Rick Warren – Master of Marketing

Rick Warren sent an email out today, to pastors who are members of his Pastors.com website, explaining why it’s good idea to preach sermons in a topical series instead of one sermon per topic.

You might think this idea arose out of a desire to find better ways to convey sound Biblical teachings to his listeners in a way that would help them remember. But he makes no mention of any such concerns. Instead his concerns revolve around marketing the church and saving time.

Warren believes that preaching a series of sermons on a single topic is a great marketing strategy for increasing the size of the church and, with the added benefit of saving a pastor’s very valuable time. He wants all the pastors who follow him to know about it this great new marketing tool. Instead of having a pastoral concern over the best way to disciple and teach believers, the concern he prioritizes in this email is how to best use a sermon series to entice people to come back.

Instead of focusing on developing sermons that touch believers with sound Biblical doctrine and leaving church growth up to the Holy Spirit, Warren sees his sermons as a marketing tool to grow the church through human effort and enticements.

Here are his top reasons for recommending preaching in a series:

1. **It builds momentum.** It keeps your church going in a positive direction. (You gotta love his specificity).
2. **It creates word-of-mouth advertising.** It’s the best advertising a pastor has, Warren says.
3. **It saves study time!** Yes, one of his top three reasons for preaching in a series is that it saves the pastor’s time in study! Warren says that when you preach in a series it takes less time to study for four sermons than it would take to study for four sermons on different topics.

4. Warren recommends **announcing a new series on high-traffic days** like Easter and Christmas so that infrequent attenders will be enticed to come back.

5. Warren says the **ideal length for a series is 4-8 weeks**. He worries that anything more than eight weeks might cause the congregation to wonder if you know about anything else.

In other words, the pastor’s reputation would be at stake! Forget whether it might be necessary to use more than eight weeks to, say, go through the book of Hebrews. Forget whether a series on the book of Hebrews might benefit your congregation spiritually. Just make sure you cut it off after eight weeks so they won’t begin to have doubts about you.

So to re-cap Warren’s reasons for advocating a series of sermons on the same topic, we have:

1. It saves the pastor’s time (i.e. he doesn’t have to spend so much time studying the Word each week)
2. It’s great advertising
3. It builds momentum (whatever that means)
4. It relies completely on human effort to grow the church (no more messing around with God who might have decided your church has grown quite enough already)

A screenshot of Warren’s message:
3 Reasons I Preach in a Series

By Rich Heaton

I rarely preach a single sermon—very rarely. I came to any sermon at all like Saddleback and you preach either at the beginning, middle or end of a series. Why do I do this?

- **Build momentum.** Momentum matters to investors. It’s what keeps your church going in the same positive direction. If it’s any winning project is a direction they don’t have to re earn your congregation begins to anticipate the next sermon.
- **Create word-of-mouth advertising.** Preaching in a series can be the best marketing tool you have. People pass on the gospel to the lives of your congregation, they find their friends.
- **It saves study time.** Every single person I study more than I can possibly use. Most of an outline that I can use only once. The most common way to a sermon is to do it in series. Plus, I take less time to study for the sermon on a similar topic since sermons on four different topics.

I always announce a new series or speech rehearsed in a list of editors like Saddleback. I mention a book that brings us to the lives of our church for just two or three weeks. I think the best length for a series is four to eight weeks. Any longer than eight weeks causes your congregation to lose interest. They begin to worry if you know about anything else.

So if you’re not preaching in series, start now. It’ll build momentum, create word-of-mouth advertising and save your time.