

40 Days that Start with a Different Gospel

Did you know according to a leading voice in the American church scene you can now "connect to Christ?" Rick Warren, a leader within the popular church-growth movement introduces the first session of his fall 2003 video series with the claim to lead people in a prayer of salvation. During this session of the "40 Days of Purpose" tape you are introduced to two main concepts. First, a person is an eternal soul. Second, life should have purpose before God. The statement is made that "what you do with your life on earth will determine where you spend eternity." At the close, Warren leads in a prayer for those who have not yet "opened their life to Christ." But what does it mean to "open your life to Jesus Christ" when you have not considered the sin issue? Whatever happened to the "sinners' prayer?"

The problem with leading in a prayer for "salvation" without acknowledging sin is that there is no foundation laid of guilt before God nor a call to *Biblical* repentance (a change of mind - which results in a change of life). In fact, Warren is issuing this "relationship with Jesus Christ" to those who have both been in church or have never gone to church at all. In other words, an understanding of the holiness of God and sin and repentance and the need for forgiveness is not an issue. He simply leads the prayer with "as much as I know how I open my life to you (Christ)." With this done, he then welcomes them into the family of God. The full context of the video tape very clearly indicates that he believes he has presented the "gospel." But he has not mentioned one thing about sin. Take time to review the tape for yourself!

Therefore, this begs the question: Unto what "Christ" have those who followed him in the prayer opened themselves? And is he indirectly saying that a persons' "sin" is that they did not know that they were an eternal creature? In addition, is their "sin" that they did not know that they can live a life of purpose before God? If a person "opens their life" up to this information (which evidently "Jesus" provides and is the reason they are now "opening their life to Him") are they then "saved?" These are the only "sins" that it would seem he is addressing. But in reality these "sins" are the philosophical basis of the "gospel" he presents. In context, these thoughts raise themselves up *against* the knowledge of God and the word of the cross. That is, they wrongly place a person in a position before the cross that says they can "add Jesus" onto their life without considering their sinful condition and ways. Now tell me, when you look in the gospels, do you ever see Jesus allowing for anyone to do this? Does He allow people to be in a position where He permits them to think that they can "add Him" onto their life or "open their life to Him" while ignoring their sinful ways? The real issue is that we are sinners before a Holy God. And true Scriptural faith/repentance cannot occur unless the true gospel message is proclaimed and received. Faith comes by hearing the Word (Romans 10:17). The fact is, if one is ignoring the reality of sin and its consequences, then one can not be receiving the Lord Jesus Christ of the gospel. Only sinners need a Savior!

So are we missing a few important Biblical truths in this "gospel" presentation? Are the Biblical ideas of repentance and faith and forgiveness before a Holy God optional in presenting the gospel? If the answer is no, and these Biblical concepts are left out of a gospel presentation and yet a person is moved to pray a prayer - do we know who moved them? It should be noted that if the gospel is not presented then another spirit is at work rather than the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth always presents the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, in the Biblical context of His redemptive work at Calvary. The Lord Jesus Christ of the gospel is the door and there is no other way into the fold. Jesus said the thief and robber and false shepherd tell us otherwise.

I believe a careful reading of all texts in regard to the book which accompanies the video session will clearly show it is centered in humanistic philosophy rather than the cross, similar to the self-esteem "gospel." (Go to your local public library sometime and read the chapter on the Fatherhood of God in "Self-Esteem: The New Reformation" by Robert Schuller. If you are truly Christian make sure you are seated. Notice how he twists the real meaning of Scriptural words/concepts and yet continues to use those very same Biblical words.) Many people replace the cross of Christ with the "vain philosophies of men" (Colossians 2:8). But that ends up making the message of the cross empty (I Corinthians 1:17). The cross of Christ is central to the gospel message! When you remove the center you remove the true message! Thus, you remove the scandal and the reproach (I Corinthians 1:18; Hebrews 13:12,13).

But when Jesus looked toward the cross during His earthly ministry He said it was *the* reason He came into the world. And yet we dare omit its' meaning from our gospel? The growing apostasy in the American church seems quite content in doing so. And not only was Jesus crucified at Calvary but according to Paul that cross has something to do with us as well. (Galatians 2:20) (Do you know of anywhere in the New Testament epistles where the Apostles ever view our crucifixion in Christ as "optional?") Life as we knew it came to an end! So are we allowed to pick and choose? That is, do we have the forgiveness He has provided without agreeing with the judgment God rendered there about the condition of our life apart from Him? You do realize it was one event, don't you? And why then continue (as the book and video do) to talk about forgiveness, about service, or fellowship or mission if we have indeed allowed for people to miss the Lord Jesus Christ of Calvary as the door? Not only that, but those who "open their life to Christ" now actually think they are bound for heaven. God help us if we have only further helped them continue in their lost condition before a Holy God and actually done it in "Jesus" name. I thank God that those who shared the Lord Jesus Christ of the gospel with me for the first time had the audacity to think that I was a sinner and because of that I was on the road to eternal separation from God in a place called hell. They lovingly pleaded with me in regards to the truth of the gospel and my condition before a Holy God. They actually preached the Real One - knowing that I was to come under conviction of the Holy Spirit as a sinner and so I believed in the Savior! Do you know the love of that Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ of the Scriptures?

[The Jesus Who Came To A Fork In The Road](http://www.atrueandfaithfulwitness.com/PDLCritique.htm) - critique of the Jesus in [The Purpose-Driven® Life](http://www.atrueandfaithfulwitness.com/PDLCritique.htm)
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