

Contend For The Faith

April 22, 2020 Lesson #14 Word Of Faith Background Information

Quotes on Reviews of Word of Faith Movement:

"Listening to Word of Faith movement preachers talk, an uninformed Christian might think they have been missing out on some great secret all their life.

In fact, many Word of Faith (WOF) beliefs bear more resemblance to the New Age bestseller The Secret than to the Bible. It's no stretch to substitute WOF's "positive confession" with The Secret's affirmations, or the Word of Faith idea that humans are "little gods" with the New Age notion that humans are divine."

Word of Faith is also known as: Prosperity Gospel, Name It/Claim It; Health/Wealth

Quote: "It is decidedly unbiblical. It is not a denomination. It does not have a formal organization or hierarchy. Instead it is a world-wide evangelical movement that is heavily influenced by a number of high profile pastors and teachers such as: Kenneth Hagin, T.D. Jakes, Benny Hinn, Paul & Jan Crouch [deceased], Frederick Price, Joyce Meyer, Paula White, Creflo Dollar, Charles Capps, Joel Osteen, Kenneth & Gloria Copeland, Mike Murdock and others."

Popular Teachings: God wants His followers to be materially wealthy, free from suffering and sickness. Any unmet need in someone's life is a sign of a lack of faith.

Please Note: "There are TRUE believers within the Charismatic movement, but that does not negate the seriousness of the corruption and false teaching within the movement. The Charismatic quest for extra-biblical revelation, subjective impressions, ecstatic experiences are outside the parameters of God's Word. If this movement were a movement of the Holy Spirit of God, then Jesus Christ & The Gospel would be front & center.

Jesus Christ Would Be The Center Of The Message."

A. Origins Of The Movement

1. Word of Faith movement grew out of the Charismatic/Pentecostal Christianity in the latter 20th century.

Many of its doctrines parallel New Thought and New Age Spirituality.

2. WOF movement is based on the metaphysical [beyond the physical realm; beyond what we can see & touch here] New Thought teachings of Phineas Quimby [1802-1866] whose teachings laid the foundation. [Great-grandfather of movement]

- Quimby was a self-proclaimed healer and a follower of Mesmer, the hypnotist.
- Quimby believed that illness in the body originated in the mind and that bodily illnesses could therefore be overcome with the "Truth." His idea was that, if the mind was corrected of wrong thinking, the body would be cured of its diseases and problems.
- Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, was a patient of Quimby's.
- Some of his ideas appear in her theology. She shared the idea that disease in the body is caused by problems in a person's thoughts [negative thinking].

WOF: "Deny your physical symptoms when it comes to sickness and disease because if you speak it, it will bring it into existence."

Ex.: Andrew Womack 2015: "If you are reaping sickness, it is because you thought sickness. You thought things that allow sickness to dominate you. It's flu season. I'm only human; a man. You thought things that made you inferior to flu. You are denying and not focusing on who you are in Christ that 'no plague will come nigh your dwelling.' You have thought things that made you susceptible to Satan stealing your health."

Main Beliefs of New Thought:

- "True human self-hood is divine." Within this we see the original lie that Satan told man: through knowledge of good and evil "you will be like God" [Genesis 3:5].
- Satan appealed to man on the basis of:
 - Man's Desire To Attain Divinity & To Control His Own Destiny.
- The New Thought movement appeals to people on the same basis, enchanting followers with the lie of divine potential.

An offshoot of the New Thought movement, which was mostly spread by Quimby's writings, is the Law Of Attraction, [the secret to manifesting your dreams] which is essentially the belief that thought can bring things into existence—that by *thinking* you are successful or rich or talented you will *become* successful or rich or talented.

"If you can imagine it in your mind, you CAN experience it in your reality."

"By thought, the thing you want is brought to you. By action, you receive it."

The Universe will bring to you what you think.

New Thought ideology is directly opposed to Biblical teaching.

Dr. Ernest Holmes: A system of thought which affirms the unity of God with man, the perfection of all life, and the immortality and eternity of the individual soul forever expanding.

- We cannot create our own reality by "positive thinking" or become healthy by declaring ourselves to be so.
- Disease of the body is a result of the fall of creation.
- Adam's sin brought death and decay into the world [Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12].
- We are created beings, part of creation, and therefore the chaos brought into nature by sin also affects our natural bodies. We are susceptible to viruses, injuries, old age, auto-immune disorders, genetic and hormonal malfunctions, deformities, and death—all because of sin's entrance into the perfect paradise God originally planned for us [Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 8:19-22].
- There is no escaping this curse; it affects every person who has ever lived.
- Despite the pain and illnesses we endure throughout our lives, God's promise of redemption through Jesus Christ is our Hope [Ps. 16:5-11; Rom. 5:2; Col. 1:27].

WOF "grandfather" was E. W. Kenyon [1867-1948], God created the world by speaking faith-filled words. God's words were filled with a tangible substance called faith. Everything that is in existence today is made out of faith. We are to also speak words of "faith" to speak things into existence and our own physical reality.

Kenyon's teachings:

- Humans took on the nature of Satan in the Fall, forfeited to him their "legal deity" and their divine dominion, and made him the legal god of the world.

Ps. 24:1a The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.

John 12:31 Satan is the "ruler of this world."

II Cor. 4:4 "god of this age"

Eph. 2:2 prince of the power of the air

I John 5:19 whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one

- Jesus died not only physically but spiritually. When Jesus died on the cross, the work of the atonement was not finished; it had just begun. When Jesus died on the cross, he went to hell, suffered and tortured by demons; died a spiritual death; ceased to be God and had to be re-born or saved. That is where the atonement took place.
- Health & wealth are obtainable by positive confession.

Mind science [where "name it and claim it" originated] was combined with Pentecostalism, resulting in a peculiar mix of orthodox Christianity and mysticism.

Kenneth Hagin, [1917-2003 "Father" of WF] in turn, studied under E. W. Kenyon.

- Hagin claimed he went to heaven and saw Jesus and received these teachings. He said Jesus came to him on 8 different occasions.

If you can't find what he was teaching in the Bible, don't worry. I have it from the highest authority

- However, it is documented that Hagin plagiarized Kenyon's writings.

Most prominent WOF teachers draw their inspiration and theology from Kenneth Hagin who believed it is God's will that believers enjoy good health, financial success and a blessed life.

Word of Faith Movement Spreads

While Kenneth Copeland is considered the leader in the Word of Faith movement, a close second is TV evangelist and faith healer Benny Hinn, whose ministry is located in Grapevine, Texas. Hinn starting his daily television broadcasts in 1990.

The Word of Faith movement got a major boost starting in 1973 with the founding of the Trinity Broadcasting Network, headquartered in Santa Ana, California. The world's largest Christian television network, TBN airs a variety of Christian programming but has embraced Word of Faith.

Trinity Broadcasting Network is carried on over 5,000 TV stations, 33 international satellites, the Internet, and cable systems all over the globe. Every day, TBN takes Word of Faith broadcasts into the United States, Europe, Russia, the Middle East, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, the South Pacific, India, Indonesia, southeast Asia, and South America.

"In Africa, Word of Faith is sweeping the continent. *Christianity Today* estimates that more than 147 million of Africa's 890 million people are "renewalists", Pentecostals or charismatics who believe the health and wealth gospel. Sociologists say the message of money, cars, houses and the good life is almost irresistible to poor and oppressed audiences."

"In the U.S., the Word of Faith movement and the prosperity gospel have spread like wildfire through the African-American community. Preachers T.D. Jakes, Creflo Dollar, and Frederick Price all pastors of black megachurches and urge their flocks to think right to get their monetary and health needs met."

"Some African-American pastors are worried about the Word of Faith movement. Lance Lewis, pastor of Christ Liberation Fellowship Presbyterian Church in America, in Philadelphia, said, 'When people see that the prosperity gospel doesn't work, they may reject God altogether.'"

Word of Faith Prosperity Gospel includes teachers from one end of the spectrum to another.

- Some believe God wants all His children rich and you should partner with Him by faith to pursue riches. You're Kingdom kids and they don't wear tattered clothes.
- Others will minimize sin, minimize pain and only talk about how well things will go for you if you follow Christ.
- They believe their ultimate source of knowledge is Revelation Knowledge. They are receiving new knowledge and they are called to be the pioneers of the new knowledge.

Costi Hinn: What is Prosperity Gospel Theology?

A very basic definition of the prosperity gospel: God's plan is for you to live your best life *now*.

- Health, wealth, and happiness are guaranteed on Earth for all who follow Jesus.
- Heaven is simply the eternal extension of your temporal blessings.

The prosperity gospel's theological foundation can be traced to at least 3 twisted versions of Biblical truths in order to legitimize their version of the gospel.

Recall: II Pet. 3:16 twist Scripture to their own destruction

1. Christ's Atonement Means Abundant Life Now

- ❖ The Bible clearly teaches that Christ died to atone for our sin [Isaiah 53]
- ❖ Because of what He accomplished through His death and resurrection, we can experience the abundant life He came to give us [John 10:10].
- ❖ Though we enjoy some benefits of the atonement now—such as the forgiveness of our sins and assurance of salvation—His atonement guarantees eternal promises that *won't* be fully realized until Heaven. We'll receive a glorified body, there will be no death, no sin, no pain, no suffering, and no disease! Those are just a *few* of the eternal benefits of the atonement. Best of all, we'll enjoy perfect fellowship with our God forever more.

Prosperity preachers teach that health and wealth were "paid for" in the atonement—just like sin. Therefore, this twisted interpretation allows them to teach people to expect complete healing, monetary riches, and total victory in every area of their *earthly* life. Instead of telling people to put faith in Jesus Christ and excitedly await their best life in heaven, they offer an empty gospel that promises people their best life now.

Copeland: God NEEDS you well. God NEEDS you saved. God NEEDS you full of the Holy Ghost. God NEEDS you strong. God NEEDS you rich. God doesn't need us. He is the Alpha, Omega. The first and the last. The wonderful counselor prince of peace, etc. God spoke the universe into existence.

2. God's Covenant with Abraham Means Inheritance Now

Specifically speaking, the Abrahamic covenant [Gen. 12:1-3] has much to do with redemption, and God's promises to His people. However, prosperity preacher's use the covenant as a means to promise an inheritance [usually land and money] for their followers now. In the prosperity gospel, God's covenant with Abraham is littered with statements like,

- ❖ "If you'll sow a seed of faith like Abraham, God will bless you."
- ❖ "If you speak it and live it by faith like Abraham, God will prosper you."

These type of statements are a way to present any temporal or eternal inheritance that awaits God's people as a blanket guarantee. If these twisted versions of the Abrahamic covenant were true, then the millions who trust in the prosperity gospel would become millionaires and land-owners overnight. Thus far, it is mainly the prosperity preachers who are benefitting from the offerings of those they deceive.

3. Faith is a Force You Can Use to Control God

The Bible teaches that Christians are:

- ❖ Rom. 5:1 Justified by faith
- ❖ I John 5:5 Overcome the world through faith
- ❖ Gal. 2:20 Live by faith because of what Christ has done

Faith pleases God, is directly related to salvation, and is the evidence of trust in God for the believer. Prosperity gospel preachers depart from this orthodox teaching on faith when they teach that faith is a force you can use to get what you want from God. In other words, you were able to obtain salvation and justification by faith, so why can't you obtain a Ferrari the same way? Prosperity theology is centered on the notion that right believing, right thinking, and right speaking are all linked with faith in order to create physical blessings.

This is where the word of faith movement also hybrids with the prosperity gospel.

It is ANOTHER GOSPEL.

Col. 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

- The threat of this movement comes from living a paradigm outside of Scripture.
- Nothing good happens outside the boundaries of Scripture.

Consider: Communion with the Holy Spirit occurs through the Word of God.

- You must use your mind to understand the Word of God. This is a huge paradigm shift for those who are used to music as an inducer of their emotions or feelings.
- They must undo their perspective on what is "spirituality."

When people live outside of Scripture and they are "chasing" messages supposedly from God, bad things happen. Unbiblical things happen and sometimes cults are born which deceive millions.

They define spirituality outside of Scripture as something induced with false claims and false expectations. It is a false idea of justification that cannot restrain the flesh, the movement is many times rampant with immorality. People are led to believe they are saved because they had a "Jesus experience."

When the experiences you have are more important than the truth you believe; it is dangerous. People are watching these false teachers who claim to have the power, the anointing, the elevated Christians. They have the power; they are the miracle people.

One reason for a lack of discernment is that followers are told that questioning the teacher is synonymous with "touching God's anointed," or "quenching the Spirit."

Compare Word of Faith In Light Of God's Word

The shift from truth to error can be subtle, and some well-meaning preachers have been caught up in it. We must be careful not to judge a preacher's entire message by only one or two sermons. However, when blatant prosperity preaching dominates a speaker's platform, this is merely an attempt to make greed and materialism sound spiritual.

Ephesians 5:5 has strong words for greedy people: For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Phil. 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Luke 12:33 Sell that ye have and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. Don't stockpile earthly wealth. Rather, we should store up treasure in heaven.

The imbalanced focus of prosperity preachers on earthly treasure is in direct contrast to the many passages that warn us not to desire riches.

Proverbs 28:22 He that hastens to be rich hath an evil eye and considers not that poverty shall come upon him.

II Tim. 3:2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Consider: Paul described those who think of God as a way to get rich as "depraved" and lacking in truth. I Timothy 6:5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

The verses following this condemnation are the antithesis to the entire Prosperity teaching:

I Tim. 6:6-10 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

⁷ For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

⁸ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

⁹ But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
When earthly wealth is our focus, we are not following the teachings of Scripture.

The apostle Paul was one of Christianity's most devout, loyal, wise, and committed adherents. Yet, he suffered poverty, persecution, and imprisonment.

II Cor. 11:24-31 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

²⁵ Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

²⁶ In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

²⁷ In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.²⁸ Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? ³⁰ If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

³¹ The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

II Cor. 12:7-10 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

⁸ For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

⁹ And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Consider: If there was any truth to the teachings of the Word of Faith movement, Paul would have been healthy and rich, not oppressed. He would have "spoken" his afflictions away. Clearly, this is not what happened.

Likewise, there are other instances where Paul was unable to "speak" healing into others, despite his sincere desire [Phil. 2:25-30; II Tim. 4:20]

Job shows how bankrupt Word of Faith / Prosperity teachings are. The Bible is explicitly clear that Job's calamities were not because of his own sin [Job 1:8].

This teaching is echoed by Jesus in John 9, where He specifically says that the man born blind was not suffering because of his sin or that of his parents [John 9:1-3].

Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Another key event is Jesus' temptation in the wilderness [Matt. 4:1-11]. This is the one and only place in the Bible where material wealth and prosperity is offered in return for worship

Consider: However, this offer is not made by God. It's made by the Devil.

Consider: Is it accurate to say that the claim, "worship and you'll be wealthy" is literally a message from Satan?

Consider: There would be no reason for Satan to tempt Jesus with wealth and success, if those are the natural and expected results of faith in God. Jesus was the most perfect person who ever lived—there was no reason for Satan to tempt Him with something if He was guaranteed to get it already! Wealth and privilege are not, in any sense, guaranteed for the believer.

God does not imbue Christians with the power to have anything we want, whenever we want it. God will grant requests which align with His will. Biblically, we see clear evidence of this. Historically, we see this in the lives of the apostles, who clearly didn't feel God was obligated to give them every whim they asked for.

If the quest for prosperity dominates a preacher's message, he or she may be someone about whom Scripture warns. The following are some common traits of many prosperity preachers or false teachers:

- The core of his/her messages is usually God's desire to bless everyone.
- Almost all their teaching focuses on the gratification of fleshly desires rather than spiritual transformation [Romans 8:29].
- There is little, if any, mention of Jesus' words about self-denial, taking up our crosses, or dying to the flesh [Luke 9:23; Matt. 10:38, Matt. 16:24].
- Obedience to God's commands is rarely mentioned as a prerequisite to His blessing [Jeremiah 18:10].
- Positive thinking about oneself and one's situation is often equated with faith and is presented as the means by which one can obtain financial blessing.
- There is a marked absence of any teaching on the necessity of suffering in the life of a believer [II Timothy 2:12; 3:12; Romans 8:17; Philippians 1:29].
- Very little distinction is made between God's children and the unsaved in the positive promises of the message [Malachi 3:16-18; Romans 9:15-16].
- The speaker rarely attempts any type of real Bible teaching that does not support the continual message of positivity and blessing [I Corinthians 3:1-3].
- He stays away from passages that contradict the positive spin of the message (II Tim. 4:3).
- Personal wealth of the minister is often far above the average lifestyle of his congregation [Psalm 49:16-17].
- The only attributes of God ever mentioned are love and generosity. Scant attention is given to His holiness, justice, and righteousness [Ephesians 4:22-23].
- No mention of the wrath of God against sin nor the coming judgment [Rom. 2:5; I Peter 4:5].
- The only "sins" discussed at length are negativity, poverty, or a person's failure to believe in themselves (I Corinthians 6:9-10; Philippians 3:3).

- Forgiveness is emphasized but with very little explanation of the repentance that was so important to Jesus and the disciples [Matthew 4:17; Mark 6:12; Acts 2:38].
- The prayer of faith is often referred to as the means by which humans “leave God no choice but to bless me” [Job 40:1-2].

There has been a subtle shift within Christianity toward a version of the gospel that the apostles would not recognize. People are becoming Biblically illiterate and are thus easily swayed by preachers who appear to know Scripture but who are perverting it to make it sound more appealing.

These preachers are attracting huge crowds, just as Jesus did when He fed the thousands [Matthew 14:21], healed the sick (Mark 1:34), and performed miracles (John 6:2).

But when Jesus began to teach the hard truths of the gospel, “many of his disciples turned away and no longer followed him” (John 6:66). Waning popularity did not cause Jesus to water down His message. He continued to teach truth whether people liked it or not (John 8:29).

Likewise, the apostle Paul exonerated himself before the Ephesians with these words:

“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God” [Acts 20:26-27].

Costi Hinn: The prosperity gospel is placed front and center as one of the deadliest teachings in the world today. It has attached itself to the Bible, and to Jesus Christ—though it has no business doing so. Billions chase after it in search of stability and hope. Yet, all those who live and die trusting in the prosperity gospel for salvation will be left wanting in both this life, and the next.