



Dear Phil

MORE ON THE PURPOSE-DRIVEN LIFE

**When are you going to finish your review of *The Purpose-Driven Life*?
—Multiple Questioners**

Dear Friends,

Thanks to all who have responded to my first article on Rick Warren's *The Purpose-Driven Life*. I've received more feedback on this than any other article I've written. In my review of the book's first 11 chapters, the jury was still out on whether Warren had just picked and chosen biblical translations to suit his views. The jury is now in, and the verdict is "no" and "yes." In most instances, Warren seemed to be genuinely motivated to allow the reader to hear the truth through different words. In a few cases, his choice of a translation is a poor one and appears to be motivated—unconsciously, I trust—by a desire to support his point.

My suggestion to anyone reading the book is to view the translations Warren cites as interpretations of Scripture. Evaluate each just like you would a sermon or commentary. If it reflects what the Bible teaches, good. If not, ignore it or look it up in a less periphrastic translation (NASB, NKJV) and see what the Bible actually says.

That brings up a typical pattern I've noticed in the way people respond to controversial books. People who like the content of a book or find it helpful often give an unqualified endorsement of the book

and its author, sometimes becoming an "Author-ite" (e.g., "Warren-ite"; "Piper-ite"). Others who find ideas in a book with which they strongly disagree often completely dismiss or condemn it and its author.

Neither of these approaches should be characteristic of believers. We are to exercise biblical discernment when we read. Maturity in thinking biblically approaches books with an "accept the biblical; recognize and discard the unbiblical" attitude. On occasion, the unacceptable material in such a book is so bad or so pervasive that it renders any effort to extract what is good a waste of time, or worse, spiritually detrimental. However, this is certainly not the case with *The Purpose-Driven Life*.

On the whole, Warren's book is worth reading. Please don't misunderstand me. I have definite disagreements with Warren on various points throughout the book. However, as a book primarily targeting believers, its good far outweighs any bad. I have repeatedly benefited from reading and rereading Warren's material.

Warren's section on "You Were Formed for God's Family" is especially valuable. His discussions on how to cultivate real fellowship, how to restore broken fellowship,

and how to protect the unity of a local church are pungent and practical. I would heartily recommend that church attenders who are not church members read this section carefully. Many local churches are sick from head to toe precisely because they don't know or practice the principles Warren outlines in this section.

Are there really five purposes for our lives? If Warren means five equally important purposes, the answer is no. The primary purpose of life is to glorify God by loving Him whole-heartedly. When we love God, we long to please Him in everything (Warren's purpose #1). Warren is dead-on when he says we were created to belong to God's family (purpose #2). The family of God, as manifested in the local church, is the necessary matrix in which our pursuit of God's glory is nurtured, corrected, and implemented through worship and instruction in Christlikeness (purpose #3), loving service (purpose #4), and missions (purpose #5). So it seems that Warren is actually developing the practical implications of the primary purpose of life.

There is no way for me to address all the areas of agreement and disagreement I have with Warren in this column, so I have placed a chapter-by-chapter analysis of the book on my website (apbrown2.net/web/purposedrivenlife.htm).

The primary purpose of life is to glorify God by loving Him whole-heartedly. We are here to bring God pleasure, to belong to God's family, to become like Christ, to serve God, and to fulfill our God-given mission. Are you living out the purpose for which God created you?

PHILIP ■

Dr. A. Philip Brown II is a member of the faculty in the Division of Ministerial Education at God's Bible School and College. For more articles by Dr. Brown, visit his website: www.apbrown2.net.