

An Open Letter To Rick Warren

From Perry Noble

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Hey Rick! I know you have visited this site at least once...and dude, I would like to thank you for being one of the first people that God used to MESS ME UP in regards to my view of church. There were a series of events that took place in my life back in the mid 1990's—and reading your book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, was one of them!

You see, I **HATED** church when I was a kid—I often joke with people that I had a drug problem as a child, my mother “drug” me to church on Sunday morning, then she “drug” me to church on Sunday night—and I was even “drug” on most Wednesday nights as well. And so when she passed away when I was 12...I made a break from church.

Until Jesus found me!!! I thought receiving Christ would be enough. I had ran from Him for years and had actually developed into a pretty good pagan. BUT He changed me...and then began dealing with my heart about being in the ministry.

I resisted—BIG TIME! I didn't want to work in the church...I didn't really like the church...but, as always, God wins & I surrendered.

At first I thought about going with some sort of para-church organization...and even considered traveling around and speaking for a while...but when no one really invites you to speak...well...that kind of tells you that isn't the way to go.

Then somebody told me about your book, “The Purpose Driven Church.” I will have to admit I wasn't that interested—dude, **it was 399 pages** and I have A-D-D!!! (Up until this book I believe the most intense thing I had ever read was Green Eggs and Ham!)

BUT...I thought I would give it a try...and I could not put it down! I read your book...then I would read the book of Acts...and then I would read your book...and then the book of Acts...and I got so PUMPED UP that I literally could not sleep at night! FINALLY I was reading something about a church

that I believed could and should be taking place...and the Lord used your writings as a catalyst to spur me AND encourage me.

Long story short—a group of about 15 of us began a church in the fall of 1999 in a living room here in Anderson, SC. (Our entire county has about 170,000 people.) It has been a ride...God has blessed our socks off...we moved into our new worship facility last February...and this past Easter we had over 10,000 people show up!!! God is doing amazing things...and we know there is more to come.

So dude, I am just writing to thank you! I know you hear this all the time...but your book and your example has served so many of us pastors. AND...you have had a part in every move that NewSpring has made...God used you (and many others) to inspire what is going on here.

I know you receive your fair share of criticism...dude, wow...I get it—but there are literally days when I have thought, “At least I am not Rick Warren or George W. Bush!” But I want you to know that what you are doing IS making a difference...and for you to keep up the incredible work...and not to come down off the wall & get tangled up in the web that the enemy seeks to spin through detractors.

I admire you because, despite people cracking on your PDL material and your funky shirts, you have stayed faithful! Stay the course...stay on task with what the Lord leads you to do...and know that there are tons of us out here who can clearly recognize the blessings of God on you and your ministry!!!

Finally—I would say that the Lord used you to...

- Teach me what church CAN be
- Show me that if you do not have a plan in ministry that it will be obvious to everyone that you have no plan!
- Teach me patience as I read all 399 pages...and then I did it again!
- Show me how to stay focused...no matter what people say about me! (I am still learning this!)
- Show me that people CAN receive Jesus—even if the pastor wears Hawaiian shirt!
- Show me that pastors can be on television and represent Jesus in such a way that the rest of us do not look stupid!

Thanks Rick!!!