Book Report

The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren, is a book of Christian discipleship. The book is presented in a format of a faithfully guided study for 40 days, one day at a time. The intention of which is to explore the question: “What on earth am I here for?”. The plot of the book is to move alongside the two questions God will ask his believers in the judgment day: (1) What do you do with Jesus, and what did you do with what God gave you? (2) How can I bring glory to God? I found these two questions very much in line with the contents of the audio lecture of “The Gifts and the Calling of God”.

Chapter 39 of the book presents a very good summary, giving an ultimate explanation that they are to fulfilled the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

1. “Love God with all your Heart”: You were planned for God’s pleasure, so your purpose is to love God through *worship*.
2. “Love your neighbor as yourself”: You were shaped for serving, so your purpose is to show love for others through *ministry*.
3. “Go and make disciples”: You were made for a mission, so your purpose is to share God’s message through *evangelism*.
4. “Baptize them into…”: You were formed for God’s family, so your purpose is to identify with his church through *fellowship*.
5. “Teach them to do all things…”: You were created to become like Christ, so your purpose is to grow to maturity through *discipleship* Page 1

Warren proceeds to examine the character of Worship. “The heart of worship is surrender… Offering yourself to God is what worship is all about” As such, prayer, meditation, honestly, and obedience are part and parcel of a true worship.

To edify the Church, Real fellowship is of great importance. Warren suggested that “every Christian needs to be involved”, and the real fellowship is characterized by authenticity mutuality, sympathy, and mercy. In other words, the exercising of the Motivational Gifts from God to each individual. The manifestation of which requires honesty, humility, courtesy, confidentiality, and frequency. As such broken relationships restored, and the unity of the body of Christ be enhanced.

Discipleship is about taking on God’s value, attitudes, and character” for which I parallel with the all-rounded Gifts from the Trinity Godhead to the believers. We grow by making good decisions, by allowing God to transform the way we think through His Spirit and our repentance, by abiding in God’s word, and by persevering through trouble and temptation. In other words, the Manifestation of the Gifts of God.

Warren seems to agree that a person can possess many Gifts. In his statement, mature Chrsitian servanthood realizes that God often calls us to secondary ministries based on “wherever is needed at the moment”.

Ministry is our service to believers and it is in large part what gives our lives meaning and significance. We begin to understand how God means for us to serve when we understand our SHAPE (Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experience).

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The Gift of Evangelism is emphasized. Evangelism is our service to unbelievers. Fulfilling the evangelistic mission God has given you will require our full submission to God’s will as we seek to exercise the Gifts we received from God. Gradual manifestation of the Gifts of the Spirits enhances our Personal evangelism, giving powerful life testimonies and draw people to Christ.

A striking idea I got from God through the reading of the book is that I see Warrens’ suggestion of “Balancing these five purposes” is the key to persevering and succeeding in the Christ life. “Blessed are the balanced; they shall outlast everyone”. In the same way, “Balancing the 21 Gifts” as mentioned in the course will enhance the Manifestation of Trinity Godhead for the best of God’s Ministry.

I found some good insights in the book:

1. Combats the self-centeredness and wrong individualism characteristic of the modern day society., viz: “It’s not about you”; “moment-by-moment dependence of God”.
2. Upholding the authority of the Word of God as seen in statements like “Transformed by Truth”; “the truth transforms me”.
3. God centered living is vital: “the ultimate goal of the universe is to show the glory of God”.
4. Redefinition of a true worship: “the most common mistake Christians make in worship today is seeking an experience rather than seeking god. They look for a feeling, and if it happens they conclude that they have worshipped. Wrong! In fact, God often removes our feelings so we won’t depend on them. Seeking a feeling, even the feeling of closeness to Christ, is not worship”.
5. Similar to the video lecture, there is an emphasis of the 1 Corinthians 13’s Love: “love cannot be learned in isolation”. Page 3
6. Warren emphasizes of God’s shaping and molding believers by “character development”. This surely can echo the course’s idea of the development of the 21 Gifts from God.

Gifts are identified as guarantees of God’s desires for us.

“What I’m able to do, God wants me to do…. God will never ask you to dedicate your life to a task you have no talent for. On the other hand, the abilities you do have are a strong indication of what God wants you to do with your life”

“Using your shape is the secret of both fruitfulness and fulfillment in ministry”

“You will be most effective when you use your spiritual gifts and abilities in the area of your heart’s desire, and in a way that best expresses your personality and experiences. The better the fit the more successful you will be:

God is the ultimate controller to assign believers the works according to the gifts and passions that He has given us.

The instructor of the video lecture compares an Evangelist as a Salesman. Whereas Warren says that “your personal testimony is more effective than a sermon, because unbelievers see pastors as professional salesmen, but see you as a ‘satisfied customer’, so they give you more credibility. Personal stories are also easier to relate than principles, and people love to hear them.

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Warren perpetuates the perception that ”unbelievers see ministers as professional salesmen” by fronting all the benefits of the Purpose Driven Life and going light on repentance.

In conclusion, I find that the book compliments and support the video lectures of the course. The encouragement is to putting the Gifts into practice, so as to excel and enhance the Ministries of the Body of Christ.

As stated in the introduction, there is a promise that the Purpose Driven perspective “will reduce your stress, simplify your decisions, increase your satisfaction, and most importantly, prepare you for eternity”.

In the section entitled “The Benefits of Purpose Driven Living”, Warren again emphasizes that the Purpose Driven paradigm is able to give meaning to your life, simplify your life, focus your life, motivate your life, and prepare you for eternity.

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