



Adult  
**OBESITY**

# Rick Warren Leads the Fight Against Obesity

The pastor and author of “The Purpose Driven Life” challenges believers to embark on The Daniel Plan for successful weight loss.

BY TROY ANDERSON

SOMEWHERE AROUND THE 500TH BAPTISM OF the day, a decidedly unspiritual thought popped into Pastor Rick Warren’s mind. “They’re all fat,” America’s most famous pastor remembers saying to himself. “I’m dunking everybody underwater, and everybody’s fat.”

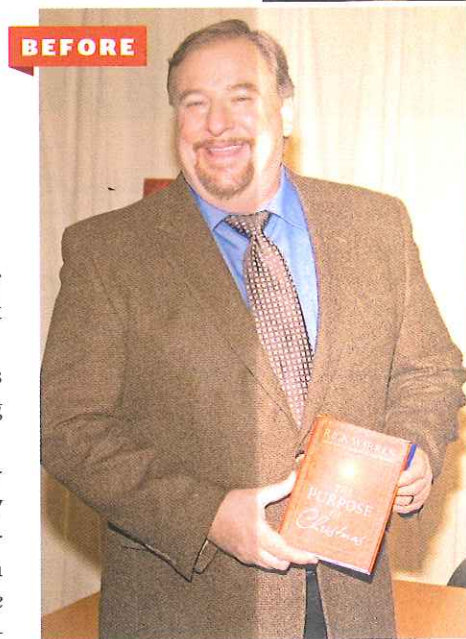
This revelation struck the leader of one of the nation’s largest churches as he was immersing nearly 900 people in the baptismal just outside of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif. But then Warren — the author of the best-selling book *The Purpose Driven Life* and a spiritual inspiration to millions — admitted to himself: “But I’m fat. I’m out of shape. I’m a terrible example to my congregation.”

Not long after this epiphany, the 290-pound, self-described “manly man” learned about the impact obesity has on brain power. Studies have shown people who are obese are much more likely to suffer dementia in their later years. And that was when Warren began to seriously consider adopting a healthier lifestyle.

“Diabetes didn’t scare me,” Warren confessed. “Heart disease didn’t scare me. But having a healthy brain got

my attention.” About a week after his baptismal marathon, Warren told his 22,000-member Orange County congregation that he needed to repent for setting a bad example with his diet of hot dogs, hamburgers, and other unhealthy foods.

Warren said he had only gained two to three pounds annually, but he had been their pastor for three decades. Warren told his congregation he needed to lose 90 pounds. He invited Saddleback members to join him in a diet and



**PURPOSE DRIVEN** A svelte Rick Warren in his private library — sporting a smaller waistline and greater appreciation of a healthier lifestyle.



WARREN/PAUL BEREBACH/ZUMA PRESS/NEWS.COM  
AMEN/ZUMA PRESS/NEWS.COM / HYMAN/LARRY BUSACCA/GETTY IMAGES

exercise program developed in collaboration with three experts: Dr. Mehmet Oz, the cardiac surgeon and host of *The Dr. Oz Show*; Dr. Daniel Amen, a brain expert; and Dr. Mark Hyman, an expert on metabolism.

That was a little over a year ago. Warren recently welcomed thousands to a celebration rally for the first anniversary of The Daniel Plan. The numbers don't lie: In just one year, the Saddleback program has helped 15,000 participants collectively lose 250,000 pounds. Based on the remarkable success of The Daniel Plan



**DRs. AMEN AND HYMAN**

in its first year, Oz, along with Warren, Amen, and Hyman, now sees churches and other faith-based communities as the ideal community vehicles to fight the nation's obesity epidemic.

"This project has made me realize that faith could be the key to mobilize our nation's fight against obesity. And Warren could be just the man to do it," Oz said during a recent interview with Warren on *The Dr. Oz Show*.

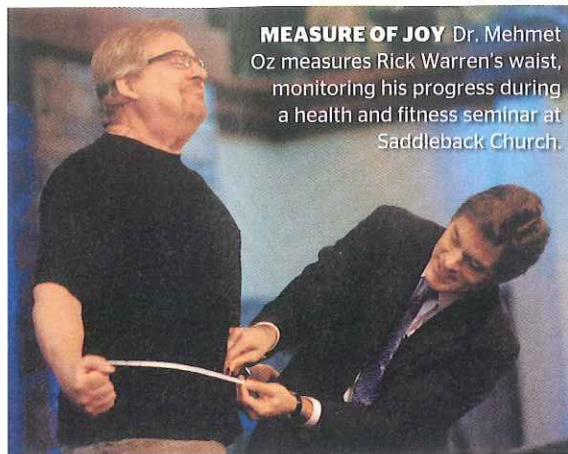
The Daniel Plan is inspired by the biblical story of Daniel, who rejected King Nebuchadnezzar's royal food and wine for a diet of vegetables and water. The program comes along at a time when obesity in the United States has reached epidemic proportions. More than a third of all adults and nearly 1 in 5 children are obese. From 1980 to 2008, obesity rates doubled for adults and tripled for

children. A recent Cornell University study found obesity accounts for 21 percent of U.S. healthcare costs, or \$190 billion a year — more than twice previous estimates.

For Warren, this lifestyle-related pandemic isn't just an exorbitantly expensive health crisis. It has deeper spiritual and moral implications.

"We now have as many people in the world that are battling obesity as we have battling malnutrition," Warren tells Newsmax. "There are 1 billion in each category. Saddleback's PEACE Plan has been feeding the poor around the world for 10 years. But now I've learned there are as many malnourished people as there are people having health problems from eating too much food."

So far, the doctors have seen remarkable results, with some people losing more than 100 pounds. Warren has lost 60 pounds. Other Saddleback members report



**MEASURE OF JOY** Dr. Mehmet Oz measures Rick Warren's waist, monitoring his progress during a health and fitness seminar at Saddleback Church.

improved sleep, lowered blood pressure, more energy, and less reliance on medications.

Those on the plan are exercising, eating plenty of vegetables and other healthy foods, and have sworn off sugar, white bread, rice, pasta, wheat, hydrogenated fats or oils, caffeine, and processed food.

Amen says The Daniel Plan is an answer to his prayer. While attending another church, Amen saw donuts for sale and a grill sizzling with

hotdogs and sausages. During the service, the minister referred to last night's "ice cream social."

"It was then I realized churches are sending people to heaven — early!" Amen says. "I spent the rest of the service praying that God would use me to change the culture of churches."

Within two weeks, Warren called the doctor to ask for help developing The Daniel Plan.

## Rick Warren Talks About His Plan to Trim Down America

BY DAVID A. PATTEN

**W**HEN PASTOR RICK WARREN decided to take on the nationwide epidemic of obesity, he consulted some of the best medical minds in the country and came up with The Daniel Plan.

In just one year, this unique approach to better health has helped transform the lives of over 15,000 people. Newsmax contributor Troy Anderson met with Warren at his Saddleback megachurch to hear firsthand about The Daniel Plan, how it works, and how it could help cure the obesity crisis in America.

**NEWSMAX:** Churches are famous for "ice cream socials" and serving

barbecued hamburgers and hotdogs.

**How has your diet changed as a result of The Daniel Plan?**

**PASTOR RICK WARREN:** I'm eating lots of vegetables and lean proteins and drinking a lot of water. I stay away from anything that is white. No white sugar, no white bread, no white flour. One of the little things we tell people is, "If it grows on a plant, eat it. If it's made in a plant, don't eat it."

**You told your congregation that you never paid much attention to the perils of obesity until you learned it could impair brain function. Why is this important?**

Lots of studies are showing the correlation between weight and



decreased brain function. I wasn't afraid of a heart attack. I wasn't afraid of diabetes. But I depend on my brain for speaking, writing, and leading. That really got my attention. Now, I exercise, get more sleep, eat a lot of water-dense foods, which are filling, and I grow an organic garden.

**A key element of The Daniel Plan involves the support people receive from their**

Warren told Amen he wanted his church to get healthy so they would have the vibrancy and energy necessary for the “Decade of Destiny” — a 10-year vision of church growth and outreach initiatives.

One of these is The PEACE Plan, an effort to mobilize millions of Christians to copy Jesus’ model of ministry — addressing the five “global giants” of poverty, disease, illiteracy, self-serving leadership, and spiritual emptiness.

“He wrote *The Purpose Driven Life* so he really wants everyone to understand their unique calling and purpose,” says Dee Eastman, director of The Daniel Plan. “He wants them to get physically healthy so they can follow that calling.”

As part of Warren’s vision, Saddleback is working to export the 52-week diet-lifestyle program to faith communities around the globe.

“Saddleback is beginning a health revolution that is going on throughout the country,” metabolism expert Hyman told those gathered at the anniversary celebration. “We are getting churches all over the country and the world involved in this. You guys are part of something extraordinary, powerful, and transformational.” □

**THE DANIEL PLAN:**

## Rx for a Healthier Nation

The Daniel Plan (DanielPlan.com) contains six core principles and action steps. Step No. 3 is to “Eat Delicious Whole Foods.”

As The Daniel Plan website explains: “Have 70 percent of your daily diet consist of whole, living foods including raw or lightly cooked vegetables, fruit, raw nuts, and

seeds. The other 30 percent can include lean protein, whole grains, and starchy vegetables.”

■ Other tips: “Don’t drink your calories ... Drink water instead.”

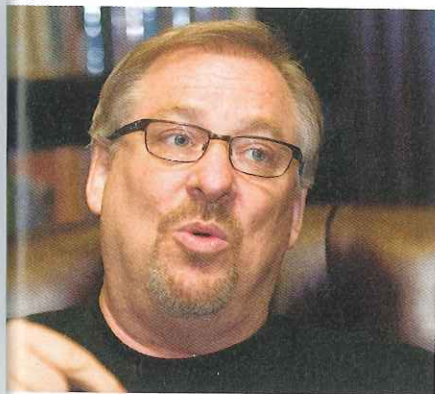
■ “Read the label: Avoid high fructose

corn syrup, hydrogenated oils, nitrates, food coloring.”

■ “Avoid the ‘white menaces,’ flour, rice, potatoes, and sugar (bread, pasta, cookies, cakes).”

■ “Supplement your diet with high quality vitamins, omega-3, vitamin D, and a multivitamin.”

■ “Eat a nutritious breakfast that includes protein. Add healthy snacks throughout the day. Low-fat lunches. Light dinners (don’t eat within three hours of bedtime).” □



**small groups to stick with the diet and exercise program. Why is the “team sport” aspect of the plan so important?**

What The Daniel Plan is doing is not particularly new or innovative. It’s not rocket science. But it adds two components that can cause people to stick with it longer. One of them is the spiritual component of prayer and asking God for help so you are not just depending on will-

power. The fellowship component is we get better in a community. Saddleback has 6,000 small groups that meet during the week. We ask each group to choose a health champion, and we have a lot of groups that walk, work out, and exercise together.

**From a spiritual perspective, why is it important for people to participate in the plan, lose weight, and get healthy?**

It’s a matter of stewardship. The old English word — stewardship — is the modern word for management, and that is we are to be stewards of every gift God gives us.

God made your body, Jesus died for your body, the Holy Spirit lives in your body, and so God wants you to take care of your body.

**What would Jesus’ message be to believers who are seriously struggling with their weight?**

I think, No. 1, Jesus would first of all say that you are deeply loved. God has never met a person he doesn’t love. He would say, I have a purpose for your life.

He wants us to depend on his power to make changes in every area of life, not just in our relationship to food, but in every different area. The goal of this is that our lives bring honor to God. □