

SUPERNATURAL MIRACLES? OR SHALLOW MARKETING?

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Since many cannot seem to resist the allure of all things “purpose driven” from the Baptist preacher Rick Warren, it is appropriate to examine some of his claims to see if they really are supernatural miracles or just another shallow marketing scheme. In a CD mailed out to churches an enclosed booklet suggests:

Imagine what could happen in your church if every one of your members began to live out God’s five purposes on a daily basis! Watch Rick Warren’s invitation to take your church on the remarkable journey called 40 days of purpose.

Many impressive claims of phenomenal numerical growth within the booklet are introduced under the heading, “Revival, Awakening or Miracle?” What is it that is supposed to produce this sensational growth? Rick Warren’s “ministry tools that empower your campaign.” Within the list of his tools are his book *The Purpose Driven Life*, billed as a *New York Times* Bestseller, and a “Training Manual” accompanied by eleven videotaped training sessions.

A few congregations in Memphis have announced the practice of “40 days of purpose” or “40 days of prayer” in their church bulletins, and one has even announced that Rick Warren’s *The Purpose Driven Life* will be taught in Sunday school class! If Rick Warren’s “tools” guide churches into phenomenal growth, then why do not churches of Christ implementing his purposes experience such growth? One church in Memphis that at one time held membership in a community church association similar to that organized by Rick Warren has lately been using everything from the small group approach to church growth to a Christmas Cantata, so why would the preacher relocate from that congregation to the one now using *The Purpose Driven Life* in its Sunday school class if these innovations bring not just growth but according to the marketing brochure phenomenal growth? The alleged miracles of growth suggested by Rick Warren are like the alleged healing miracles of Oral Roberts or Benny Hinn who affirm that if you do not experience a miracle the problem is your lack of faith!

Please, observe:

1. The Baptist Church is not the church of Christ because Christ is not its head (Eph. 1:22-23), it does not wear the name of Christ (Rom. 16:16; Matt. 16:18), it is not scripturally organized (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1), it does not worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24; Eph. 5:19), and it has at its very foundation sinful division (I Cor. 1:10).

2. The Bible condemns the special observation of days, months, times, and years (Gal. 4:10-11; Col. 2:16-23).
3. The reference to “your church” is unscriptural because the church does not belong to men but to Christ (Matt. 16:18). It is wrong to suggest that the church belongs to men who may use any means they choose to make it grow (I Cor. 3:6; Acts 2:47).
4. Miracles have ceased. The purpose of miracles was to confirm the authority of Christ and the apostles and to confirm the words they spoke and wrote as inspired from God (John 14:11; Heb. 2:3-4).
5. The Bible is the all-sufficient guide to consult in matters of “church growth” (II Tim. 3:16-17). Christians will “speak as the oracles of God”; impostors will not (I Pet. 4:11; Isa. 8:20). The inspired book of Acts from beginning to ending discusses the establishment, growth, and spread of the church (Acts 1:8; 28:31). Why do religious people in general and members of the Lord’s church in particular continue to reject it and replace it with “the doctrines and commandments of men”? Since the book of Acts is being set aside for the writings of a church guru who boasts growth through the six million copies of his book *The Purpose Driven Life* and “the numbers don’t lie” and people are searching for something that works to bring about church growth, then why not espouse the “Baptist Faith and Message” of the Southern Baptist Convention because they have fifteen million members? The church is the bride of Christ; faithful men and women refuse to stand for the spiritual adultery now being advanced (Eph. 5:23; Rev. 19:7).