

Rick Warren: The power of a campaign for revival and spiritual awakening

Edited and posted by Bob Young

If God allowed you to baptize hundreds of new believers, add hundreds of new members, and increase your average attendance by thousands in just 40 days, would you call that a revival? If, during those same 40 days, God prompted people in your church who were previously uninvolved to start serving in ministry, and caused others to commit to a world missions project, what would you call that? An awakening?

What term would you use if your members became so concerned for their spiritually lost friends that they convinced their neighbors to study the Bible for six weeks in one of thousands of small groups meeting in homes across your city?

Whatever you call it, all this has actually happened at Saddleback during the campaigns we've conducted over the years, and we stand in awe at what God has done. God has repeatedly worked through campaigns hosted by thousands of churches around the world in similar ways. Untold thousands have come to Christ and have been baptized, welcomed into church membership, connected to a small group or Sunday School class, taught the meaning of real worship and fellowship, equipped for ministry, and then sent out for their mission in the world. Troubled marriages have been healed, broken relationships between church members have been restored, and a new spirit of unity, vision, and purpose has swept through many congregations.

What is behind this wonderful movement? Days—and even months—of prayer, seeking, and fasting prepared churches for what God wanted to do in their midst. But it takes more than prayer to reach, equip, and send out disciples into the harvest: **it takes a biblical strategy.**

I share four reasons campaigns have been so effective.

The Principle of Concentrated Focus

During our campaigns, the entire church—every age group, every ministry, every small group, and every service—focuses on a particular spiritual emphasis. All extraneous meetings and emphases are eliminated for six weeks while we concentrate on this one thing. In the introduction of my book *The Purpose Driven Life*, I explain the biblical and strategic significance of a 40-day emphasis.

The Principle of Multiple Reinforcements

During a campaign, we communicate truth repeatedly in various ways: a weekly message by the pastor, a personal daily devotional reading, a weekly Scripture memory verse that everyone memorizes, a weekly small group or Sunday School lesson, a weekly email of encouragement, and various social media posts. The same truths are taught in different formats. This allows the truths to sink deep into hearts, which is essential for any permanent life change.

The Principle of Behavioral Teaching

Biblical preaching—the kind that changes lives and families and churches—teaches people to be “doers of the Word, not hearers only.” Interpretation without application simply creates an audience with overdeveloped ears and heads, but no hearts, hands, or feet to act like Jesus. The messages during a campaign are designed to call people to specific commitments.

The Principle of Exponential Thinking

This is thinking so big that you have to depend on God. It is “the faith factor.” You attempt something so big that it can't be accomplished by human effort alone. Exponential thinking adds a zero to your goal. If you have five Sunday school classes or small groups, you ask, “What if we prayed and worked to start 50 classes or groups? What would that require?” Exponential thinking stretches your faith, your creativity, and your dependence on God. We haven't reached every goal we've set, but we always end up with far more growth than we would have otherwise.

For years, we've watched God use these principles. Kingdom principles produce Kingdom growth. When we align ourselves with God's Kingdom agenda, God does marvelous things.