06) Here is a quote I saw today from John MacArthur's book "Ashamed of the Gospel"

Like the modernists a century ago, churches in the user-friendly movement have decided that doctrine is divisive and that peace is

more important than sound teaching. Wanting to appeal to a modern age, they try to frame their message as a friendly, agreeable, and relevant dialogue. Unfortunately, it is often the most "relevant" topics that the church can ill afford to agree on. The pet doctrines of our modern age-radicalism, abortion, feminism, homosexuality, and other politically charged moral issues-pose the most obvious problems for user-friendly churches. Their undefined theology and seeker-sensitive philosophy do not permit them to take a firm biblical stance on such matters, because the moment they defy the spirit of the age, they forfeit their marketing appeal. They are therefore forced to keep mum or capitulate. Either way, they compromise the truth.

[Top](#)

Doctrine of Salvation

How did we get to such a place? As I said above, as I see things, it has to do with a sincere desire to reach the lost, but using man's methods instead of God's. The few passages I have heard in defense of these unbiblical methods are Jesus dining with sinners Matt 9:9-13 where Jesus dined with sinners in Matthew's house, the Mars Hill sermon, and Paul's statement in 1 Cor 9:22.

First in Matthew, Jesus did not invite them over for a worldly show; he went to where they were. He called them sinners and likened them to the sick that needed a doctor. Further he called them to repentance. This is the same approach he used with the women at the well.

Mars Hill sermon (Acts 17:23-32) is often used to say we need to be culturally relevant. Paul did not invite anyone at Mars Hill to the local church where they would have culturally relevant service and message. Paul was doing street evangelism. He used a prop, in this case an altar to "the unknown god" to tell them about a God who was unknown to them. He finished by saying God is gracious and will overlook their time of ignorance and that He "*strictly commands all men everywhere to repent.*"
Acts 17:30

Now Paul's statement:

"... I am made all things to all men, so that I might by all means save some. 1Cor 9:22"

We cannot take this to mean that we must do whatever it takes to get them the door and keep them there so they might hear the gospel.

Let's look at the following things:

- What did Paul mean?
- How is someone saved?
- What method has God given us for evangelizing?

What did Paul mean?

We have to back up a couple of verses to see examples that let up to his concluding statement. Paul said that though he was free he became a servant to all. To the Jew he became a Jew. To the one under the law he became as one under the law. To those outside the law he became as one outside the law (although really under the law of Christ). And finally to the weak he became weak.

Each example is of Paul empathizing with the person with whom he was sharing the gospel. He wanted to help them see that he was no different, not better nor worse. He was a sinner saved by the grace of God.

"Faithful is the Word and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." 1Tmi 1:15

As a former pastor of mine put it, we are all on a level playing field before a holy God.

“for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God...” Rom 3:23.

To come to the conclusion from this verse that we must use the world’s methods to reach the world is absurd.

There was actually a parable about the Kingdom of God compared with a wedding feast that all sorts of people were invited to in Matt 22:1-14. One person was there who did not have on a wedding garment. He was kicked out! Jesus wrapped it up saying:

“For many are called, but few chosen.”

How is someone saved?

This should not be any secret here. It is through the preaching the message of the Gospel, the “Good news”. But good news isn’t good news unless you first are aware of the bad news. But this kind of preaching is not popular these days. So called preachers like Robert Schuler do not even want to mention the word sin because it is a negative word that makes people feel bad. But 2 Cor 7:10 says this is absolutely necessary.

For a full discussion of the subject see [How is someone saved?](#)

What method has God given us for evangelizing?

The Bible shows us that evangelism is done through the preaching of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 1:17-25

17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

18 For the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those being lost, but to us being saved, it is the power of God.

19 For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will set aside the understanding of the perceiving ones.”

20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the lawyer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom did not know God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe.

22 For the Jews ask for a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom;

23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.

24 But to them, the called-out ones, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

25 Because the foolish thing of God is wiser than men, and the weak thing of God is stronger than men.

Paul preached Christ crucified. This is foolishness to the world but to them, “to us being saved, it is the power of God”. He did not put on a circus or use the world’s methods.

For more information on how to present the gospel, see:

<http://www.livingwaters.com/>

In the end I believe that evangelical church has stooped to use of the world’s methods, because believers are too afraid and/or too ignorant to do personal evangelize as described in scripture. (I am guilty as charged and desire to grow in this area) It is easier to invite someone to a comfortable & fun event.

[Top](#)

Purpose of the Sunday Gathering:

The purpose of the Sunday morning service is not for the making sinners feel comfortable in hopes they will eventually hear and respond to the gospel. Sunday services are a place where believers gather together to worship God and be equipped for ministry. As such it is not to be man focused but God focused. An unbeliever may come in and observe, but it may be a new and different experience for him. To the unbeliever, the things of God are foolishness as we saw in 1 Cor 1:18. For this we

do not have to apologize or be ashamed. Certainly we must show kindness and respect as is becoming of God's children.

Worship should be of highest integrity of the heart. Songs should be those of praise extolling the nature, character and glory of God. Our giving and celebration of the ordinances of baptism and communion should be done with respect and reverence. One thing I see rarely in any church these days is a quiet sanctuary where one can pray and make sure their heart is prepared for worship before the service starts.

Teaching should be expository so as to preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) for the edifying or building up of the body. The following passage explains what the outcome of this is.

"And truly He gave some to be apostles, and some to be prophets, and some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. And this until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a full-grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we no longer may be infants, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, in the dishonesty of men, in cunning craftiness, to the wiles of deceit. But that you, speaking the truth in love, may in all things grow up to Him who is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitted together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of each part, producing the growth of the body to the edifying of itself in love." Eph 4:11-16

A service that makes the unbeliever feel right at home will not produce this result.

[Top](#)

Not of the world:

Surveys today show that among those who call themselves "Christian" there is little to no evidence it makes a difference in our behavior or in the behavior of our kids. This is calling me to question if our churches are failing us? Why is there no difference? Has the world gotten into the church? A partial answer to this is that we are so trying to attract the world into the church to "reach them" that the world is getting into the church. The church is to be the spotless bride of Christ (Eph 5:25-27). If we are so identified with Christ, we can't expect the world to feel at home. What we can expect is criticism.

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, the servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept My saying, they will also keep yours." John 15:18-20

No matter what we would like to believe, if we are living the way Jesus asks us to live we cannot expect the world to love us. James teaches us:

"... Do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever desires to be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." James 4:4

Why then are we trying? We are a light to the world (Matt 5:14) but men hate the light because their deeds are evil (John 3:19).

Further, we are called to come out from among them:

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship does righteousness have with lawlessness? And what partnership does light have with darkness? And what agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what part does a believer have with an unbeliever? And what agreement does a temple of God have with idols? For you are the temple of the living God, as God has said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' Therefore come out from among them and be separated, says the Lord, and do not touch the unclean thing. And I will receive you and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. 6:14-18

The world and its culture have gotten engrained in the thinking of the modern church. Too often we think like the world and even live like the world. The church is made up

of the elect or “called out ones” and we are called to become “holy as He is holy”

“but according to the Holy One who has called you, you also become holy in all conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:15, 16

It is tough to do this and make our church comfortable for unbelievers. They think like the world because they are of the world. If we do as God asks, we will become a “peculiar” or special people for his own possession (Titus 2:14, 1 Peter 2:9)

“who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify to Himself a special people, zealous of good works.” Titus 2:14

We should be different from the world and when they see us they should see a difference. They should see not just cultural differences but genuine love and joy.

Q. Can a church be different, holy and yet loving and reaching out to a hurting world?

A. Yes and we are told to.

Q. Can we call the lost out of the world with the Gospel?

A. Yes, but only with the power that comes from God. This means using God’s methods in God’s way.

Conclusion: If a church is to be the church that is biblical, it can’t be conforming to the world. It must be different. It may be hated, it may be misunderstood but it can still carry out the mission it is called to do; to be the bride of Christ and a light to the world. If we are to be a light to the world and the world loves darkness we cannot be like the world and still shine.

[Top](#)

Growing Concerns at my Present Church

No church is perfect, especially if I am a member. All have their strengths and weaknesses and all are in need of prayer for leadership, ministries and the congregation. We are a body of imperfect people growing in Christ and learning to serve the King.

A series of events over the years has raised my concern for the well being of my present church. No one thing was a cause for alarm, but the cumulative affects of all of them have reached a point of great concern.

ABF Concern:

I have been at my present church since 1999. The children’s ministry was thriving and a real outreach to the community. Many kids invited friends to AWANA and soon those kids were inviting their parents. Sunday school hour had good teaching for the kids and Adult Bible Study Fellowship classes (ABF) had a number of options for adults to attend. The ABF and small groups were a source of fellowship and training. Teaching centered around doctrine, expository teaching of a book, surveys of the bible and discernment in the area of false religions. Many good classes were offered and I enjoyed and grew from participation in them. As my church grew and specifically the children’s ministry grew, the classrooms became too small. To accommodate the children’s ministry, the number of ABFs was reduced. It was time to look at expanding the facilities and I joined the Design team for the purpose of designing a new building that would hold the entire congregation in one worship service along with creating more classrooms for ABFs. Five years later we still have no expanded building and only a handful of people are involved in an ABF at an offsite location. The result of a lack of ABF participation is a slow deterioration of doctrinal knowledge of our members.

Children’s Sunday school curriculum:

For several years my wife taught children’s Sunday school classes. The material used was of good quality. At one point about 3 years ago, a decision was made to switch

curriculum to one that had more fun and less content. The concern of the leaders was that some kids were getting bored. This falls in line with what a lot of the mega-churches are saying that today's kids are so media saturated that we have to provide that same level of excitement to keep their attention. My wife reviewed the curriculum and was disappointed at how watered down it was. None-the-less it was here to stay. My wife felt uncomfortable with the curriculum and no longer teaches.

Topical vs. Expository Preaching:

Topical preaching is also a trend in the Evangelical church. Mega-church Willow-Creek does this exclusively as did Stonebridge for its Sunday services. While topical preaching can be an effective way to cover a subject, this can be done from expository teaching as well. The benefit of expository teaching is that it tends to make sure all things are taught, not just a handful of things over and over as does the health, wealth and prosperity churches. I noticed that when our new pastor taught from the "Sermon on the mount" for the "Jesus: uncensored" series, he censored out Matt 5:31-32 that dealt with divorce. This is obviously a topic on which the modern church has completely waffled and he didn't want to touch it. I did ask him about it and he said he might cover it the next time he speaks on the "Sermon on the mount", or possibly during the current "Extreme Home Makeover" series. So far he has not. The problem the modern church has with expository is that the Bible covers many topics that are no longer popular.

Watered down Jr. & Sr. High Sunday School:

My daughter has not attended Sunday School for several years for similar reasons as my son. She is not being challenged. I specifically asked her about this year. She and some friends were look down upon for taking it seriously by some of the other kids. She says they spend only a little time on content, and then the rest of the time is spent playing some games. I asked an Elder who taught the class about this the response was that those other kids have little interest in Sunday school so they try to get a little bit in and then have fun to keep them coming. The result is to cater to the least common denominator. Something's wrong.

In attempting to try to reach the disinterested, we now lack of serious discipleship for interested youth to challenge them in their walk with Christ.

[Top](#)

The ever increasing use of videos and gimmicks:

In the service we are again trying to placate the culture of this world through media to "get their attention". I don't think this is necessary. A couple of years ago I was running sound for music rehearsal when someone rolled a Harley into the sanctuary. When I composed myself, I asked: "what was the meaning of this"? Pastor Jason said they were toying with the idea of using for a joke to break the ice at the beginning of the service. I objected and the idea never materialized. Why would someone think this was a good idea? Look at Jesus response to a misuse of the temple:

"saying to them, It is written, 'My house is a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of thieves.' " Luke 19:46

His point was that His father's house was a holy place that should not be treated disrespectfully. Yes I know that God now dwells in the hearts of believers so we are the temple, but there is a place for housing the corporate temple with respect during worship.

Given that, when the body meets for corporate worship, shouldn't we clothe that temple appropriately as with expectation to meet with the King of King's? Now many roll out of bed into their jeans and T-shirts advertising their favorite whatever.

The Purpose Driven Life and the use of Rick Warren's material:

Our new pastor came in January of 2004. About the time he came, our church was just about to start a "40 Days of Purpose" campaign based on the book by the same

name by Rick Warren. Before it started I heard a report warning about it. I got a copy of the book and read half of it before we were to start the campaign. I was horrified at what I saw. The widespread abuse of the paraphrase "The Message" was typified in this book. Rick Warren had his ideas all worked out and then sought a few phrases from any translation or paraphrase he could find to support it. These parts of verses are often taken out of context. His gospel of salvation was no gospel at all. It was all human centered psychology, appealing to the flesh for meaning and purpose in life with a Christian veneer. I read the entire book and added my editorial comments in the margins.

I approached the pastor on this shortly after he started but said that it was approved by the leadership before he got there. He acknowledged my concerns but didn't want to do anything about it. I can't fully blame him as a new and young pastor to the church. I do question why the elders didn't more carefully screen the material or use discernment. I did express my concerns to one of the Elders who agreed with my assessment, but he basically said "the train has left the station" and there was nothing else to do.

I had hoped that after the PDL campaign that nothing more would come of Rick Warren's influence, and for a time nothing did. Rick Warren has many follow up programs but none were mentioned.

Celebrate Recovery (CR) bypassed the approval of the Elders

A little over a year later another Rick Warren program was going to be introduced called "Celebrate Recovery". (See "The Berean Call" newsletter about a first hand review of CR at <http://www.thebereancall.org/Newsletter/html/2005/oct05.php> . While the people involved with this program are sincere in their desire to see people freed from their addictions, they are really using the world's methods. Here is a quote from "The Berean Call":

"The issue is not whether we should minister, but how we should minister: man's way or God's way? Man's way, or a mixture of biblical teaching and ungodly counsel, is contrary to God's way. Man's way leads to death. Applying Scripture to man's way leads to a slower death, akin to what would result when pure water is added to a toxic drinking fountain. We desperately need to take heed to God's admonition through the Prophet Jeremiah: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer 2:13). TBC"

I was not aware of it at the time but another person who held my same concerns as I had desperately tried to warn leadership but was ignored. In fact the elders were sidestepped in the introduction of this program, which is alarming to me. Again this program uses the technique of man's ideas backed with phrases selected from various paraphrases' often out of context.

Change in leadership structure:

This happened at the 2004 congregational meeting. Part of the change was required by the Christian and Missionary Alliance to bring it into conformity with their guidelines. Another aspect which I remember being a yellow flag to me was to allow for more flexible changes in leadership in regards to ministry. The thought was that waiting for annual congregational meetings is too far apart and would "slow things down". I always felt that quarterly meetings like I was accustomed to at First Free would be better for just such a reason. The ability to make changes without congregational approval makes leadership less accountable. I am not sure if this is related to the Elders being bypassed on the CR issue or not.

[Top](#)

Recommended Books by False Teachers with no warnings:

In January 2006, my pastor spoke on spiritual disciplines. When we think of spiritual

disciplines, what comes to mind are things we encourage in a daily “quiet time” with the Lord such as prayer, bible reading, memorizing scripture and meditating on scripture. I don’t remember much about the sermon, but he recommended the book “Celebration of Discipline” by Richard Foster and some other books. I read this as a young believer in college and rejected its false teaching then. In the book Richard Foster advocates meditation that is in fact based on eastern religions and many other false teachings including the teachings of Carl Jung and so called “desert fathers” who in turn got there teachings from the eastern religions. There had been section on astral projection in the first edition(s) that I hear has been removed from the 25th anniversary edition, but that hardly makes it okay now. Pastor excused the book as basically having a lot of good stuff that really helps and stretches him and besides we should always filter everything through scripture. I said to him that you can’t just recommend books without a warning for the dangerous teachings in them, especially for immature believers who wouldn’t know any better. He commented that almost no one is going to read books from his list anyway. This is no excuse and still he does not intend to warn others about these.

Another brother independent of my knowledge came to him with the same concerns but no action was taken to “purge the leaven”. This brother told me that the other books he recommended are by other emergent church authors including Erwin McManus which I did not know about at the time. When it comes to false teaching:

1Cor 5:7,8 Therefore purge out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For also Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast; not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Not Taking Discernment Seriously:

Related to the last two subjects, I feel that while my pastor heard and understood my concerns, he was quick to defend his actions and reluctant to take any corrective actions.

Concerning my warnings about the Emergent Church teachings, he said he was very aware of the movement. He said something to the effect of: “I don’t agree with all that they say, and clearly some things are wrong but still they have some interesting things to say. I am going to keep studying them.” If he admits they are “clearly” teaching false doctrines, we should have nothing to do with them. The Bible speaks clearly here:

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who secretly will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing on themselves swift destruction. 2Pe 2:1.

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house, nor speak a greeting to him. 2 John 1:10

Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Mat 7:15

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but try the spirits to see if they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 1John 4:1

“And I exhort you, brothers, to watch those making divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them. For they who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple.” Rom 16:17, 18

“holding fast the faithful Word according to the doctrine, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convict the gainsayers.” Titus 1:9

But the warning has gone unheeded. Following up with two of the Elders I found sympathetic ears, but they were also dismayed and unable to make changes. I asked them “Is it not the job of the Elders to watch over the souls of the church?” “Shouldn’t the Elders be screening material and holding the Pastor accountable?” My brother who has also brought concerns was applauded for his discernment, but told that “we as a church are not at that point”. What does this mean?

He was also told that if we made changes to correct the wrong things, that many of the people would stop coming. This is pragmatism and goes back to the saying: "What it takes to bring them in is what it takes to keep them here." They know this and are afraid to correct things and for the fear of losing people.

Watering Down of the Congregation:

Following on from the previous point, if we are afraid to make corrective step we will continue to lose people who want to be challenged to grow in the Lord biblically and be replaced by those who are looking to be entertained. "What it takes to bring them in is what it takes to keep them here." We have lost many in the past few years who were very involved mature members. We now have a more immature congregation, and many here because of PDL. Perhaps it is good that they are in church, but to what end if we can't teach the whole counsel of God without driving them away.

Director of Youth Ministries:

In our first meeting with Ben we asked several questions. The answers seemed to be carefully worded so as to placate our concerns. There was as sense that youth workers can relate to our kids better than with their parents, and that parents are working off an old paradigm. Here is a quote from the annual report for the 2006 congregational meeting:

"...we must be willing to learn as leaders and parents in order to be equipped to deal with a changing world. Our schools are changing, our families our (*he meant are*) changing, our students are changing, so why shouldn't the ministry?!

'In times of change, learners
inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves
beautifully equipped to deal with a world that
no longer exists.'
-Robin Cook

”

OUCH! It feels like push the old fogies out of the way, their irrelevant. It seems to me that man's problems are the same as they were right after Adam sinned. It seems to me the answer in the Gospel that has not changed in 2000 years. It seems to me that Paul's statement in Romans still holds true:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Romans 1:16

In later meetings he seemed to want to involve the parents more which is a good thing. Still I feel that relating to youth culture is a key emphasis, maintaining the idea of entertainment as a mean of teaching is necessary and fun being a big part of the ministry.

Further, I don't support the idea that adolescence needs to be extended into a persons 20's. For my family as they go through their teen years, I want them to be taking their relationship with the Lord more and more seriously. I want them to be equipped to make biblical decisions for their circumstances in life and be spiritual leaders. Hebrew boys were considered men at the age of 13 and women at 12. I want my children making a difference in the world not just being baby-sat.

1Co 13:11 When I was an infant, I spoke as an infant, I thought as an infant, I reasoned as an infant. But when I became a man, I did away with the things of an infant.

(most translations use "child" instead of "infant" but it is a good translation from Greek meaning immature, babe, child)

[Top](#)

Family Goals:

- Be a family that loves God and wants to live for him in all aspects of our life.
- Raise a godly seed:
- Home schooling
- Church
- Learn to share the gospel

These are difficult goals that require prayer and diligence. The world wants to squeeze us into its mold. Television, movies, music, entertainment and consumerism are all battling for our children. This is a struggle for us to reign in. We grew up with many of these values with out knowing the potential harm. We had little example to follow. It has had its grip on us from when we were young and we now wrestle with it. How do we draw the line where we struggle ourselves?

A family that lives for God:

As spiritual head of the home it is my responsibility before the Lord to set the pace for following God. This means I need to set the example, provide for family devotions and discussions, and set standards and guidelines for the home. I must live in the joy of the Lord and help my family enjoy living for Him. We need to do more things together as a family, not only in fun but in serving and witnessing.

Practical steps:

- be filling our minds with the Word of God
- be willing to and follow through with obeying what he speaks to us through his word
- lead by example
- talk to our kids about what we do and why we do it
- show them how to obey

Raising a godly seed:

This starts with a vision. Doug Philips spoke about how some Christian parents are happy that their kids don't smoke, drink into drugs or sex. They think they have done their job. But he says "that's no standard at all!"

My family was a "good Catholic family" that didn't get into trouble. But just going to and participating in church did not keep the next generation from looser morals. The Bible speaks of active discipleship of our children.

"Hear, O, Israel. Jehovah our God is one Jehovah. And you shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be in your heart. And you shall carefully teach them to your sons, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up." Deut 6:5-7

Note the words "carefully teach" and the emphasis that it is done throughout the day.

I don't support the idea that adolescence needs to be extended into a persons 20's. As for my family as they go through their teen years, I want them to be taking their relationship with the Lord more and more seriously. I want them to be equipped to make biblical decisions for their circumstances in life and be spiritual leaders. Hebrew boys were considered men at the age of 13 and women at 12.

1Co 13:11 When I was an infant, I spoke as an infant, I thought as an infant, I reasoned as an infant. But when I became a man, I did away with the things of an infant.

(most translations use "child" instead of "infant" but it is a good translation from Greek meaning immature, babe, child)

I want my children making a difference in the world. There seem to be few who have a vision for what God is calling them to be when the graduate from high school (or even college for that matter). I would like to be working with my kids and praying for them for a vision of what God wants for their lives both daily being led and long range. I want them to be able to be leaders in a world that needs leader of character, humility and integrity who seek God for the strength and wisdom to lead.

Schooling:

Becoming involved with the home school movement brought us in touch with those who hold a more separatist view of Christian living. Public schools are referred to as "Pagan Seminaries" and there is a lot of truth to that. Our kids at a tender young age are not equipped to be missionaries. They do not have the ability to discern good teaching from bad. Humanism is the religion of public schools and it is taught in virtually all classes at all grade levels.

I was at first very skeptical of the idea of home schooling. We started at a very difficult time in our life. After attending my first home schooling conference I was convicted and convinced it was the right thing to do. It has been hard and has its challenges. I started teaching My daughter in the 6th grade and am in my fourth year. It has become much more time consuming as she entered high school. In kindergarten and 1st grade she was in the public school. She was influenced by the kids around here and in 1st grade one was a very bad influence. Home schooling was a hard transition for her but now she really appreciates it. She has made friends and church and in the home school groups. These kids are being raised with values similar to ours and not those of the public at large. This is important to reinforce the values we are trying to instill, rather than work against us.

I believe because we home school, apply the bible to our lives and love our children as best we know God wants us too, we have enjoyed a good relationship with them. Both are strong willed and "expressive", yet in the end they know we care about them and have their best interest at heart. Rather than just sheltering them from the world however, they get exposure to the world with us beside them to help them know how to think about what they see and experience from a God-centered point of view. This is how they are prepared for life.

[Top](#)

What we should look for in a church:

Supportive of Home schooling & Christian Schools

As for us we are home schooling and committed to doing so and helping others. I would like to have my church fully supporting that idea, not being neutral to the idea.

I believe the church should recognize this and not be afraid to speak out on the issue of public schooling and the indoctrination of humanism taught there. I believe Home schooling and Christian schooling are the only options with home schooling preferred. Even Christian schools need to be kept to a high standard with books and materials and teachers carefully screened. Some may argue that they can't afford to home school or send their kids to Christian schools. The church should see the need and be willing to help out. Home schooling can be done inexpensively if there is a stay-at-home mom. If living on one income is hard, churches should help couples to learn to do that if possible. Some financial assistance may be necessary. Churches should establish Christian schools for their members.

Family Focused:

The family is the key social unit that God created. This can and should include extended family and adopted family. By adopted I mean that in a more broad sense than normal. With our mobile society, there are often single people and widow(er) and even single parent families that are missing a healthy home structure. Strong families can "adopt" others in the church body into their own to share in the riches and strengths of family relationships. The church should try to integrate families as much as possible in service, worship and other activities. Graded education is a product of humanistic principles long forgotten. Where possible integration of the ages should

be done that the younger might learn to from the older and develop biblical respect for those who have more life experience.

There should be emphasis placed on the role of husband/father as spiritual leader and teaching/training for how a man is to be that leader.

Biblical:

This affects all aspects of church from preaching, worship, evangelism, discipleship and caring and community outreach.

All programs and teaching should have a high view of scripture and use it frequently.

Spiritual discernment is to be valued, especially in regard to the false teachers that the Bible repeatedly warns will come into the church and that will be part of the coming apostasy. Elders are the spiritual watchman of the congregation and as such should see discernment as a vital part of their ministry.

Evangelism:

How does a church fulfill the Great Commission while we present the bride of Christ spotless? Emphasis should be on training individuals in personal evangelism and discipleship. New believers are welcomed into the congregation and accountability relationships established to see that they do not get lost along the way.

Worship:

Worship should always be God centered with an emphasis on reverence and respect for the King we serve.

Other:

The church should be separated unto God without being "out of touch" with the world around us. We are to be the light of the world and not hidden.

[Top](#)

eMail:
pocketc@yahoo.com

Last updated
June 25, 2006