

Event Transcript

Myths of the Modern Megachurch

Monday, May 23, 2005
Key West, Florida

Some of the nation's leading journalists gathered in Key West, Florida, in May 2005 for the Pew Forum's biannual Faith Angle conference on religion, politics and public life. Conference speaker Rick Warren, pastor of the largest church in America, addressed misconceptions many Americans have about mega-churches. He also discussed his best-selling book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, as well as current trends in the evangelical movement, the work his church is doing for AIDS and poverty relief in Africa, and some of his views on hot-button political and cultural issues.

Other conference speakers were John Dilulio (University of Pennsylvania), who spoke on faith-based initiatives, and Reuel Marc Gerecht (American Enterprise Institute), who spoke on Islam and democracy.

Speaker:

Rick Warren, Senior Pastor and Founder, Saddleback Church, Orange County, California

Respondent:

David Brooks, Columnist, *The New York Times*

Moderator:

Michael Cromartie, Vice President, Ethics & Public Policy Center; Senior Advisor, Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life

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MICHAEL COMARTIE: Rick Warren is the author of the *New York Times* #1 bestseller *The Purpose Driven Life*, which sold a record-breaking seventeen million copies in its first 19 months, making it the bestselling hardback nonfiction book in history. He is also the founding pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, one of America's largest churches. He and his wife, Kay, began the church with one family in 1980. Today the church averages over 20,000 in attendance each weekend on its 120 acre campus and lists over 80,000 names on the church roll. The 40 Days of Purpose and the Purpose Driven movement have become a world-wide phenomena featured in numerous newspapers, magazines and TV shows. *Time*, *Christianity Today* and several other publications have named Rick Warren "the most influential pastor in America."



We're delighted that Rick could be with us for this conference. Rick, thank you for coming and we look forward to hearing from you.



MR. WARREN: Thank you. My favorite introduction was one time they said, "And here is Rick Warren, of whom Billy Graham said, 'Who?'" (Laughter.)

I am truly honored to be here. I really mean this. When I saw your names and who was going to be on this list, I thought, you know, these are men and women that I read all of the time and I respect, and I want to thank you for the columns and the articles that you write. Just to be sitting up here with David Brooks, I feel like we ought to reverse this, let him talk and let me comment on him because I love reading his stuff. I read all of your stuff all of the time and I just wanted to start off by saying thank you. Thank you for helping me grow, helping me develop.

As a writer, you never know who is reading your stuff and so I just wanted you to know I am

There is a verse in the Bible that says the intelligent man is always open to new ideas; in fact, he looks for them. And so when Mike invited me to come to this and I saw your names, I really jumped at the chance. I enjoy these smaller, intimate meetings. You know, when you speak to 23,000, 24,000 people every weekend, crowds don't impress you anymore. So really, anywhere I go is going to be smaller than the group I talk to on Sunday. So it's not like I'm going to get a big wow out of a crowd.

I would much rather come and do this kind of thing where we can dialogue and talk back and forth. Last night, I was in Miami speaking to this huge international convention of all of the Spanish-language publishers and they gave me the city key to Miami, but really I would have more fun with you here today. And then I saw you were doing it at Key West and that sealed the deal – (laughter) – because I subscribe to the Gilda Radner philosophy of fashion: I wear what doesn't itch. (Laughter.) And this is as formal as I get. I get a Hawaiian shirt every week when I speak. I wear a suit once a year on Mother's Day to honor my wife and that is about it, and so this is right up my alley.

I also wanted to come and challenge you to see your writing as a stewardship of influence. God has put you in this position. As you can imagine, I get a lot of invitations to speak – I get about four or five a day – and so I have been choosing pretty carefully which ones to accept. And I came here because I only speak to influencers, and God has given you a degree of influence.

And I would challenge you – pardon me for using a religious term – to speak in a prophetic voice. What I mean by that is in our world today we need more than information, we need more than interpretation: we need action. We're drowning in information, and there is a famine of meaning – what does it all mean?

So I have been asked today to speak on the evangelical mega-church and then a case study of Saddleback, and part of what I would like to do is share my journey – I would like to tell you the story behind the story of my life changed. You know, when you write the best-selling book in the world for the last three years, that changes your life and I'm not the same person I was three years ago. And, you know, maybe I can share that.

But since you're journalists, before we look at this idea of the myths about the mega-churches, I would like to just give you maybe four or five trends or stories I think you need to be aware of that have come in on the scene, because as I travel around the United States, and around the world, I see them over and over.

The first trend that I would say you need to be aware of is the return of the evangelical movement to its 19th-century roots; that is going to be a big story – the return of the evangelical movement to its 19th-century roots. What are those roots? Compassionate activism – and I am not talking about politics; I am talking about the fact that about a hundred years ago, Christianity split into two wings in the Protestant division and this hasn't been happening with Catholicism, but it did happen in Protestantism.

There is a fellow named Walter Rauschenbusch, who is the man who came up with the term "social gospel." Rauschenbusch was a liberal theologian and he basically said we don't need this stuff about Jesus anymore; we don't need the cross; we don't need salvation; we don't need atonement; we just need to redeem the social structures of society and if we do that people will automatically get better. This is basically Marxism in a Christian form.

And there were even magazines like *The Christian Century*, which was a pretty audacious title when it started at the beginning of the 20th century – as if to say, this is going to be the Christian century; we are going to bring in the millennium simply by changing the social structures of society. Well, nobody believes that anymore after two world wars and a bunch of other stuff.

But what happened is Protestantism split into two wings, the fundamentalists and the mainline churches. And the mainline churches tended to take the social action issues of Christianity – caring for the sick, for the poor, the dispossessed, racial justice and things like that. Today there really aren't that many Fundamentalists left; I don't know if you know that or not, but they are such a minority; there aren't that many Fundamentalists left in America.

Anyway, the fundamentalist and evangelical movement said they were just going to care about personal salvation when they split from the mainline churches. What happened is the mainline churches cared about the social morality and the evangelicals cared about personal morality. That's what happened when they split. But they really are all part of the total gospel – social justice, personal morality and salvation. And today a lot more people, evangelicals, are caring about those issues.

Bono called me the other day and said why don't you come up to the U2 concert at the Staples Center because we're both active in AIDS prevention. My wife and I have given millions to the

trend, and one of the trends you're going to be hearing about in the future is a thing called the Global Peace Plan, and we may get back into that a little bit later.

I would echo one of the things John Dilulio said earlier, that Washington isn't that important. It's not. I'm sorry to tell you that, but it's just not. And one of the things that evangelicals have is a true view of the limitations of politics. Politics is always downstream in culture. By the time it gets to law – I'm sorry, folks – it's already in the water system. There is not a high school person in America who has a politician's picture on his wall as a hero. Who do they have? Sports stars, entertainers, celebrities and things like that. And so, I would say that that's a key issue.

Another trend that I see is this 40 days phenomenon – this 40 Days of Purpose, which of course I'm right in the middle of. Ten percent of the churches in America have now done 40 Days of Purpose and that's just now. We will take another 10 to 15 thousand through it this year, and on and on and on. And there's a little story of how that got started in churches and then it spread to corporations like Coca-Cola and Ford and Wal-Mart, and they started doing 40 Days of Purpose. And then it spread to all the sports teams. I spoke at the NBA All-Stars this year because all of the teams were doing 40 Days of Purpose. LPGA, NASCAR, most of the baseball teams – when the Red Sox were winning the World Series, they were going through 40 Days of Purpose during the Series. So the story of the 40 Days of Purpose is more than the story of the book. And maybe we can get back to why that touched such a nerve around the world, because *The Purpose Driven Life* is not just the best-selling book in American history; it's the best-selling book in about a dozen languages. It's in about 30 languages right now and that's why I was at this meeting last night with the Spanish.

The next phase that you're going to see is we're actually doing citywide 40 Days of Purposes. We've already done one in Chattanooga; we're going to do one in Philadelphia this fall with 250 African-American churches. We're doing one in Orlando, and you're going to see this movement.

The third trend I think you need to be aware of is the signs of the possible spiritual awakening in America. You know we've had two Great Awakenings in the history of America and we're a hundred years overdue for the next one. If there is a second Reformation in the Church and a third spiritual awakening in the world or in America, it will come through two words – small groups.

The small group structure is the structure of renewal in every facet of Christianity – including Catholicism. And really "mainline" is sideline now. They're not mainline anymore, they're sideline denominations. The mainline is evangelicalism. The sidelines are the ones that used to be the mainline. And so, it's kind of like when we talked about the mainstream media. What is the mainstream media? There's old media and there's new media, okay, but what's the "mainstream"? It depends on what stream you're in. I think it was pointed out earlier that America is a pretty big place and there are lots of streams. And I could take you around America and show you forty different streams. And so it just depends on who you're listening to. But I do believe what David Brooks wrote in an article right after the election, what he called the two conversations going on in America. And I think that was a pretty seminal article; there are not just two conversations going on, but there are even more than that.

I think a fourth trend that you might be interested in as journalists is the move – the shift in power – in evangelicalism from what's called para-church organizations to local churches. In the last 50 years, most of what was new and innovative that's been done in Christianity was done by para-church organizations, not actual congregations. Things like World Vision, World Relief, Campus Crusade for Christ, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Billy Graham Organization and on and on. And America in its entrepreneurship has started thousands of these para-church organizations since the 1950s. And in the '70s and the '80s particularly, all of the bright minds were not going into local churches. They were all going into these para-church organizations.

But all the smart people I know are now working in local churches. They're moving there and the power is moving back to the local congregations. Regardless of size, they just happen to be there. And as a result, the pastors and the priests and the ministers of these churches are, I think, gaining a larger voice. And that's why, by the way, the religious right does not represent evangelicalism. I'm not a part of the religious right and I don't know any of my friends who are part of the religious right. It's a portion, but it's like when you take the elephant and you've got the nine blind men and one says it looks like a tail and one says it looks like something else – you know, it's what you're grabbing onto at the time. And a part of that is because the religious right has tended to limit the number of items on the agenda to three or four social issues and missed a bunch of others.

Another issue that I think you need to be aware of is what I call the three great questions of the next twenty years. And I think these are questions that we're going to be facing – they're all religious issues – and here is what I think they are. Number one, will Islam modernize peacefully? We're going to hear more about that a little bit later tomorrow. Will Islam modernize peacefully? – big implications on that one.

And number three, which is a really big one and of particular interest to me, what is going to replace the vacuum in China now that Marxism is dead? What's going to replace it? In all likelihood, it's going to be Christianity. I've had two state dinners in China in Tiananmen Square and People's Hall with their government, with the bureaucrats there, with the Cabinet members. I've actually had them in our home and had them in our church, and they've given me pretty much carte blanche in China for some reason. I don't know why they trust me, but we've discussed this, and I've debated them. I said, "You know what the problem with China is? You want the economic freedom of the West without the freedom of speech and the freedom of religion and the freedom of information that you must have to get the other." And so, they're going through turmoil. But there are about 80 million Christians, maybe as many as 100 million Christians – most of them evangelical – in China right now. That's about 25 million above ground and about 75 million meeting below ground in house churches. And so it is a huge, huge wave that's taking place there.

Then the other story that I would encourage you to look at is this evolving alliance between evangelical Protestants and Catholics, particularly in the evangelical wing of Catholicism. In 2004, there were three big surprises in our culture. One of them was the success of the movie *The Passion*, which was roundly panned by everybody and then went on to become the third biggest best-selling movie in history – grossing \$600 million. The second was, for the second year in a row, my book was the best-selling book in the world. A book by a pastor – how's a book by a pastor selling that many, almost a million a month? And the third was some of the so-called "values voters" from this past election. And really, I happen to agree with some of what's been said, that there's a lot of over-emphasis laid on that. But in all three of those, Catholics and evangelicals came down on the same side of the fence in many areas. Now when you get 25 percent of America, which is basically Catholic, and you get 28 to 29 percent of America, which is evangelical, together, that's called a majority. And it is a very powerful bloc, if they happen to stay together on particular issues.

Okay, now let's talk about what I was assigned, "Myths of the Modern Evangelical Mega-Church." I spoke at Harvard last month. I did a series of lectures for the faculty in the Kennedy School and also in the law school. I spoke to several groups of faculty and several groups of students and I started with this quote from Peter Drucker: "The most significant sociological phenomenon of the first half of the 20th century was the rise of the corporation. The most significant sociological phenomenon of the second half of the 20th century has been the development of the large pastoral church – of the mega-church. It is the only organization that is actually working in our society."

Now Drucker has said that at least six times. I happen to know because he's my mentor. I've spent 20 years under his tutelage learning about leadership from him, and he's written it in two or three books, and he says he thinks it's the only thing that really works in society.

Before we can talk about the myths, let me give you some definition. What is a mega-church? Technically it's a church that averages over 2,000 in attendance. That's the draw point, the break-off point for a mega-church – 2,000, not in members, but in attendance on a weekly basis. Now let me put this in perspective. In 1963 in America, only 93 churches in America had more than 1,000. Today, there are over 6,000 churches that run over 1,000 in America.

There is a shifting. There are 6,000 churches that run over 1,000, there are about 750 churches that run over 2,000 – so those are the real mega-churches, the 750 over 2,000. There are about 20 churches in America that run over 10,000 in attendance on a typical weekend. And there are three of us that run over 20,000. The three largest churches in America are Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, outside of Chicago; the Lakewood Church in Houston, which is on television, so you might have seen that one (the pastor is Joel Osteen); and then Saddleback is the largest church in America. We had our 25th anniversary on Easter this year. I did 12 services. We had 45,000 in attendance and I preached 12 services in a row. Two weeks later, we celebrated our anniversary and we had never had the church in one location, so we rented Angel Stadium and had 30,000 at Angel Stadium. I have 82,000 names on the church roll.

I started Saddleback in my home 25 years ago with my wife. And you need to understand, I am a country boy. I grew up in northern California in a town of less than 500 people. So the church I pastor is about a zillion times bigger than the town I grew up in and that has been cultural shock for me. And I've watched the church grow from just my wife and me over the past 25 years. One of the things we wanted to prove is that you don't have to have a building to grow a church, so we grew the church to over 10,000 before we had our first building. We went 15 years without a building. We met in 73 different facilities in the first 15 years. We said, "We're the church that, if you can figure out where we are, you get to come, because we only want really smart people." So we kept changing it. But we wanted to prove it's not a church. We met in warehouses, bank buildings, stadiums, tents, whatever. So today, we have a 120-acre campus, we have about 30 acres just in parking, if you can imagine that. It's like I'm in the Dumbo parking lot or the Goofy parking lot or whatever.

Purpose Driven Life," I took off seven months and I did not preach, and I did not teach, and I did not lead my staff of 300, but I just wrote the book. And while I was gone, the church grew by 800 people because it's not built on me, it's built on the 9,200 lay ministers in the church.

We were talking about volunteers this morning – I know about volunteers. We have 9,200 lay ministers who lead 200-plus different ministries all over southern California. I know these numbers are a little overwhelming, but just to give you an idea, we have 2,600 small groups that meet from Santa Monica to Escondido in 83 cities. And so the church gathers on Sunday for a big service and then meets during the week in homes. That allows us to do all kinds of enormous things. For instance, in November, during our 40 Days of Community, we decided to feed every homeless person in Orange County three meals a day for 40 days. We went out and we found out that was 42,000 people. How do you feed 42,000 people three meals a day for 40 days? Well, it takes a lot of volunteers. And we did – we collected over 2 million pounds of food and those 9,200 lay ministers pulled it off and we fed 40,000 people three meals a day.

So when you talk about taking government money – we don't want government money. I don't want government money because I don't want them intruding in what we're doing. I love the point that John Dilulio made earlier, that there's a difference between teaching and transformation. I'm in the life change business. I'm in the transformation business. You know what motivates me? – not size; in fact, I don't even like big churches. I mean, my favorite size was 300 people. What motivates me is that I am addicted to changing lives. I love seeing lives changed and that is the untold story. Everybody tries to attribute the growth of churches to everything else but what makes them grow – and it's changed lives.

Now that's what a mega-church is, so what's an evangelical? Let's just review. An evangelical believes the Bible is God's Word, Jesus is who he claimed to be, salvation is only by grace – in other words, you can't earn your way to heaven – and everybody needs to hear the good news; information, not coercion. It is a funny thing to me that about every five years America and journalism reintroduces evangelicals to America. It's like starting with Carter – you know there was a headline – "Who are the Evangelicals?" And about every five years, we get a new article – "Who are the Evangelicals?" Well, it's not like they're a fringe group; they're 28 percent of the country. In a pluralistic nation, we are a lot bigger than most of the other sections. And it's not like they need an introduction. What needs an introduction is some of the smaller groups and it's just kind of funny. It's like people say, "Because I don't know about them, well, then maybe America doesn't know about them."

Well, the other thing that I would say is that we need – and I'm not speaking of you here – but we need to help journalists use the right terms. There is a difference between "evangelicalism" and "fundamentalism" and "the religious right." And people use them like they are synonyms. They are not – they are very, very different. I am an evangelical. I'm not a member of the religious right and I'm not a fundamentalist. And also, a pastor is not an evangelist. I get called an evangelist all the time, as if that's the only thing there is. I'm not an evangelist, I'm a pastor. An evangelist is somebody who travels around from town to town to town speaking. James Dobson is not an evangelist, he's a radio psychologist. But people call people evangelists like that's the standard term if you're an evangelical; no, I'm a pastor. What does a pastor do? He cares and comforts and counsels.

Toffler wrote a book many years ago – I'm sure you all read it – called *Future Shock*. In that book he says when life is changing rapidly, we need what he calls islands of stability to hang onto. We need some rocks in our lives that don't change when everything around us is changing. And when I went to start Saddleback Church, I had just finished my doctorate. I was out of seminary and I moved from Texas to southern California, and I said I want to spend my entire life in one location because I value being in a community, watching the kids grow up and go through stages. My daughter was four months old when I started Saddleback Church. She's now married and has a child and has one on the way. So I've watched an entire generation grow up in my church, and I've loved that – watched the kids be born, be dedicated, grow up; I've watched them go through grade school, graduate from high school, go off to college, come back, get married, come back, have a baby. It's that kind of stability that builds really strong churches.

And so I just said, "I want to be pastor."

And so what is a mega-church and what are some myths about it? Well, I wrote down a bunch of them here. Here is the first one. The first myth is that mega-churches are a uniquely American phenomenon. That's a myth. Mega-churches are not a uniquely American phenomenon. The reality is there are far more mega-churches outside of the United States than there are inside of the United States. In fact, all of the largest churches in the world are outside of America and Saddleback is just a baby compared to some of them. For instance, William Kumuyi's church in Lagos, Nigeria, has 120,000 in attendance. Cesar Castellano's church has 250,000 in attendance. They're building a stadium right now that seats 250,000. Ten of the 11 largest churches in the world are in Seoul, Korea. The largest Baptist church, the largest Methodist church, the largest Presbyterian Church, and the largest Pentecostal church are all in Seoul, Korea. I've spoken in them. The largest church in the world is in Seoul, Korea – Central Church

you don't get to be a mega-church if you get involved in other issues. You would find that most of the churches that are politically active tend to be medium- or small-size churches. They are not the largest churches. And because they tend to get caught up in a political agenda, they don't grow to the size of others. The largest churches tend to focus on issues like the ones that we're focused on.

A third myth is that mega-churches attract people because of their size. Now that one is laughable. Nobody goes to a church because of its size. Actually, the larger a church gets, the more headaches there are, the more hassles you have to put up with, the further you have to walk to get to the service. Can you imagine in our church checking in and out four or five thousand children into our Sunday school? Our Sunday school is bigger than any school in our district – it's just enormous. I mean, we have a computer system where you come in with your tag and you've got a bar code and you flip the thing and it brings up three tags and you put one tag on the baby and one on the bottle and one on the diaper bag and then you don't get them mixed up. And you don't check that baby out unless you come back with the right tag because we've got split homes, and we found one parent trying to come pick up the child when it's not their weekend. And so there are all kinds of things to think through. The truth is the only people who like large churches are pastors. (Chuckles.) And they like them because they like to speak to big crowds. But people put up with the size in order to get the benefits – they say, "I like the teaching, I like the programs, I like the music, and I like the ministries," and things like that. So it's a myth that people go because they want the size.

A fourth myth is that most mega-churches have televised services. That's just not true. In fact, until Lakewood Church grew up, Bill Hybels' church and our church – the largest churches in America – were not on the television. In fact, when I started Saddleback 23 years ago, I said we would never go on TV and we'd never go on the radio because I didn't want to be a celebrity. I think always being in the spotlight blinds you. I think that you get more done under the radar, behind the scenes. And I actually was able to do it for about 23 years until this blasted book kind of blew my cover. But I was able to just keep behind the scenes, and while I wasn't known like a Jerry Falwell or a Robert Schuler or some of these media personalities, every pastor in America knew who I was because I put all of my sermons on an Internet site and it gets 400,000 hits a day from pastors. And so, instead of me teaching it on the radio or TV, we put it on the Internet and we allow other pastors to take this material and use it.

Another myth is that mega-churches require little or no commitment. What I mean by that is that people think if you're big, you must be shallow. And I would just say to that – the reality is that most members of typical churches could not join Saddleback because they would not be willing to meet the requirements. We have very strong standards for requirements. They're pretty tough, and we're not interested in the big membership; we're interested in turning an audience into an army and mobilizing it for good.

The last one that I'll give you is the myth that mega-churches grow by marketing. I'm so tired of this story; I've heard it over and over and over – the latest being the most recent issue of *Business Week*, where it basically says the mega-churches are big business. Now that is just such a superficial, unrealistic view of what actually goes on. The implication is that if a church is this big, it must be because of marketing. No, it's because of changed lives. When peoples' lives are changed you'd have to lock the doors to keep them out, because they want to go where their lives are changed. We put people in a tent for three years where we would freeze in the winter and it would rain on us all spring and we'd burn up in the summer and the howling winds could come through – and people would walk about a mile through the mud to get to this tent. I mean, everything was inconvenient. And why did they come, why did they show up? Because their lives were getting changed; that is what was happening. So they put up with inconvenience.

The only guy I know who got this was a *New York Times* reporter who did an article on Saddleback a while back. And I like the way he said it. He said, "Marketing creates a message in order to sell a product. But Warren's doing the exact opposite – he's creating products in order to push a message." Well, it's true. I plead guilty to that. But that's not marketing, that's taking the message and trying to get it out as many ways as possible instead of creating a message to sell your product.

Really there are two kinds of mega-churches. They don't grow the same way. Some grow by transferred growth and some grow by conversion. And anytime you see a mega-church that grows instantly – it just kind of explodes – and all of a sudden they go from zero to 5,000, that's a church that's growing by transfer growth, which means they've just become the hot act in town and everybody goes, "Let's just all go over there. That's the place to go so we'll all go." And as a pastor, I don't consider that legitimate growth. Jesus said, "I'll make you fishers of men." This is like swapping fish in the aquarium. It's like we pop them from one place to another, and they grow at the expense of other churches.

Saddleback is unique in that 78 percent of the members of our church had no religious background prior to joining the church. It is a church of conversion growth. We've baptized about

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churches, while most of the members are in large churches. In other words, right now there are about 340,000 churches in America of all different sizes and shapes. A lot of those are out in towns of 50 people and there's nobody in them, but there's a pastor. So there are a lot of pastors in little churches. But today most of the members are in the larger churches. You know, I could go on, but I think I'll just stop on that and let David Brooks respond.

MR. CROMARTIE: Thank you, Rick. We asked David Brooks to respond because in his book, which many of you have seen – *On Paradise Drive* – part of David's research was on the mega-churches. And so, we thought David would be an ideal person to comment on this since he traveled around the country and saw some of the communities where these mega-churches are located. So, David, thank you for responding.

DAVID BROOKS: First, I think that was just fantastic. The personal story is kind of amazing, but I think we also saw your spiritual gifts and leadership and business gifts. The intellectual gift is the gift to be able to pick out – out of the draws of the media world – the crystalline pebble that is truly important. And I thought the trends you raised are fantastic and I think in the book you do that with the Bible.

Now, thanks to Rick and his folks, I have my own personalized leather-bound copy of the book.



MR. WARREN: Now don't show them that – they're going to get envious.

MR. BROOKS: Well, you know, it's a two-class world, what can I say? (Laughter.) And it's handy for me because as Anne Kornblut can tell you, in the afternoons, I'm up in the *Times* Bureau, you know, evangelizing – (laughter) – with the book. And the first sentence of the book is, "It's not about you." And that is the way we live our life at the *Times*. (Laughter.) It's not narcissism, it's never about us. And day 26 of the 40-day process is called "Growing Through Temptation." And a lot of us have felt temptation since aroused by this number of 22 million and that is the temptation toward envy. For all of us who have written books, that figure is kind of eye-popping.

I leave the *Times* Bureau with Tom Friedman, who's number one on the non-fiction list right now. I come to this conference in Key West, and I see Malcolm Gladwell, who was recently number one on paperback and hardcover non-fiction. I go to see Mr. 22 Million over here. I expect to walk outside and see Tom Clancy sitting there. (Chuckles.) I'm going to be writing my book, *The Blinking Flat Purpose-Driven Tipping Point*. (Laughter.) I actually thought of doing a book just for Republicans called *The Chauffeur-Driven Life*. (Laughter.)

But, anyway, what I thought I'd try to do is talk a little about what I think of as a transformation in the evangelical community – a transformation in methods and especially in leaders, which I think Rick exemplifies. And since Rick mentioned Bono, let me start with a little story of something that happened to me two weeks ago, which I think sort of exemplifies this. I got a call a couple of months ago from a friend of mine who works on the Hill, Mark Rodgers, who used to work for Santorum. And he said, "Do you want to go to a U2 concert?" And I love U2 and my wife especially does. So we went up there and he organized a little group and Gerson went – his first rock concert. (Chuckles.)

And we went out to an Italian meal in South Philly and there were some people from the Billy Graham organization, there were some Christian rock musicians from Nashville, and it was a great conversation. Everybody else at the table except my wife and I knew Bono and had long relations with him either through Africa work, through the Heartland Tour – remember he took this tour, where he went to Willow Creek, he went to Wheaton, he went up and down the Midwest, stopping at mega-churches, stopping at schools, doing a lot of conversation, a lot of awareness of AIDS, urging evangelicals to get involved in AIDS research. There had been a piece of research showing that evangelicals were less likely to get involved in combating AIDS than other groups. And I think when that came out I think a lot of people in the community felt embarrassed. And I've been told that he was instrumental in raising awareness among evangelicals.

I was told at this dinner by one of the guys who is a producer for Switchfoot of a meeting in Nashville where Bono was coming through, and he had a meeting just with Christian musicians. And he said – you know, it was a group of forty or fifty – he said, "I know what you guys are feeling. You're in this genre – in some way it represents who you are, but in some way you feel trapped by it. You feel trapped by the strictures of what you have to do. It's not quite fully expressing who you are as artists." And this guy from Switchfoot said, "That's exactly how we feel, that somehow we're constrained." And then my friend who was at the dinner put up a guitar,

himself a Christian; he's very non-sectarian – but he has a faith in Jesus and at the end of the concert, he takes off his cross and puts it on the microphone stand and the last thing you see is the spotlight on the cross. And so there's a lot of Christian imagery in what Bono is and what he does. But he's not typical. But what I found was a great comfort between these two heterodox communities.

And then the second thing was what this guy from Switchfoot was saying – the sense of breaking out of the crust of a certain stricture, an ethic in the community. And people wanted to break out of it and express their faith and their lives in new ways, and there was a sense of frustration with that. And I think that's happened across the evangelical world. And I'm coming from outside that community – I'm Jewish, and so I'm sort of looking at it from the outside. I'm reminded of when the Human Rights Campaign, the gay and lesbian organization, had a group of people come in to explain Christian conservatives to them, and they invited me and Jonah Goldberg. (Laughter.) And so, I don't come from this community, but I speak for it.

MR. WARREN: Well, I'm actually speaking at the University of Judaism this next month, where I've been asked to come in and teach the rabbis my preaching seminar. So I'm speaking for Jews.

MR. BROOKS: Well, I was going to say – we don't actually have mega-gogues, because if you built a town with a mega-gogue, you'd have people saying, "Oh, I don't go to that mega-gogue." (Laughter.) "I go to that other mega-gogue, I wouldn't touch that mega-gogue."

But anyway, it's like popcorn. The popcorn is in that hard shell and then it just bursts out. And that doesn't mean the hard shell part is gone, but it's just much more complicated, what's going on, and in some ways softer. And I think that's what's happening. And so I'll just run down very quickly what I think some of the causes are of this transformation in the evangelical leadership and community and then some of the effects.

The first cause, I think, is the end of a certain sort of history since the 1920s – evangelicals pulling in after the Scopes trial, feeling embattled, defensive, and then more slowly over the decades feeling much more comfortable in American culture. I think that comfort derives from the home schooling movement, so there's less a sense that "My kids are being educated in ways that are alien to me." People are more comfortable with how their kids are being educated. Then Reagan and Bush. And then it was interesting to hear Rick talk about the repairing of the split between the social and the personal. And I think these are just long and historical trends that are creating a comfort level, and with the comfort level, less of a need to feel embattled and part of a remnant and a greater need to express yourself and not be quite so unified and disciplined. So that's one thing.

The second change, I think, is a certain embarrassment I sense with the putative leaders of the evangelical movement. A sense of embarrassment, to be honest – I can say this, I'm Jewish – with people like Jimmy Swaggert, Tammy Faye Baker, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Ralph Reed, sometimes James Dobson. You know, I was with some evangelicals in Pennsylvania the day after Falwell made those 9/11-related comments. And the sense of revulsion was – I can tell you – natural and profound. And as we learned in the South Carolina primary in 2000, that doesn't necessarily mean people want to see outsiders coming in and blasting those guys, but within the community I think there's embarrassment. Evangelicals say, "They don't speak for me. A lot of people in the country think they speak for me, but they do not speak for me. That is not who I am." So that's the second cause.

The third cause, I think, is an embarrassment sometimes over the quality of the evangelical subculture. Mark Noll's book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* was important for a lot of people that I run into. There's another book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*. The musicians I was talking about feel that the music doesn't really represent who they are – and what was interesting when they talked about Bono and U2 was that he is an artist and because he's an artist he doesn't have pat answers for everything. He explores the problematics of a certain situation. And that's what they wanted to do, but they felt pressured to just give pat answers. And so they wanted to be more artists and less – I don't know what you want to call it – less doctrine promoters. And there was some embarrassment because of the paltry response to the AIDS crisis in Africa.

The fourth cause is a greater and perpetual desire to be Jesus-centered, which some of the putative leaders were not. I wrote a column a few months ago about John Stott, this great writer and pastor in England. And it was funny – he came to Washington and I had a chance to have breakfast with him, and when I tried to talk politics with him, you could see his eyes sort of cloud over. But whenever we would talk about Jesus, he was just alive and vibrant. And there's a gap between what Jesus was doing, which is so energizing to people, and what politics and Ralph Reed are doing.

The fifth cause is a frustration with a certain political style, where you go out and vote, you rally,

long, long time ago. Mark Rodgers, who is up on the Hill, is someone who is acutely aware of that, and spends a lot of time trying to go downstream to influence the culture.

Sixth – and this is what I wrote my book about – is just the changing demographics of America, and especially of the evangelical community. It's now an exurban community, an exurban culture. You know, 90 percent of the office space built in America in the 1990s was built in these far-flung suburbs. I mentioned at lunch that the population of Pittsburgh in the '90s shrunk by 8 percent. The developed land area of Pittsburgh expanded by 43 percent – fewer people, they're just spreading out. And they're spreading out to places like Mesa, Ariz. Mesa now has more people living in it than live in St. Louis, Cincinnati or Minneapolis. Mesa will soon pass Atlanta in population. Food courts come and 500,000 people just follow.

And the culture of these places – you don't want to hear my whole hour-long riff on these places – but basically, it's influenced by the game of golf. It's a state of spiritual grace suggested by golf, which I call living at par. And when you're living at par, your DVD collection is well organized, your cell phone rate plan is well tailored to your needs, your fingernail polish matches the interior of your Lexus, you've got your life so calm and together that next to you, Dick Cheney looks bipolar.

And what has really organized the exurban culture, if I had to pick one thing – there are many obvious reasons people move out to these fast-growing suburbs: lower mortgage, shorter commute, actually, because people can work out there – but the number one reason is they want an orderly place to raise their kids. It's all about finding a place where they can feel comfortable raising their kids. And the demographics of these fast-growing suburbs are basically 1950s America. I call them Mayberrys with Blackberries. They just have very low divorce rates, very low inequality, no rich people and no poor people. It's just 1950s *Leave it to Beaver* Land out there, with incredible fertility.

One of my favorite statistics from this last election was that George Bush carried 22 of the 23 states with the highest white fertility rates and John Kerry carried the 17 states with the lowest fertility rates. And that's really not about fertility; that's about church attendance. People who attend church have more babies than people who don't.

By the way, one of the myths about evangelicals is that they're prudes. This is the other thing I always quote at every one of these meetings. The group of women in America that have the most orgasms are evangelical women, according to the University of Chicago. (Laughter.) Of course, at the University of Chicago an orgasm is a theoretical construct. (Laughter.)

So anyway, those are the causes, and then I'll just, in five minutes, run down what I think the consequences are.

One, a new leadership cohort, much more influenced by Chuck Colson than anybody else, and much less by Pat Robertson. Rick Warren is a perfect example – not a guy on TV, not sitting up there preaching and crying with a potted plant next to him – someone who is not enriching himself. Rick reverse tithes; he gives away 90 percent of his money. He gave a check to his church that compensated the church for the 25 years of income it had paid him in the first 25 years of his service. So that's a new sort of leader.

And there are other people, people I know less about or read less about but I'm curious about. One is a guy named Brian McLaren, who is part of the "emerging church," which seems to be a Gen X thing. I've read about them, but I really don't understand them. They talk about motivating younger believers, they talk about being postmodern, but at the same time they emphasize Alistair McIntyre. I'm not quite sure what it's all about, but it's something.

Then there's Rich Cizik at the National Association of Evangelicals. And then Mike Gerson, who is another perfect example of a new sort of person, less combative, more uncomfortable with the Robertson-Falwell style, but someone who is much more comfortable in the world. When you read Carl Cannon's *National Journal* article on him, it's clear that he was not in the wilderness at any point in his life. He's been working for Sen. Dan Coats and doing more things in power. Instead of protesting against the mainstream culture, he's been energetically, positively working proactively to get stuff done. So it's not as much of a contrarian attitude. So, a new leadership.

Second, there are new causes, as Rick mentioned, beyond the normal family agenda of abortion, homosexuality and vulgarity in the media. Not to say those have faded away. But if you want to cover the Republican Party and want to care about politics, it's the social conservative wing of the Republican Party that cares about poverty, and that's where the energy comes from, whether it's Rick Santorum or Dan Coates or Jim Talent.

Of course, there's the AIDS issue, which Rick is very involved in with his peace movement, and the whole focus on Africa, which Rick is also involved with, leading thousands of people over there. Chuck Colson helped in trying to get the president involved in the civil war in Sudan. Rich Cizik has been a strong proponent of creation care – the environmentalism we're beginning to

agenda beyond the normal issues to a whole range of issues, which is just something new, and part of this flowering I'm talking about.

And finally, you have a new political style. One of them, I think, is alliances and not conversion. I think a lot of social conservatives came into politics and said, "We'll win followers the way we do it in faith; we'll convert them to us." And there is now much more effort in trying to build strategic alliances with people who are fundamentally not like us but who are operationally like us on certain issues. And so there's a different political style. There's also much more comfort in feeling crossways with the traditional Republican agenda. Social conservatives, according to Andy Kohut's recent Pew data, are just much more economically moderate or liberal than other Republicans. And you begin to see it on the Social Security issue where they feel free to divert away from the Republican movements on this issue. In fact, if I were building a political majority in this country, I'd start sort of where Gary Bauer is substantively. I'd take socially conservative and economically liberal, and I think that's a lower-middle-class majority in the making, which is the opposite of what you hear, that a party should be fiscally conservative and socially liberal. I think that's not the way to build a majority.

And then finally – and I think this is the most problematic thing – the consequence of this transformation is the relationship with the mainstream culture. You know, *The Times* had a Sunday piece about a church – I think it was in Arizona – and the point of the piece was that this is "religion lite" – and you hear this all the time – and I happen to think that was overdrawn. I haven't been to that church, but for most of the people I know it seemed overdrawn, but not totally without point.

I do think there is a shopping-for-faith aspect – maybe there always has been in American culture. Henry Steele Commager had a line: "In the 19th century, religion prospered while theology slowly went bankrupt." And he meant that Americans are not doctrinal in their faith. We had presidential candidates like George Bush who switched denominations in the middle of his life, but he couldn't quite tell why. You had Howard Dean who switched denominations over a bike path. And then you had Wesley Clark who switched four or five times. And that's not atypical for Americans.

And so we're just not a doctrinal people, but I think, nonetheless – not only in mega-churches but maybe throughout American culture – you have, I think, a lightening of religion, certainly a walking-away from the old Jonathan Edwards trembling before an angry God. It's certainly more happy, more upbeat, more optimistic. And to me, one of the most interesting things about this book is the way it's both part of the culture but in some ways very counter-cultural. It's very against the culture of narcissism, the culture of "me," but on the other hand, it's not Jonathan Edwards either.

And so it's the negotiating – being part of the world and being opposed to it, marketing and at the same time sort of counter-marketing – that's the great tension and the temptation, it seems to me, looking from the outside. For a lot of the evangelical community it's the temptation to just be so easy, so undemanding and sometimes so vacuous. That is also part of the consequences.

In any case, I thought what Rick said was fantastic, and he exemplifies a lot of the changes we're seeing.

MR. CROMARTIE: Well, there's our critical response. (Laughter.) Thank you, David. Jeffrey Goldberg.

JEFFREY GOLDBERG, THE NEW YORKER: A very simple question. You mentioned the Global PEACE Plan. What's your Global PEACE Plan?

MR. WARREN: It has to do with what happened to me, and I really have to tell you the story. All my life I planned to simply pastor this church for life and train pastors. That's all I wanted to do. And so I've spent the last 20 years training about 400,000 pastors in 162 countries. I didn't want to do anything else. And all of a sudden after the book came out, two things happened. First, it brought in a ton of money. I mean, a ton of money. Second, it brought in a lot of notoriety, which I didn't really want. And I began to say, what am I supposed to do with this affluence and what am I supposed to do with this influence?



And I call it the stewardship of affluence and the stewardship of influence. And I don't think God gives you either money or fame for your own ego – particularly pastors. And so I thought, what am I supposed to do with this? And being a pastor I went to the Bible, I started reading, and I came up with two passages of scripture, one out of the New Testament on what to do with the money; one out of the Old Testament on what to do with the fame.

and share it since he's already shared it –my wife and I made five decisions. There were millions of dollars coming in on this book. And we made five decisions. Number one, we would not change our lifestyle one bit. So I didn't buy a bigger house, I don't own a second house, I don't own a yacht, I still drive a four-year-old Ford. We said we will not – no matter how much money comes in – we will not change our lifestyle.



The second thing was, as he mentioned, I stopped taking a salary from the church about two years ago. The third thing was I added up all the church had paid me in the previous five years and I gave it back, because I didn't want anybody thinking that I did this for money. And sure enough, I knew that, being in the spotlight, I would be under greater scrutiny. And the very next week either *Time* or *Newsweek* came, and the first question they asked was, "What's your salary?" And I thought, isn't that typical; they always think you're in it for the money. And I said, "Well, actually I've now served my church for free for 25 years." Got 'em! You know? (Laughter.) It's just the exact opposite of what they expected.

Then, fourth, we set up three different foundations. One is called Equipping the Church, which we use to train pastors in third-world countries. The other is called Acts of Mercy, which we use to help those infected with AIDS. And another one is called The Global PEACE Plan, which I'll share in just a second.

The fifth thing we did was become reverse tithers. When Kay and I got married 30 years ago, we began giving 10 percent of our income to charity. And each year we would raise it a percentage, because every time you give, you break the grip of materialism in your life. The only antidote to materialism is giving. It's the only way. And so the second year of our marriage we started giving 11 percent to charity, then 12 percent, then 13 percent. Every time I give it makes my heart bigger and it makes me more like Jesus. And as David said, I love Jesus.

And so, today, 30 years later, my wife and I are reverse tithers. We give away 90 percent and we live on 10. And honestly, the easiest part was what to do with the money. Last year my wife and I gave away \$13 million. That was the easiest part. The hard part was, what are we going to do with the fame? And so I began to read scripture and I came to the passage in Psalms 72 where Solomon prays for more influence. And when you read it, it sounds like a very self-centered prayer. Solomon is the wisest and wealthiest man in the world. He's the king of Israel at its apex in the United Kingdom. And he says, in Psalms 72, "I want you to make me more influential. I want you to spread my name across the nations. I want you to bless me; I want you to give me more power." It sounds like a very egotistical prayer. And yet then you read the rest of it and he says, "So that the king may support the widow and orphans, care for the oppressed, defend the defenseless, speak up for the prisoner, help the immigrant." He basically talks about all the marginalized of society.

And that was a turning point in my life two-and-a-half years ago, where God basically said to me – and I've never heard God speak audibly; it's in my mind – "The purpose of influence is to speak up for those who have no influence. The purpose of influence is to speak up for those who have no influence." And in religious terms I had to say, "God, I repent, because I can't think of the last time I thought of widows and orphans." I live in a very affluent Southern California neighborhood. There aren't any homeless people lying on the streets where I live. And I said, "I can't think of the last time I cared about the homeless."

And so I went back and I began to read scripture, and it was like blinders came off. Now, I've got three advanced degrees. I've had four years in Greek and Hebrew and I've got doctorates. And how did I miss 2,000 verses in the Bible where it talks about the poor? How did I miss that? I mean, I went to two different seminaries and a Bible school; how did I miss the 2,000 verses on the poor?

And so I began to think about this, and two years ago I was in Johannesburg, South Africa, where I was teaching this Purpose-Driven church seminar, and we simulcast it to 400 sites across the continent, and I trained in that time just about 90,000 pastors, in that one week. And after it was over I said, "Take me out to a village." So we went out to the township of Tembisa. I said, "I want to see some churches." We got to this one little church where there were 75 people in a tent – it's a tent church – 25 orphaned by AIDS and 50 adults taking care of them. And this guy walked up to me, this young pastor, and he looked at me and he said, "I know who you are." And I said, "How do you know who I am?" He said, "You're Pastor Rick." I said, "How do you know who I am?" He said, "I get your sermons every week." As I told you earlier, I put all my sermons on the Internet, and we charge Americans for them and then we translate it into other

this village." He said, "No, but they're putting the Internet in every post office in South Africa." He said, "Every weekend I walk an hour and a half to the nearest post office and I download your free sermon and then I preach it." He said, "You know, you are the only training I've ever had." And I thought, I will give the rest of my life for guys like that.

So I began to ask myself, what are the biggest problems on the planet? What are what I call the global giants, the problems that are so big they seem impossible to solve; the problems that are so big the United States of America can't solve them; they're so big the United Nations can't solve them; they're so big they affect billions of people, not millions? And I came to the conclusion that there were five. There were five global giants. And here's what – in my opinion, as I've traveled around the world – are the five biggest problems.

The first one is spiritual emptiness. Billions of people in this world do not know that their life is not an accident. There are accidental parents but there are no accidental children. There are illegitimate parents but there are no illegitimate children, and there is a purpose for every person's life. And they don't know that, and they don't know that God made them for a purpose.

Number two – this one surprises people but it is the source of all of our other problems – egocentric leadership. That is the second global giant: self-centered, self-serving, instead of leadership like Jesus, which says, "Lay down your life for your sheep." Servant leadership – the leaders serves. The world is full of little Saddams. They are in every nation, they're in every community, they're in every church, they're in every business, they're in every academic setting, they're in every homeowner's association. Give a guy a little bit of power and it goes to his head and he becomes a dictator. And he doesn't understand that I exist as a leader for the people, not vice-versa.

The third is poverty. Half the world lives on less than \$2 a day. We're working on the first national model of the PEACE Plan right now in Rwanda, where the average income is 68 cents a day.

The fourth major problem is disease – the fourth global giant. What is amazing to me is that the diseases that are killing and still affecting billions of people we found the cures for in the 19th and 20th century and now it's the 21st century. And it is unconscionable. We know the cure for yellow fever, we know the cure for malaria, polio, measles, mumps, leprosy, and even AIDS. We don't have a cure for it, but it is 100 percent preventable because it is a behavioral disease – 100 percent preventable. And we just don't have the leaders who have the courage and the guts to do something about it – the conviction, the character and the courage to do it.

And then the fifth is illiteracy – illiteracy and ignorance, lack of education. Half the world is still functionally illiterate, and how are they going to make a living in the 21st century if they can't read or write?

Now, I'll tell you my bias. I believe these problems are so big that only the church is big enough to handle it – the millions and millions and millions and millions of local churches that are spread around. There is more distribution of them than all the Wal-Marts and K-Marts and Starbucks and McDonalds put together. I could take you to a million villages around the world that don't have a school, don't have a grocery store, don't have a hospital, don't have a post office, but they've got a church. And we are now working with the 400,000 pastors that I've trained globally to build a network to do the PEACE Plan. And we're privately testing it right now in 47 countries. I have 4,500 of my members on the field right now in 47 countries that have visited the field.

And the PEACE Plan is an acronym. "P" is "Partner with churches"; you find a church in the area to partner with, or you plant a church if there isn't one there. "E" is "Equip leaders." And we're equipping leaders in a way that is culturally relevant — not Western-style leadership but Jesus-style leadership. "A" is "Assist the poor," and in assisting the poor, you've heard the phrase, "Don't give a man a fish; teach him to fish." That's not good enough. If all you do is teach a man to fish, what you do is you create a village of fisherman, so they all live on subsistence living. You must raise the economic standard. You must teach them not only how to make a fish; you need to teach them how to sell a fish – teach them free enterprise. That way not everybody's a fisherman and some people can specialize and the economy begins to grow. "C" is "Care for the sick," and "E" is "Educate the next generation."

And we've actually created what we call clinic-in-a-box, business-in-a-box, church-in-a-box, and we are using normal people, volunteers. When Jesus sent the disciples – this will be my last point – when Jesus sent the disciples into a village he said, "Find the man of peace." And he said, "When you find the man of peace you start working with that person, and if they respond to you, you work with them. If they don't, you dust the dust off your shoes; you go to the next village." Who's the man of peace in any village – or it might be a woman of peace – who has the most respect, they're open and they're influential? They don't have to be a Christian. In fact, they could be a Muslim, but they're open and they're influential and you work with them to attack the five giants. And that's going to bring the second Reformation.

the argument that David was alluding to, that there isn't theological rigor always pervading that tradition? Mike Gerson, for instance, is somebody I've heard make this argument before. That's why, for him, *First Things*, the Catholic magazine, is far more influential than any sort of evangelical publication, and that's why he genuflects in the direction of somebody like John Dilulio. (Laughter.)



MR. WARREN: *First Things* is a great magazine. I read it cover to cover. But let me just say this – I agree with half of what Mark Noll says, but Mark is an academic and he's writing about an academic culture. He doesn't have the slightest idea what's happening in local churches. For instance, in our church, to be one of those 9,200 lay leaders you have to take a 52-week systematic theology course. And he doesn't know that. And so, I'm just saying, what you say in an ivory tower is often not the reality in the local church.

MR. FOER: And the second part, what percentage of your church do you estimate voted for John Kerry? And, given the move to the left – or what you might call the left – on poverty, do you foresee anything that the Democratic Party could do to increase its share of the evangelical vote?

MR. WARREN: Well, in the first place, I do not believe it's healthy for any one party to be co-opted by any one particular thing. I don't think that's healthy at all. I am an American; I believe in pluralism, and I don't think we need a God party. I really don't believe that at all. In fact, notice in my definition of evangelicals I didn't say anything about political views – I mentioned what evangelicals believe about Jesus and the Bible, but I could show you evangelicals who believe the exact opposite thing politically in my own church. Now, I'm in Orange County; what do you expect? But I'll just tell you, I am not interested in any policymaking, but as a pastor I minister to politicians on both sides of the aisle, including this last year both the president and John Kerry. Both of them.

And so, I'm not interested in trying to play policymaker; I'm trying to play pastor, which means asking questions like "How's your life doing?" In my own church I would imagine almost none of those people – maybe 15 percent – voted for Kerry. But, again, part of the issue is that there is no such thing as red state, blue state. There really isn't, okay? If anything, it's red county, blue county. You know, 2,500 counties went for the president, 500 counties went for Kerry. But they were almost equal in population. It was urban values versus the rest of America. My state, California, is not a blue state. It's all red except for the urban areas.

DAN HARRIS, ABC NEWS: Let me actually try to take a crack at what Frank was getting at. What's your reaction to another best-selling author, whose name hasn't been mentioned, Jim Wallis, who is, like you, critical of the religious right, but much more so. What's your take on his book?



MR. WARREN: Well, I think Jim Wallis proves the exact point I just made, that there are evangelicals at opposite ends politically. I would say this: if you're talking about what David said, where there are socially conservative values in terms of morality and more moderate values regarding the role of government, yes, there might be that. That's definitely growing. And I would say this – I even mentioned earlier, one of the trends is evangelicals are finally coming back to the table and speaking out about the poor, the sick, the environment and other issues that they took off the table when they basically said, "We're only going to care about moral issues – quote, 'personal moral issues.'" Those other issues are moral issues too. The environment is a moral issue.

MR. CROMARTIE: One of the criticisms of Jim's book has been that he says that evangelicals care only about these two issues and yet, from what we've heard Rick and others say, there's this whole array of issues that evangelicals comment on.

I've got Josh Green up next.

JOSHUA GREEN, THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY: You said you don't consider yourself part of the religious right and maybe churches aren't political, and yet, you know, Karl Rove, the president's advisor, whom a lot of us put a lot of stock in, made a point of trying to attract – and apparently did attract – the evangelical vote. So what exactly is your take on the 2004 election?



"born again" won – everybody since Carter. And that shows the difference in politics, but Carter, then Reagan-Reagan, Clinton-Clinton, Bush-Bush, all eight elections, a guy who claimed to be born again won the election. America, in the last half of this century, elects born-again presidents.

Reagan has been to my church. And both Reagan and Bush number one would tell you privately they were born again.

MR. BROOKS: On George the elder, I loved when he was asked during the election, "What did you think about while you were floating in the Pacific after you got shot down out of the sky?" He said, "I was thinking about God – and the separation of church and state." (Laughter.) You could see the politician in his head.

But back to this past election, just on the voting we all know that Bush won 98 of the 100 fastest-growing counties in the country, and one of the things – aside from the faith, which we can explore in a million ways – one of the values of those counties, as I said, is social order and orderly places for raising kids. And to me, the importance of the churches is people move out to these counties, they have no community; they have no place to get together, and the first thing they do when they get there is to build a church so they'll have a place to get together. And what I think Rove understood was that it's very hard to reach those people because they're atomized – they just got there. One way to reach those people is through the churches, and a lot of it is just preaching traditional family values through the churches.



The other thing – this is apropos to nothing – but to me, it was Rove's most brilliant stroke of the whole election: the other place they get together is health clubs, and the Republicans advertise on a little screen on the StairMaster machines. (Laughter.) And I thought that was ingenious.

But anyway, the churches are community centers as much as worship centers.

WENDY KAMINER, THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY: I'm having a hard time articulating my question because it's kind of a large one. I want to understand what you mean when you talk about seeing a Third Great Awakening. When you were talking about your own beginnings you talked about starting in your house and not having a building and working for 15 years without one. And I was reminded, while you were talking, of AA, which started the same way, which has God knows how many people, which still doesn't have a building, which is clearly purpose-driven; it's just not Jesus-centered, and it's had to be very non-doctrinal in order to be as large as it is.



MR. WARREN: Right.

MS. KAMINER: And then you also asked whether America would return to its religious roots? I'm not sure it ever left its religious roots, but that's a different question. But if you look at the Colonial period, there's not a lot of religion, really, and that's why there is a First Great Awakening, and why it's news. And then you have the Second Great Awakening – you have the 19th century, and there's quite a lot of religious experimentation, and the Second Great Awakening is about individual salvation, as you say.

So I'm guessing that you're saying that this Third Great Awakening is going to be the coalescing of progressive interest in the social gospel with sort of revivalist interest in individual salvation. And this brings me to something that David really hinted at. It's still, for you, very Jesus-centered, and it's still very focused on saving individual souls as well as doing all of this global work. How are you going to protect yourself from all the influences of culture? You say that culture comes before law; I would say culture and law work in tandem, and I would also say that religion and culture work in tandem. I think that's always been true historically.

MR. CROMARTIE: Like some of the concerns Alan Wolfe brought up when we had him here.

MR. WARREN: Yeah, I've talked to Alan about this, several times in fact.

You know, 500 years ago, the first Reformation with Luther and then Calvin, was about beliefs. I think a new reformation is going to be about behavior. The first Reformation was about creeds; I think this one will be about deeds. I think the first one was about what the church believes; I think this one will be about what the church does.

The first Reformation actually split Christianity into dozens and then hundreds of different segments. I think this one is actually going to bring them together. Now, you're never going to get Christians, of all their stripes and varieties, to agree on all of the different doctrinal disputes and things like that, but what I am seeing them agree on are the purposes of the church. And I find great uniformity in the fact that I see this happening all the time. Last week I spoke to 4,000 pastors at my church who came from over 100 denominations in over 50 countries. Now, that's wide spread. We had Catholic priests, we had Pentecostal ministers, we had Lutheran bishops, we had Anglican bishops, we had Baptist preachers. They're all there together and you know what? I'd never get them to agree on communion or baptism or a bunch of stuff like that, but I could get them to agree on what the church should be doing in the world.

And the way I expressed it is that the Bible calls the church the body of Christ, and what's happened in the last 100 years is that the hands and the feet have been amputated and the church has just been a mouth, and primarily it's been known for what it's against. It's been known for what it's against. And I am working toward a second Reformation of the church which could create a Third Great Awakening in our nation or world, and it may not happen in America; it may not.

All of the growth of Christianity, as you know right now, is South of the Equator, whether it's in South America, South Asia or Africa, south of the Sahara. And so that's where the future of Christianity is. There's no doubt about it in my mind. And so I'm more concerned as a pastor about the church, but I think if there's a Reformation there, it could lead to a spiritual awakening in the world. And I do see signs of it in that people are hungry. How do you explain a book by a pastor selling now over 25 million copies? And that's in English. The book has sold over 30 million copies worldwide. And I'm not even a writer.

I tell you, there's nothing in the book that's new – not a single thing in the book that's new, that's not in historic Christianity over the last 2,000 years. I just happened to say it in a simple way.



ELSA WALSH, THE NEW YORKER: So are you saying doctrine won't be important or is not important if you bring together all these –

MR. WARREN: No, no. I think, though, it's what Augustine said: "In the essentials, unity; in the non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity." And I think that's how evangelicals and Catholics can get together. And I don't know if you know this or not, but fundamentalists and Pentecostals don't like each other, okay? They don't. But they could get together.

"In the essentials, unity; in the non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."

SARAH WILDMAN, THE AMERICAN PROSPECT: I'll try to be quick, although I think my two or three questions are sort of unconnected. What about people who don't have Jesus in their lives, if you could address that sort of generally, and then also, do you see this Reformation involving conversion? And then also, how do you see people responding to this in the wake of, say, the tsunami this year? How does the purpose-driven life connect to natural disaster?

MR. WARREN: Before you go to the third, let me answer those two. First, on the answer to the first one, everybody is betting their life on something. Every one of you are betting your life on something. You're all doing it. Every one of you are betting your life on something. I'm betting my life that Jesus was right when he said, "No one comes to the Father but by me." Now, I may be wrong, but I'm betting my life that he knew more about it than I do. And that's all I can say.

On the other issue, on the Tsunami, I'll give you an example. I think Saddleback Church may be the most generous church in America. I wasn't even there the week the tsunami happened, but here's how that network works. I knew about the tsunami probably before any of you did because I was up at 4:30 in the morning on my computer, and a Purpose Driven church in Sri Lanka – the largest church in Sri Lanka, actually; it runs 5,000 people – sent me a note that said, "Rick, we just had an earthquake two minutes ago." He said, "Inevitably there will be a tidal wave. Before the tidal wave hit, we had already released churches headed for the coast to work on that because of the network that we have now using the Internet."

Why? Because what Martin Luther nailed to the wall of the Wittenberg door somebody pulled off the wall and started reprinting. The Reformation would have never happened without the technology to make it possible. We now have a new technology which allows global networking between millions of local churches. It's called the Internet.

So when I got that information from the pastor, we immediately did two things. First, we released churches all over India, Southeast Asia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, in our network – immediately going to the coast to start cleaning up, for instance, Buddhist temples that we knew were going to be destroyed and stuff like that. And the second thing was, I had announced in our church about people giving to the tsunami, and on the basis of a one-minute announcement, our church gave a million-and-a-half dollars to the tsunami, just like that.

So then we put out an email. I have an email newsletter called Rick's Toolbox that goes out every Monday to almost 147,000 pastors. And I write a little note every Monday. I sit in my pajamas, hit the button, it goes to 147,000 pastors. "You guys want to help out on the tsunami?" Boom, tons of money is coming in, and it's just all going back out.

MS. WILDMAN: I guess what I meant was not so much response as how do you reconcile the numbers of dead in terms of a "purpose-driven" life?

MR. WARREN: Well, that's the question Larry King asks me every time I go on his show. Larry has the same question: why do bad things happen to good people? Here's the bottom line. We live in a broken world. This is not heaven; this is earth. That's why we're to pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," because it's done perfectly in heaven – not here. Life is not fair. The Bible doesn't say it's fair. In fact, it's very unfair. And that's why I happen to believe in an afterlife. If Hitler doesn't get his just rewards, then life is not fair. And there are a lot of things that are not fair in this world. The Bible says that every time I make a bad choice it has negative implications on somebody. Now, that has implications in the fact that the world is broken, and as a result, there are hurricanes and there are tornadoes and there are all kinds of things – because Christian theology says the world is broken. And God grieves as much over that as we do.

MR. CROMARTIE: One of the topics that did not come up during our advisors meeting is the problem of suffering and evil in the world, and that certainly would take at least a whole afternoon session.

MR. WARREN: And brighter minds than mine have thought on that one.

JUAN WILLIAMS, NPR: Picking up on this business about the disagreements between the fundamentalists and the Pentecostals, I mean, this struck me as news because when journalists write about it, we go to people like Robertson and Falwell to represent the evangelicals. And that's the way it comes across, so it strikes me that we're ill informed or you're wrong. (Chuckles.) And secondly, that you're not using this God-given influence you spoke of, because your influence is not showing up in the American media in terms of supplanting people who you would tell us are bogus.

MR. WARREN: Well, I tell you, that's the reason I accepted this meeting, because I'm just tired of having other people represent me and represent the hundreds of thousands of churches where the pastors I've trained would nowhere, no way, relate to some of the supposed spokesmen of a previous generation.

Now the word "fundamentalist" actually comes from a document in the 1920s called the Five Fundamentals of the Faith. And it is a very legalistic, narrow view of Christianity, and when I say there are very few fundamentalists, I mean in the sense that they are all actually called fundamentalist churches, and those would be quite small. There are no large ones.

MR. WILLIAMS: Bob Jones is not a mega-church?

MR. WARREN: No, no, no, no, no. Bob Jones is not a mega-church. That's right exactly, it's not, and that group is shrinking more and more and more. On the other hand, Pentecostalism and charismatic evangelicalism is growing by leaps and bounds. It's growing huge all over the world. And so that's the movement that's growing.

MR. WILLIAMS: What's the difference between a fundamentalist and a Pentecostal?

MR. WARREN: A fundamentalist would deny the miraculous today. They would – for instance, one of the hallmarks of a Pentecostal would be praying for miracles of healing and speaking in an unknown tongue and things like that. Those would be hallmarks of Pentecostalism and fundamentalists would say, "Oh no, all that stuff died at the end of the New Testament." They would not accept the miraculous today.

MR. WILLIAMS: So what's the difference between you and the fundamentalists?

MR. WARREN: Well, I don't agree with that. I believe there are miracles today.

MR. WARREN: That would be true. A fundamentalist basically would look at many others in Christianity and say, "You're not even a Christian." They'd say it about Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics. You know – even evangelicals. It's interesting – maybe 15-20 years ago, Falwell stopped calling himself a fundamentalist, and actually left the fundamentalist fellowship, and he went and joined the Southern Baptist Convention – which is as wide – I mean you can find anything in that.

MR. CROMARTIE: Well, let me ask John, do you have any data on this?

JOHN DIULIO, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA: Rick's absolutely right. As I said this morning, just disaggregate the demographics on the evangelical community, and you find intergenerational differences in opinions. Boston College's Alan Wolfe, writing for *The Atlantic Monthly*, did a long article a number of years ago on the interesting intra-group differences among evangelicals. It was essentially correct. Rick Warren represents evangelicals who are pro-life, pro-family and pro-poor. For him and millions more evangelicals the pro-poor part is every bit as important as the other two parts. A majority of evangelicals are with him.

MR. WILLIAMS: So on abortion, you're strongly pro-life; is that right?

MR. WARREN: Sure, I am. It's just not the only thing on the agenda. Of course, if I believe every child is born for a purpose – and in Psalm 139 it says, "I formed you for a purpose in your mother's womb" – then obviously I would believe that abortion short circuits a person's purpose. Sure, but that's not the only issue.

A lot of political issues are really what I call heart projection. That is, in the book, I talk about how we're all wired different ways to care about different things. If we all cared about the same thing, a lot would get undone in the world. For instance, I don't know anybody who doesn't believe that the environment isn't important, but some people really care about the environment – it's like they're rabid about it. Well, fine. I think it's important to take care of the environment; it's just not my passion. Some people are really rabid about protecting the rights of the unborn. I happen to believe the rights of the unborn need to be protected, but I'm just not rabid about it. I happen to be rabid about some other things. Why? Because we're all passionate about different things.

Now, what happens is, when I force you to say you must feel as passionate as I do about this particular issue, whether you're a believer or not, then that's going to create political conflict.

MR. WILLIAMS: It's interesting that you don't mention race in your global plan. And it just strikes me, given what you've told us about the southern hemisphere, race is a major issue, immigration is a major issue, the treatment of minorities in these mostly white areas, the fact that your church is in Orange County – these are major issues.

MR. WARREN: Well, I didn't have time, Juan, to get into the "A" of the PEACE PLAN. Part of the "Assist the Poor" is justice – a justice task force. My wife has been in Cambodia and in Laos basically to get kids out of forced prostitution, things like that. And I guess the reason I didn't mention the race thing is because we look at it in terms of a justice issue, not a racial issue. Of the 4,000 pastors I met with this last week, 500 of them were black. I'm going to go do 40 Days of Purpose in a citywide campaign in Philadelphia with 250 black churches. I'm not even thinking that that's an issue with us. We – black and white in the church – need to be fighting together on some other issues.

REBECCA HAGGERTY, NBC DATELINE: A couple questions. I hope that some of them can be brief. I'm interested in what your small groups do. I'm interested in what your denominational background was – what you grew up as and if Saddleback is a part of a particular denomination. And if you could also expand on the ideas you've mentioned about a Third Great Awakening and a "Second Reformation" – whether you think that that's coming in religious life?

MR. WARREN: Well, okay, let me start backwards. On the Great Awakening, I am just seeing signs that people are more open to spirituality and talking about God than they've ever been before. When I went to Harvard a month ago, I honestly expected a pretty hostile audience – I'm an evangelical pastor and I'm going into Harvard. And I went in and I spoke four times and they gave me a standing ovation.

And the faculty sat and all the deans sat in the front row and I just took hot-seat questions for an hour and a half and they broadcast it on C-SPAN, and I found not skepticism, I found this attitude of "tell me more, tell me more." It was like pouring water on a parched piece of land, and I found incredible spiritual receptivity. It was the exact opposite of what I expected. And I mean, David Gergen was there and afterwards we were talking about it, and I'm going, "That's not what I expected to happen." You know, I got invited to speak at this Aspen Ideas Institute. And I'm going, what's an evangelical pastor going to this for? Well, evidently somebody's not afraid of us anymore.

party and I want you to invite all your secular elite friends from Manhattan and let me talk to them." And he goes, "Okay." (Chuckles.) So he sends out a list, he invited 350 people, who's who in Manhattan to the top of the Rainbow Room, and I went up there and you know, I just started talking to them – again, standing ovation. And I'm asking, as I talk to these people, "Have you ever met an honest evangelical?" And the response is, "Well, no, I live in Manhattan." Of course not, everything stops this side of the Hudson. It's like, is there anything else in America? And that's why David's book was so valuable in pointing out that there is another conversation out there, folks.

And here's an interesting thing. My book sold 18 million copies before it got its first review. What does that say about media?

MS. HAGGERTY: And your small groups – are they Bible studies?

MR. WARREN: Yes, they are. And we actually use a video-based study where we study a curriculum and then they meet all different times of the week.

MS. HAGGERTY: And your denomination when you grew up?

MR. WARREN: My father was a Baptist pastor. I grew up in little tiny churches of less than 50 people. I call myself an evangelical.

MS. HAGGERTY: Also, briefly can I throw in another one? You brought up gay marriage, so what do you think on the topic of gay marriage?

MR. WARREN: I don't accept gay marriage. I don't think that a gay relationship is exactly what God wants in life. But I don't think that homosexuality is the worst sin. The Bible says it's not. The Bible says the worst sin is pride. Pride is what got Satan kicked out of heaven. The Bible says pride goes before destruction of the body and a haughty spirit before a fall. So, you know what? In looking at a hierarchy of evil, I would say homosexuality is not the worst sin. But I would also say homosexuality is not natural. I think that there are certain parts of a body that are made to fit together. (Laughter.)

MS. HAGGERTY: Do you think marriage needs the protection of government?

MR. WARREN: You know, I talked to Aaron Brown about this – it's funny, I was interviewed on *NewsNight* one time, and he was talking to me – because he was very threatened by this, and he said, "You know what? I'm worried about the tyranny of the majority." And I said, "Aaron, tell me about this," and he grew up as the only Jewish family in some town in Michigan or whatever. And he said, "I've always worried about the tyranny of the majority." I said, "Well, I can understand where you're coming from."

What I worry about is the tyranny of activist judges, who completely keep throwing out what the majority says. Are we a democracy or not? Do we have a right to vote? And do my votes not count? Or can any single judge just consistently throw out what a majority of people have voted? Is this a democracy or not? I believe in a pluralistic America, and you know what? A lot of times in a pluralistic America, I lose. I lose because I don't get my way all the time. And you know what? That's okay. I'm willing to put up with the fact that I often lose in a pluralistic America because it grants me the freedom. And I believe that everybody has a right to be at the table. I think a gay person has the right to make their case and I think I have a right to make my case. And I think that in a democracy, we have a right to vote on it. I do not believe in judges who go out and find all kinds of excuses to thwart the will of the majority.

By the way, my wife and I had dinner at a gay couple's home two weeks ago. So I'm not homophobic guy, okay? We had dinner with a gay couple because we are heavily involved in helping people infected and afflicted by AIDS and we've given millions to it. So I'm no homophobic guy. I just don't believe it's God's will.

JANE EISNER, PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER: I'd like to go back to Sarah's question because, frankly, I don't think you answered it, and maybe I can rephrase it. Day 15 of the *Purpose Driven Life* says, "You were formed for God's family. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ." And then you ask, "How can I start treating other believers like members of my own family?" So does this belief mean that non-believers are outside the family? And what then happens to non-believers in a pluralistic America?

MR. WARREN: Good question. When I was born physically, I automatically became a part of the human race. I didn't have a choice. The moment I was born, I became a part of the human race. I didn't become a part of somebody's family until somebody chose to take me home from the hospital. There was a choice that was involved. So I was a part of the human race, but I wasn't a part of the Warren family until my parents decided to keep me. They could have decided not to keep me and I would have been a part of something else. I believe every person is created by

MS. EISNER: What happens to those people who don't make that choice and where do they fit into a country that, in your view, is experiencing a spiritual awakening, and is going to be doing things based on those sets of beliefs?

MR. WARREN: Okay, first, do you have to be a believer to be an American? No, obviously not. And I would fight with Muslim-Americans, and Jewish-Americans, and secular Americans, and atheist Americans – I'd fight together for our country. There's no doubt about that. So we're talking about two different issues. We're talking about the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. And I don't believe they're the same thing.

My job is not to save America as a pastor. My job is to save Americans – individuals. Kingdoms, countries come and go. This is why the Catholic Church really had it right in so many ways. How many nations have come and gone in the last two thousand years? I believe with all my heart that if history goes on for the next thousand years, the United States may not be here, but the church will be here, because it's not a temporary institution. I believe it is God's family that will go on for eternity. And I believe that all human forms of government eventually decline. So that's why I don't place my faith in who is going to get elected because –

MS. EISNER: But, I mean, with all due respect, I belong to a tradition that contends that it's been here for 5,760 years.

MR. WARREN: Well, if you're Jewish, then you're my cousin, okay?

MS. EISNER: But you may think that predicates a purpose in life, a belief in Jesus Christ, and a belief in an afterlife. If I don't share those beliefs, I mean, where am I?

MR. WARREN: You know what? I believe I'm going to hell. I believe I'm going to hell if I don't do what God tells me to do. And as I said earlier, I believe everybody's betting their life on something – you're betting your life that Jesus was wrong. I'm betting my life that he was right.

E.J. DIONNE JR., THE WASHINGTON POST: Well, what happens to those who – because that's the question – who don't make your bet? What is your belief about what happens to the people who don't make your bet?



MR. WARREN: My belief is that people who don't accept what Jesus said will end up where Jesus said they'd go. And if you have a problem with that, it's not a problem with me. It's a problem with what Jesus said. I believe to go to hell you have to do the impossible: you have to reject the love of God. I believe that God came to earth in a human form 2,000 years ago, that he split history into A.D. and B.C., that even if you don't accept that Jesus was who he said he was, every time you write a date you use his life as a reference point – A.D. and B.C. And I believe that he came to earth because he wanted to show us what God is like.

I have a hard time relating to an impersonal force in the sky that's like, "May the force be with you." I need a God with skin on it. I need to see what it's like – it's kind of like for me to understand God without some kind of human form would be like an ant trying to understand the Internet.

MS. KAMINER: But what about the civic answer to Jane's question?

MR. WARREN: Well, okay, but I'm not giving the civic answer.

MS. KAMINER: But I think there's a civic component to her question.

(Cross talk.)

MR. WARREN: The civic answer is – are you an equal citizen? One hundred percent. And in our country, I will defend your right to believe something the exact opposite of what I believe.

MR. WILLIAMS: But what about some of the laws that say otherwise?

MR. WARREN: There is no law in America that tells you what to believe.

MS. KAMINER: No, but what if this majority that you respect passes laws that codify the majority's religious beliefs?

MR. WARREN: Here's what I think – I think we owe all of our freedoms to the Judeo-Christian heritage.

MR. CROMARTIE: I may have lost control. I need to go to the Jacuzzi; you all continue. Let me

for more than five minutes in the history of the church, and so to give it the kind of attention it deserves may require a reception and a sunset and drinks.

MS. EISNER: I still don't feel satisfied from the civic perspective. I know that this isn't about persuading one or the other of us that we're right theologically, and I understand that. But I think that – as I understand the history of our government, its main purpose is to protect minorities of whatever sort there are. It doesn't always do that, but that is what it is about. And you know, one could feel left out of this purpose-driven life theologically. And one could also feel left out civically, if the values that are stated here, particularly the belief that not only frankly, am I right – I realize that you feel like you're betting on it – but that I am compelled to tell others, if those values infringe on the rights and the stability of the minority.

MR. WARREN: Well, I obviously believe in total religious liberty. I would say this: religious liberty does not mean removing any sign of religion out of the public square –

MS. KAMINER: That's not the question. Let's take something trivial – let's take the blue laws. Let's take that businesses have to close on Sundays because for the majority Sunday's a holy day. So suddenly the minority has to observe this holy day of rest.

MR. WARREN: I would be against blue laws myself.

MS. KAMINER: Now, that's a very trivial example, but that's the kind of question. What happens when this majority that comes out of this Great Awakening starts to codify its religious beliefs into law that the entire population is supposed to obey?

MR. WARREN: Well, I would say that what came out of the previous Great Awakenings were women's right to vote, the abolition of slavery and all kinds of other major freedoms in America.

MS. KAMINER: That's simplistic.

MR. WARREN: No, it's not simplistic; that's history.

MS. KAMINER: There are a lot of reasons why you have feminism and slavery being –

MR. WARREN: But it's not simplistic because every major movement like that for freedom was led by pastors, including all the way up to the most recent one with Martin Luther King. Historically, it's not seculars; it's pastors who have worked for women's freedom, have worked for racial freedom, have worked for the right to vote – every single freedom movement in America in history was led by religious leaders, not by secular leaders.

MR. WILLIAMS: When you were attacking judges a moment ago, you didn't give any thought to the idea that judges and the Constitution protect the rights of minorities. Instead you portrayed them as activist judges. In fact, if you'd had an election on the end of slavery, I'm not sure how it would have turned out. And as for women's right to vote, I know they would have lost.

MS. EISNER: This is your Harvard audience.

(Laughter.)

MR. CROMARTIE: I'm going to let others in. We need to keep moving. Anne?

ANNE KORNBLUT, THE NEW YORK TIMES:
People keep going down the issues with you and you've done abortion and gay marriage. Can I ask you where you are on the death penalty and stem cell research? I'm just curious actually whether there are any issues where you find yourself diverging from the mainstream or the standard evangelical position.

MR. WARREN: Let me ask you this – if I answer that question to your disagreement, will it affect our relationship to each other?



MS. KORNBLUT: I have no idea what you're talking about. (Laughter.) No, I'm just curious whether you have –

MR. WARREN: I'm saying for you, is that a make-or-break issue? See, it's not for me. I am firmly a cultural conservative. There is no doubt about that. I'm just more than the four issues that have been brought up – okay? In other words, I'm a right-to-life person. I'm very firm on that. I believe that everybody makes a decision on these issues based on their values. I happen to base my values on certain values that I get out of the scriptures. Other people base their values on some other beliefs. Everybody makes a value-based judgment.

MS. KORNBLUT: No, but do you think he has any major failings?

MR. WARREN: Of course he does. One example would be, I think that the AIDS issue itself needs to be pushed harder. On the issue of the 15 billion dollars that was committed, you know there's a difference between a president saying, "We need this," and then it getting appropriated and then it getting allocated in the budget – you know that's just one of the three steps. And I would like to have seen more push on the second and third step. I mean, it's one thing to get credit for something, it's another thing to push it through. And I would say that I would like to see more of that.

That's a big issue with me because I care about Africa a great deal. In Africa, there are right now 14 million children orphaned by AIDS. I have been there. I have been in those orphanages all over Africa and that number is going to grow to 40 million in the next 20 years. And can you imagine 40 million children growing up without mommies and daddies? That is anarchy waiting to happen. That's an entire continent sliding off into the desert and into the ocean. And whether the government does anything about it or not, if the church doesn't do anything about that – I think 100 years from now, we'll look back on the Christian church today and say, "What were you thinking?" The same way that I look back on the church that allowed 300 years of slavery and I say, "What were you thinking? How did you allow 300 years of slavery and not do anything about it and you were reading the same Bible I read?"

JILL LAWRENCE, USA TODAY: Okay, try to imagine for a minute being one of these minorities – Jewish or Black or Hispanic or somebody who lives in a city who isn't part of the majority in the last two presidential elections – looking at someone like you who has a church of 20 to 25 thousand people, who has sold 25 million books, who has trained tens of thousands of pastors in the United States, whose sermons are read every weekend all across the United States – and then knowing that you said 85 percent of your church voted for George Bush?

MR. WARREN: I just guessed that. I don't know.

MS. LAWRENCE: I mean, this is like a huge political force – you know – looking at it here. And I'm just curious about how explicit you get or how signals are sent within your congregation. Is it an accident that 85 percent voted Republican?

MR. WARREN: It's Orange County.

MS. LAWRENCE: Do you ever talk about the election campaign? Do you ever talk about the judicial filibuster? I mean, how do you –

MR. WARREN: No, no, because God called me to be a pastor, not a politician. If I believed you could change the world through politics, I'd run for government. But I don't think you ultimately change people's hearts through legislation. I think you change people's hearts through personal transformation.

MR. CROMARTIE: So your church is not political?

MR. WARREN: Not at all.

MR. CROMARTIE: Does your church have a Wednesday night debate politically?

MR. WARREN: No. We would not do a "Justice Sunday." Why? Because I have to shepherd everybody. I have a church full of both Republicans and Democrats. And you know what, I love them all. And I don't care how they vote; I still love them. And that's my job – I'm not a politician, I'm a pastor.

MR. CROMARTIE: Let me interrupt you. This may support one of your points, David, about the new evangelical leadership in that Rick does not politicize his church explicitly the way earlier religious conservatives like Falwell turned Sunday services into political campaigns. Am I right?

MR. BROOKS: Oh, I would say there are two sides to Rick. One is the side that's not particularly new and maybe not that particularly interesting, which is that he is a cultural conservative, and we've established that in the last hour.

MR. WARREN: Surprise.

MR. BROOKS: But then there's another side to Rick, which is very interesting. So far we haven't really explored that.

MS. LAWRENCE: So your whole congregation voted not for the guy who wanted to pledge much more money to AIDS, but for the guy who went back on his promise.

MR. WARREN: Well, here's what I think. I happen to agree with the liberals on many of their goals. I just happen to disagree with their solutions. For instance, I agree with a lot of the goals

MR. CROMARTIE: Well, let me interrupt you there, Rick, because I want to get others in on this question if I could. I really do want to get everybody in and we're not going to take a break – take your own – because if we take a break, I don't know what will happen. (Laughter.)

JOHN PARKER, THE ECONOMIST: My question is a change from our current emphasis. Do you think it is a myth that mega-churches are basically suburban community makers?

MR. WARREN: Well, it is a myth that they're just in the suburbs, that's for sure. Most of the inner city mega-churches tend to be black. They're all my good friends, but they do tend to be black because you only build a church on the people who are wherever you are. So for instance, probably 25 percent of my church is Asian. Why? Because the University of California-Irvine is 80 percent Asian. So I've got a church full of Asians. We've got less than one percent black where I live in my part of the county but 100 percent of them attend Saddleback church. They all go to Saddleback. My personal prayer partner for the last 24 years is an African-American. One-third of Orange County is Spanish-speaking. Saddleback has started 21 Spanish-speaking churches and we have a Spanish-speaking congregation in our church. We actually have 22 different services in our church appealing to all different kinds of ages, styles of music. If you were to come this Sunday, you could come and you could hear me speak, but you could choose whether you're going to go to the reggae service – we actually have reggae music, or you can go to the jazz service or you can go to the black gospel service. You can go to the unplugged service. You say, why do you do that? I can't even get my own family to agree on music, much less 22,000 people. What's wrong with that? You know, we all like different styles of music, so we have different styles of music in our services – it allows people to choose. But I would say our church accurately reflects the demographics of the community. We're Asian, we're Spanish, we're a few blacks, and we're white.

MR. CROMARTIE: Thank you. And, John, thank you for the shortest question of the day. E.J.?

MR. DIONNE: I have a whole bunch of questions. You pick the ones you want to answer. Number one, how does Peter Drucker fit in? Number two, how can you avoid politics – and I mean in the large sense; not just go to a convention and endorse candidates – but how can you avoid politics given the problems you care about, since in a sense your very criticism of Falwell and Robertson is itself in some sense political?

Third question, if it's possible to talk about this without going on and on, how does the sort of person who is coming to your church now compare with the kind of person who would come to your church 25 years ago? And then the other two really quickly: are you a para-church movement despite yourself? And I'd love you to answer Anne's question on the death penalty, and we'll love you anyway no matter what you say.

MR. WARREN: Let me just say that I'm having the time of my life here – I live for this kind of discussion. Most of the time when I do interviews, I get the lamest questions. These are serious questions. I mean, you guys are really asking fundamentally important questions. And we don't have to agree on it, but at least we're talking about it. So I'm having a good time with this. Let me go back down the list, E.J.

The first one was Drucker. I recognized, as the church began to grow – you know I was 25 years old when I started the church – that I needed mentors in my life. And so I've had spiritual mentors – like Billy Graham, who has been a spiritual mentor to me, my own father was a spiritual mentor to me, other people that you would know. But I happened to be, probably 20 years ago, at a philanthropy conference, and I just met Drucker, and he said something that I thought was very important. He said, "The purpose of management is not to make the church more business-like, but to make it more church-like." And I thought, that's what I want because I don't think churches should be a business. I think fundamentally that's the wrong motif; the church is a family, it's built on relationship.

And so I began to go to him for advice on how to lead something that's exploding in growth. He's been very helpful to me. He is a Christian, by the way. I asked him one time, "How and when did you step across the line in faith?" And he said, "The day that I figured out what grace really means, I realized I was never going to get a better deal, so I accepted it."

Okay, what was the next question? I can answer this one – I believe in the death penalty because the Bible believes in the death penalty. I do believe in that. I also believe that there are some things worth dying for, personally. I think that there are some things more important than life. I would die for my life; I would die for our country. I just think that there's some –

MR. CROMARTIE: Death penalty discussion over drinks.

MR. DIONNE: How do you avoid politics? And are you a para-church despite yourself?

MR. WARREN: On the politics, let me say this – I think government is a noble profession; it's just not my calling. I think it's a noble profession. I was president every year in high school and

all interest in government. That's the truth. And I just thought, I'm more interested in helping people change personally.

MR. DIONNE: Forget the para-church question since we're so short on time. What's happened to the nature of the people who come to you, say, now, compared to when you started?

MR. WARREN: Well, the church outgrew me a long time ago. When the first church started, I literally did it all. I did all the teaching and preaching and praying and baptizing and hospital visits and things like this. And when the church reached about 400, I burned out emotionally. I just hit the wall because I was still trying to meet everybody's needs – do all the weddings and all the funerals and make all the hospital calls and visit all the people. And one night, I stood up at church and said, "Guys, I can't do this anymore. This is too hard. The church is growing too fast, and I cannot personally meet all your needs. But as I read the Bible, I don't think that's what I'm supposed to be doing anyway. It says I'm supposed to equip you to do your ministry." And so I said, "I'll make you a deal. If you do the ministry of the church, I will make sure you're well-fed; I will lead and feed." And it was right afterwards that the church exploded in growth, because I wasn't the bottleneck anymore.

To give you an example, right after that, I went to visit a guy who had heart surgery and I walked into intensive care and I said, "I'm Pastor Rick and I'm here to see Walton." The nurse looks at me and she goes, "How many pastors does this church have?" And I said, "Well, seven or eight if you're talking about ordained pastors, and if you're talking about lay pastors, we've got over a hundred." And she says, "Well, I'm sorry you can't see him, too many pastors have already seen him." I think this is pretty funny. And I said, "Ma'am, you don't understand – I'm the pastor, the founding pastor, the head honcho." She says, "I don't care who you are, you can't see him." And I think it's hilarious that I can't even see this guy. So she walks away and I sneak in anyway. It's easier to seek forgiveness than permission. I walk into the room and this guy's got IVs up his arm and he goes, "Pastor Rick – like I must be really sick, the big guy's here – like near-death."

And the truth is, he didn't need to see me, because in the small group system that we've set up in our church, people care for each other in the small group. One of our principles is the church must grow larger and smaller at the same time. Larger through the Sunday services, smaller through the proliferation of small groups. If you get sick in our church, you will get visited almost every day you are sick. Why? Because it's organized through the small groups.

We learned that from the Koreans. The Korean churches taught us how to do that, and so we learn from anybody. I just came back from Rwanda where we learned a whole bunch of stuff about caring for the ill through these churches that are caring for the sick. So we're trying to learn from anybody. What I am is a translator. I have an ability to simplify and synthesize. And so I learn from everybody. I learn from science, biology, politics, and then I try to synthesize it and share it.

MR. DIULIO: I'd like to say a few words in praise of what you've done and the worldwide ministry that it's now become. I'll hold off on the death penalty and other more contentious issues till dinner. I also have a question about the "ecumenism of the trenches" between Catholics and evangelical Protestants. And I'd note, too, that the point you made about the southern hemisphere is correct. Christianity is growing. It is the fastest-growing religion in the world by any measure. In the southern hemisphere, it is outpacing all other religions. And it is the Pentecostal and charismatic wings of Christianity that are driving that growth, including the more orthodox traditional Catholics. There are more baptisms in West Africa thousands more baptisms than in much of the unfunded pension liability known as Europe.

When you're invited to speak at colleges and universities and places like Harvard, I'm not surprised – and I don't know that Luis Lugo would be surprised – because of the amount of interest in places like Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania. At Penn we have over 140 course offerings having something to do with religion, and the demand for these courses is just off the charts. There are 800 students who attend Catholic mass at 10:00 on Sunday night. And they go to confession, which really freaks me out, because I haven't done that in a while.
(Laughter.)

But the question I most wanted to ask you has to do with the "ecumenism of the trenches." I'm sure you've met a Bishop Blake of Los Angeles of The Church of God In Christ, or COGIC.

MR. WARREN: I have spoken to him, yes.

MR. DIULIO: The bishop and other COGIC pastors have recently issued, or will soon issue a report on the black family that will deal with issues of gay marriage and so forth. It's really a report about the state of the black family from a black Pentecostal perspective. And what is very interesting about it is that there is a neo-Catholic subtext to it. Theologically, there are big differences between COGIC and the Catholic Church. Yet here they are, drawing on each other. Also, Catholic leaders have worked with COGIC leaders on several social policy and community

Catholic-evangelical engagement is exclusively on pro-life and marriage issues.

MR. WARREN: Yes, yes.

MR. DIULIO: I was going to point at the other Catholics in the room; I won't do that – (scattered laughter) – I won't identify them. But, you know, to pull out the beam from our own eye. I think the Catholic bishops let that happen.

But what about on the pro-poor side? How much engagement with Catholics are you really experiencing?

MR. WARREN: I think it's just getting started, John. I think it's the beginning of a new movement. I've had a number of Catholic people, like Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, came out, and others have kind of made a pilgrimage to Saddleback and said, "What are you doing out here, and what's an evangelical guy doing this for, and you know, why do you care about AIDS and the poor, and stuff like that?" And I just think the word is getting out. There have been movements that have come along that have broken the denominational barriers in Christianity, things like the conferences we do, and even stuff like Promise Keepers that kind of went up and then went down; you know, all of a sudden you've got a million guys on the National Mall, and they're everything – they're Catholic and Pentecostal and Baptist.

And the other thing that's interesting, last Saturday I spoke at a thing called the Global Day of Prayer. You've probably never even heard about it or covered it. There were only 150 million people involved in that, but it got almost no coverage, okay?

Now this is an amazing thing. It started in South Africa with a Catholic layman. His name is Graham Powers, and Capetown, South Africa, was the murder capital of the world. And he said, "We've got to do something." So he goes over and he rents the cricket coliseum, which in 122 years has never been used for anything except cricket, and they said, "You'll never fill it – 60,000 seats, you'll never fill it." And within one day they were sold out and had a day of prayer.

It got criticized in the press, and so the next year they had it in eight stadiums in South Africa. The next year I was in Africa when they went to the eight southern countries, and they had, I don't know, 8 million or 9 million. The next year they went to every country. Last year every country in Africa had a day of prayer – they filled 282 stadiums and 20 million people participated in it.

This year they went global for the first time, and they did it in 162 countries, all praying in stadiums, at one time, simultaneous around the clock. It started in Fiji. This was last Saturday; it didn't even get any coverage in America.

I went to the head site in Dallas. They decided to do it in Dallas, and it's a reunion, and I'm the speaker. And they were broadcasting 24 hours a day around the world. It was the most amazing thing. And we were talking about this barrier breaking down between black, white, Pentecostal, different groups, and T.D. Jakes – you know who he is – and T.D. Jakes said, "One of the things television did is it allowed people to watch each other's services from a distance and go, 'That's okay.'"

And, you know, growing up as a Protestant boy, I knew nothing about Catholics, but I started watching ETWN, the Catholic channel, and I said, "Well, I'm not as far apart from these guys as I thought I was, you know?"

I will tell you this – this is really funny. Going back to the Aaron Brown thing, when I was being interviewed on *NewsNight*, at the end of the interview he looked at me, and he goes, "Now one more question. Why are you so hot?" I said, "Excuse me?" He said, "I mean, you're not like that good looking or nothing." And I'm said, "Well, yeah, I'm no Brad Pitt; I'm just the everyman, you know?" And later when they played it, they cut it. They cut that saying off the thing. I wanted that on there. That would have been a laugh for my members. They would have loved that.

MS. WALSH: I'm interested in your own personal transformation. I was raised a Catholic and used to go to church every Sunday, and it was very somber; very, very somber, serious. You hardly acknowledged anybody. I've been to some evangelical churches, and the first thing that you notice when you go into an evangelical church is how joyful it is, with the music, and it's very strikingly different to me. And you yourself seem to have a level of joy in your own life.

But were there periods in your life where you went through dark moments and doubts about your own beliefs?

MR. WARREN: Yes.

MS. WALSH: And what were the hard things that you went through, and what did you learn from them?

prayed a prayer. And I didn't even know how to pray. And I just said, "God, if you're really God, I want to get to know you. I don't know if you're there or not, but if you're there, make yourself real to me, and Jesus Christ, I open up my life to you."

So I prayed this simple prayer. Do you know what happened? Nothing. (Chuckles.) Nothing. No thunder, no lightening, no angels came down, wings, you know. My hair didn't turn white like Charlton Heston, or something like that. But I look back now and that was the turning point of my life. And it really had a kind of delayed reaction in that the more I understood the decision, the more excited I got about it.

It's kind of like one day I said two words that changed my life in front of a bunch of people. I said, "I do." Two words – "I do." At that point I had no idea what I was doing, and the rest of my life I've been working out the implications of those two words. (Laughter.) And my wife constantly says, after 30 years, "You did." I said, "I do?" "Yeah, you did." "And so that's included?" "Yeah, that's included."

And I remember when I got married – I don't know if I'm just a little slow or what, but I remember waking up the first day of our honeymoon, and I rolled over in bed, and I looked at Kay, and I go, "Man, I don't feel married." She said, "It doesn't matter if you feel it or not, buddy; you're married, you know?" Well, it was about six weeks later, and I remember I woke up one morning, and I leaned over and looked at her, and I thought, I get this woman the rest of my life, and I got so excited. And I got up and I started jumping around the room. I'm going, "I'm married, I'm married!" She says, "Well, it's about time."

And I think that was the same thing in my spiritual conversion. It really wasn't an emotional decision for me. It was really pretty intellectual. Because I had been raised in a Christian home, I rejected it all, and I decided to study the religions of the world. I actually moved to Japan, and I studied Buddhism, Shintoism, Hinduism. I studied all the religions of the world, and it was an intellectual process that brought me to this decision.

But have there been times of doubt? Yes. In fact, at the end of the very first year after starting Saddleback in 1980. And I – actually, we – pulled into town right in the middle of rush-hour traffic. Now again, remember I was raised in a town of 500, and there's L.A. traffic. And I'm in the middle of rush hour, and I look, and I go, "God, you've got the wrong guy." And we had no money, no members, no building. I didn't know a single person in Orange Country. It was a total move on faith from Dallas, Texas. We packed up everything in a U-Haul truck, my wife and I and our four-month-old baby. It was almost like the Beverly Hillbillies, you know, moving to southern California.

And so we get there, and I pull off the off-ramp at 4:00 in the afternoon, and I find a real estate office, and I walk in and I find a realtor – his name was Don – and I say, "My name is Rick Warren. I'm here to start a church. I need a place to live. I don't have any money; I don't have any building. I'm just here starting on faith, and I don't have any money."

He just started laughing. He said, "Let's see what we can do." Well, to make a long story short, within two hours he found us a condo, he got us the first month rent free – I don't know how he did this; he got no deposit down; he just said, "I trust this guy; I think he's okay" – and that man became the first member of my church. As we were driving I said, "Don, do you go to church anywhere? He goes, "Naw, I don't go to church." I said, "Great, you're my first member." (Laughter.) Yeah, he still is.

So then I asked myself, what kind of church are we going to be? And I decided, why don't we be a church for people who hate church? There are plenty of good churches around here. Why don't we have church for people who hate church? And so I went out and for twelve weeks I went door to door, and I knocked on homes for about 12 weeks and just took an opinion poll. I had a survey with me. I just said, "My name is Rick Warren. I'm not here to sell you anything, I'm not here to convert you, I'm not here to witness to you. I just want to ask you three or four questions. Question number one: Are you an active member of a local church – of any kind of religion – synagogue, mosque, whatever?" If they said yes, I said, "Great, God bless you, keep going," and I politely excused myself and went to the next home. When I'd find somebody who'd say, "No, I don't go anywhere," I'd say, "Perfect; you're just the kind of guy I want to talk to. This is great, you don't go anywhere. So let me ask you a question. Why do you think most people don't attend church?" And I just wrote the answers down. I asked, "If you were looking for a church, what kind of things would you look for?" And I'd just list them. "What advice would you give to me as the pastor of a new church? How can I help you?" So they'd say, "I think churches exist for the community; not vice versa," and I'd write that down.

Now the four biggest reasons in my area why people didn't go to church – here's what they were: Number one, they said, "Sermons are boring and they don't relate to my life." So I decided I had to say something on Sunday that would help people on Monday. Number two, they said, "Members are unfriendly to visitors; I feel like it's a clique." Number three, they said, "Most

church, none of them were theological. They were all sociological. And I had people say, "Oh, it's not that I don't like God. I like God; I just can't stand church." I go, okay; we'll build a whole new kind of church.

So what we did is we went out, and I wrote down all that information, and I wrote an open letter to the community. And this little Bible study group we had started had grown to about 15, and we hand-addressed and hand-stamped 15,000 letters and mailed them out 10 days before Easter; 205 people showed up at the first service of the church, and I had hit my target. There weren't more than about five, quote, "church-type people." They were all of no religious background at all.

I got up and said, "Let's open a Bible." But nobody had a Bible. I said, "Let's sing these songs." Nobody knew the songs. So that's how the church began. But at the end of the first year, I went through my period of doubt where I just thought, am I supposed to be doing this? And I was working 18 hours a day and loving every moment of it, and I was burning out physically and emotionally. And at the end of the first year I felt like I was the director of a spiritual orphanage – taking care of all the needs of these people who had no previous religious background at all.

And I got up to speak on the last Sunday of the year, and I fainted – collapsed while I was preaching. And that filled me with all these fears. And there were two fears going through my mind. One of them was that I felt unworthy. I thought, you know, really, should I be a pastor? I mean, I'm just kind of an ordinary guy, and I'm not a real spiritual person. I just felt unworthy.

And the other one is I felt I couldn't handle it. At this rate of growth – we went from zero to 150 in one year – within a few years, we'll be running several thousand. Little did I know where we'd be today. This is the only church I'd ever pastored.

And so I went out to the desert. I took my family out to Phoenix and dropped them off at my wife parents' home, and went out to the desert and spent a few weeks out there, and kind of went through my doubt/depression period. And out of that came a conviction. I felt like God was saying, "Now whose church is this, Rick?" And I said, "Well, it's yours." He said, "Then you focus on building people and I'll build the church." And I said, "God, you've got a deal." And so that's where I came up with the whole paradigm of what's called the purpose-driven church, which is a book I wrote ten years ago, which sold a million copies itself that you never heard of because it's just for pastors. And in that book it's about building people; it's not about building churches, it's about building individuals. And that whole philosophy of the purpose-driven church came out of a year of depression, in 1981, when my whole goal was not, "God, build a great church," but "God, get me through Sunday." And the lessons that I learned there prepared me to handle a church that has 82,000 names on the church roll now.

And if you're going to have your mid-life crisis, it's nice to have it at 26, you know? I had it early.

REUEL MARC GERECHT, AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE: I'll just touch on one thing. I mean, I think we've already gone over and over it again, but you know, when you say that you're trying not to be a policymaker, I have to say I just think you're fibbing. Historically, the natural state for all monotheisms is the union of church and state. It's true with Islam, it's true with Judaism. When you look at them you know that the entire emphasis is on the development of law. They are theologically underdeveloped.

Now Christianity obviously had a different evolution; they had a little thing to deal with called the Roman Empire, and then they tried to, you know, play catch-up on the Byzantine state and the Holy Roman Empire until the wars of religion taught them that separation of church and state – or at least greater tolerance – had some virtues. But nevertheless, at that time, afterwards, and really until the middle 20th century in the United States, I think it's fair to say that religion was the dominant force in shaping politics, which of course makes sense because both religion and politics ultimately are about the organization of ethics domestically and internationally.

MR. WARREN: Right.

MR. GERECHT: And I have to say this: that if what you say animates and defines your soul, inevitably what is going to come about in the political world is you are going to kill off the modern Democratic Party as we know it. I would also go on to say that you will kill off, I think, modern liberalism as we know it, which is why in this room I think you are beginning to feel vibrations that you really should have felt at Harvard – I'm quite surprised – (laughter) – and that you may not say so and you may not look at yourself as a policymaker, but I think the practical effect of what you're talking about is that the Democratic Party as we know it, modern liberalism as we know it, as a national party, is in serious jeopardy if this new "Reformation" come about.

MR. WARREN: Uh-huh. Can you explain to me about killing off the party? How does that happen?

MR. GERECHT: I think the modern Democratic Party is fundamentally at odds with much of

According to Jim Wallis, it's apparently trying to, but I'm skeptical whether it will be successful.

MR. WARREN: I'm not against faith informing policy. I'm not against that at all. I'm just saying that's not my personal calling, okay? And so when I say I'm not a policymaker, that doesn't mean that I'm opposed to Christians being in the public square just like everybody else ought to be in the public square and have their say at the table in public policy discussions. So I'm in favor of that; I really am – that every party should be at the table, and they have a right to inform policy with their background.

I'm just saying that personally I've got a different agenda. My agenda is really of, in, for and through these millions and millions of churches that I now have technology to network together called the Internet, which allows me to sit in my bedroom and talk to guys in Brussels, and it allows me to influence any influencer.

Last night I signed a book for Viktor Yuschenko, who asked for a copy of *The Purpose Driven Life*. A few months ago, I signed a *Purpose Driven Life* for Fidel Castro, who asked for one.

LUIS LUGO, PEW FORUM: All right, Rick, you're going over the line there. (Laughter, cross talk.)

MR. WARREN: I've probably signed books for, oh, probably 30, 40 different governmental presidents, you know, and I didn't ask them. They just asked me. So I'm interested in influencing influencers, but I'm not a politician.

BYRON YORK, NATIONAL REVIEW: When you were asked all these questions about hot-button issues, you'd tell us what you thought, and then you'd say, "But I don't really think that's the biggest and most important issue."

MR. WARREN: I don't.

MR. YORK: And earlier in your talk, you said something to the effect of "Show me a pastor who is a hard-liner on political issues, and I'll show you a smaller church; I mean, that's not the way you get a big church."

Now if journalists were to listen to Juan Williams' question, and say, "You know, we've been calling Pat Robertson too much, we've been calling Jerry Falwell too much; we need to call Rick Warren," and you spoke out on all these issues, that would hurt you, wouldn't it? I mean, you can't really speak in the way that you've spoken out frankly about some of these hot-button issues and still be everything, can you?

MR. WARREN: I'm not going to hide where I stand on what I feel are cultural issues, so I'm not ashamed of what I believe on that. I don't know if you guys can believe this, but I didn't want to be a celebrity. This thing was forced on me by the popularity of a book; that's why I never went on TV and I never went on radio. I think you get a lot more done behind the scenes, and so I didn't want to be a pundit, okay?

MR. BROOKS: Not that there's anything wrong with that. (Laughter.)

MR. WARREN: Oh, no, no. Absolutely. Some of my best friends are pundits.

I'm just so tired of a huge movement called evangelicals being pigeon-holed into just four, primarily, personal moral issues when these issues are important, but they are not everything. And that's why I emphasize what I'm passionate about. I'm passionate about the poor, I'm passionate about the sick, I'm passionate about the uneducated, I'm passionate that people know God the way I know him. I have a personal relationship with God. It's not just a "religion"; it is the most meaningful thing in my life. And I'm called as an evangelical to share it. I don't believe in coercion; I don't believe in legally requiring people to believe anything they don't want to believe. But I do believe in sharing what's happening to me – sharing my story.

When *Time* magazine comes out and calls me, quote, "America's pastor," I can't tell you what that does in my life because it's something that I really didn't want. And some people say, "How could he be America's pastor when we're not all Christians?" Well, I can't, okay? You know, somebody has got to be America's rabbi, somebody has got to be America's imam, right? But if that is a role that I'm going to play for one segment of our society, then I want to represent them and the things they value – humility, integrity and generosity – with intelligence and integrity. Those are the three important values to me.

MR. GOLDBERG: I want to nominate David Brooks as America's rabbi. (Laughter.) He looks very, very relaxed sitting there.

MR. BROOKS: My wife just had a heart attack. (Laughter, cross talk.)

MR. GOLDBERG: If I may, let me return to a point that was raised earlier, and this might segue

not making a theological point about being saved or not being saved. Although, parenthetically, many Jewish people do have this sort of question about evangelical theology, which holds that Jesus – who lived as a Jew, preached as a Jew, died as a Jew – would allow his own people to go to hell for not believing in his own divinity. But let's put that aside for a second. (Laughter.)

MR. WARREN: Let me ask, do you believe a person can be Jewish and be a follower of Christ?

MS. KAMINER: No.

MR. GOLDBERG: No.

MS. EISNER: No.

MR. WARREN: Okay, well, so you believe in exclusivity.

MR. GOLDBERG: I have no problem with exclusivity.

MR. WARREN: Okay, now let me just –

MR. GOLDBERG: No, no, no, wait. I was going to get to this. I don't have a problem with it. I have no problem with your belief about where Jews are going, where they should go, where they've been – (laughter). I have no theological issue with that. I mean, that's why we have many religions, and sectarianism is fine, and fundamentalism – I don't care. That's not the issue.

The issue is dealing with Jane – and even Wendy – as full American citizens. But the point is this. Now, you are a sophisticated guy – two Bible colleges and a seminary, and four years of Greek and Hebrew, and you've got a best-selling book, and maybe you can hold in your mind the contradiction, which is that Wendy is a full American citizen deserving of every protection that the most senior member of your church deserves. But when she dies, she's going to go to hell because she is not saved.

The question is, do you think your followers – or the people who come to church, the people who read your books, the people you are talking to all over the world – are sophisticated enough to hold this contradiction in their minds and to see Jewish people as not just Jews, but let's divide the world between the saved and the unsaved. Do you think that they are sophisticated enough

—

MR. WARREN: I do. Absolutely, without a doubt because the fundamental issue of Christianity is this: the purpose-driven life is built on two verses of scripture, both by Jesus. One is called the Great Commission, and the other is called the Great Commandment.

The Great Commandment. One day a guy comes to Jesus, and he says, "Okay, Jesus, summarize the whole Bible for me." And Jesus says, "I'm going to give you the whole Bible in a few sentences. All the law and the prophets – I'm giving you Cliff's Notes on the Bible. Here it is: Love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." So Jesus is saying, "When it gets down to the bottom line, it all boils down to two things: Do you love God with all your heart and soul, mind and strength? And do you love your neighbor as yourself?" That we call two of the five purposes that are in the scripture.

And so I think fundamentally Christianity and Judaism both teach that it's all about love. It's all about loving God and loving your neighbor. That's why I was serious when I was saying you're my cousin; I obviously have far more in common with someone who is Jewish than I do with someone who is a secularist – far more in common because we worship the same God; it is Adonai, it is Jehovah. We worship the same God. We are cousins in the faith.

Now the ridiculous thing is this myth that all religions are not mutually exclusive. If you've studied them – anybody who has studied the world religions knows they cannot all be right because they totally contradict each other. Anybody who says they don't has never studied the world religions. They are mutually exclusive, and that's why I come back to my earlier statement that I'm going to bet my life on one of them because I cannot bet my life on all of them. And I think the stupid thing is not to make a bet.

In the election, it wasn't just three-fourths of evangelicals who voted for Bush, one poll said about 65 percent of all religions who went weekly. Now that is such an overlooked point here. That would mean that a Muslim who goes weekly and a Jew who goes weekly, and a Christian who goes weekly – it was faith that trumped the other issues. It wasn't just Christians who went weekly; it was any religion who went weekly.

But the point was even a devout Muslim tended to vote for Bush? Now, was that true?

MR. CROMARTIE: I don't think it's true of Muslims in this election –

MR. WARREN: Oh, it wasn't true?

There are these theological issues and questions, as Michael said, that have been discussed and debated for a long, long time. I guess the question that keeps coming up is, do you believe that among the mass of people who believe what you believe essentially about the long list of things that a Christian is supposed to do in the world – you know, with respect to poverty and social justice, as well as these other things – that for them it's easy to have a view which says you are a full-fledged fellow citizen to whom I ought to dedicate part of my time and life and energy, regardless of your race, creed, color and so forth, and yet at the same time to hold a theological view which says, of course at the end of this, you know, that you're not saved?

MR. WARREN: Yes. I have a church full of people who are caring for gays who are dying of AIDS who don't agree with their view about sexuality. But they are, in love, caring for them right now in Laguna Beach and all over Orange County. And so they're showing acts of love because Jesus, I believe, showed acceptance to everyone without necessarily approving of their lifestyle. For instance, when the woman who was caught in adultery was brought to Jesus, the very first thing Jesus did was publicly defend her. He didn't pull out a sermon on adultery; he publicly defended her in front of the Pharisees, and he said, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."

When they went away, he then turned to her, and in the privacy of a one-on-one conversation, said, "Where are your offenders?" And she said, "They've gone away, Lord." And he said, "Well, neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more." That's it? That's all he's going to say? You know, I would have pulled out my three-point sermon on immorality. No, he just says, "Don't do it any more, okay?"

He did not minimize the fact that what she was doing was wrong, but he publicly defended her in front of others because her dignity was more important. And so he accepts her without approving of her behavior.

MS. KAMINER: But that means that there really are limits to equal citizenship because, you know, the people in your congregation may be ministering to people who have AIDS, but are they going to vote for people who are in favor of gay marriage?

MR. WARREN: Of course not.

MS. KAMINER: And so the gay people who want to get married would say, "Well, then you're not accepting – "

MR. BROOKS: Yeah, but – (chuckles) – just because you vote against somebody, they're not equal citizens?

MS. KAMINER: No, no, but we're talking – we're talking about how you see minorities integrated into civil society and who shapes the laws, and what you do with the laws that are motivated by –

MR. WARREN: Let me ask you this. Are you asking me then just to deny my convictions?

MS. KAMINER: No, not at all, not at all. I'm asking you the question about theocracy, which I think is really the question that hasn't been answered.

MR. WARREN: Well, it's not a theocracy. Here's the issue. "Tolerance" has got a new meaning, and we need to go back to the old view of tolerance. Tolerance used to mean "I value you even though I may violently disagree with your world view. I may not agree with your world view at all, but you are worthy of value." That's tolerance.

Today "tolerance" means all ideas are of equal value, or if you have an idea that is exclusive, then you are intolerant. Well, that's not intolerance at all.

MS. KAMINER: That's not what I'm talking about. That's not what we've been talking about. What I keep trying to get at is that we are a country of laws and somebody makes laws. The laws reflect somebody's moral values, and people's moral values tend to be based to a great extent on their religious beliefs.

MR. WARREN: Sure, sure.

MS. KAMINER: What happens when you have a majority that's making the laws that shares one religious belief? The minority has to be subject to those laws. It's the question about theocracy. How do you answer that question?

MR. CROMARTIE: We're out of time. Don't answer that question, Rick. The theocracy panel will be meeting on the deck. (Laughter.) Thank you, gentlemen, for coming and being with us.

(END)

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