

Contend For The Faith

April 29, 2020 Lesson #15 Word Of Faith: Force of Faith & Positive Confession

The Word-Faith movement teaches:

- The death of Jesus Christ extends to Christ giving every born-again believer the ability to obtain the material riches and possessions that one desires.
- WOF teaches their followers that one of the primary objectives in a person's life must be the pursuit of material wealth which is a visible sign that a person has the "favor" and "blessings" of God upon his life.
- Sickness, poverty, and other struggles are seen as evidence of a lack of faith.
- WOF teaches that if you desire to have whatever you wish, then you must use enough of the faith force to bring your desires or material wealth into existence.
- They put great emphasis on worldly success and the power of a Christian to control their own future through positive confession. They claim that God allows a person to "speak" their desires into reality as though they had a creative power similar to God's.

Faith movement and their doctrines stand opposed to the truths taught in God's Word.

They do it in the name of JESUS.

Doctrines considered essential by historic Christianity are not necessarily considered essentials in Word of Faith theology. Word of Faith teachers often redefine or reinterpret Christian essentials in order to fit them into their own peculiar theological systems.

These reinterpretations are often derived from "revelation knowledge" (i.e. special revelations supposedly from God, given specifically to the WF teacher).

Some claim their teaching is "secret revelation knowledge God gave them; you must listen to me so I can teach it to you." 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."

What is the fruit of this? Division among the body of Christ. This is not the fruit of the Spirit. All cults start with a private revelation. [Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, Charles Russell] Special insight or ability to interpret the Bible.

Alarming: The claims and the authority whereby they establish these doctrines, they use the term "restoration." Like a restoration of lost things.

1. Many talk about hidden mantels and anointings

Remember: We know a counterfeit by studying the original.

With them: We go to a "hidden source" or "hidden knowledge."

Placing "revelation knowledge" above Scripture is one reason why WF teachers often blatantly contradict Scripture. Many sincere Christians within the WF movement are unaware that their favorite teachers are teaching doctrines that flatly contradict the Word of God.

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

Consider: Scripture admonishes us to test all teaching by the written Word of God.

Why?: Many false teachers are in the world.

Voddie Baucham: "The Lord told me is NO SUBSTITUTE for The BIBLE SAYS."

Spurgeon "Believer! there is enough in the Bible for thee to live upon forever. If thou shouldst outnumber the years of Methusaleh, there would be no need for a fresh revelation; if thou shouldst live till Christ should come upon the earth, there would be no necessity for the addition of a single word; if thou shouldst go down as deep as Jonah, or even descend as David said he did, into the belly of hell, still there would be enough in the Bible to comfort thee without a supplementary sentence."

"There is dust enough on some of your Bibles to write damnation with your fingers."

Word of Faith Basic Theology

Theology: 2 Greek words that combined mean = The Study Of God

Christian theology is the attempt to understand God as He is revealed in His Word.

The roots of the Word of Faith movement [name it/claim it] message have more in common with new age metaphysics than with Biblical Christianity. However, instead of us creating our reality with our thoughts [new age proponents], Word of Faith teachers state we can use the "power of faith" and power of our words to create our own reality or get what we want. A central element of receiving from God is "confession," "positive confession" or "faith confession."

Side Note: Do not confuse with "Positive Thinking" theology which focuses on the individual.

Their motto: "Faith in God and believe in yourself."

A. Foundation of WOF = Belief in the "Force of Faith." It is NOT Biblical.

"Faith is a powerful, personal force that enables you to express supernatural energy that overcomes all restrictions and creates the world that you desire."

- This APPEALS to man's most basic instinct and sinful nature.

"The force of faith is released by words. Faith-filled words put the law of the Spirit of life into operation. Faith is a force that you direct at God to make Him do what you want Him to do."

[Kenneth Copeland; The Force of Faith]

➤ Laws governing the faith-force are said to operate independently of God's sovereign will and that God Himself is subject to these laws.

- This is idolatry, turning our faith and by extension ourselves, into "god."
- This teaching exalts man and his "faith" above God.

➤ Words can be used to manipulate the faith-force. It is a tangible, conductive force.

"Faith becomes a force whereby we can get what we want rather than an abiding trust in God even during times of trials and suffering."

Warning: The false teaching that faith is a force leads to other false teachings.

1. It means that you can and must generate the "force of faith," that will act upon God and get Him moving for you.

Barbara Ehrenreich: "The fastest growing brand of religion is the 'magical name it and claim it' variety, in which the deity exists only to meet one's immediate, self-identified needs."

2. If you pray for something, and have faith, the faith you generate is a force which acts upon God, indeed, which actually creates the thing you want.

3. From this comes the, "name it and claim it," false teachings.
4. It ties into the error that if you SPEAK something, it will come into existence, as is taught in the, "positive confession" heresy.

Notice the root error Error says faith is a force YOU generate which acts upon God.

The Bible teaches that faith is a reliance upon God and a desire for His will.

Can we see the implications of each as to who is in charge?

Error puts US in charge, and we use our faith to act upon God.

Truth puts God in charge and tells us to surrender to Him for His will.

God's Word: Faith is NOT a force. Heb. 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. [confidence in what we hope for; assurance of what I don't see] Faith is to govern our entire lives. We are to WALK BY FAITH in Jesus Christ. [II Cor. 5:7]

Fact: We have NO POWER at all. Faith is the trust and assurance that all of the promises of God find their YES IN HIM. [II Cor. 1:20] Not in me & not because I said the right words.

Question: Is it possible to teach such error and know Jesus Christ? This teaching is the very antithesis of the gospel of grace, skews the basic essential of faith, and leads people away from a grounded relationship with Christ.

B. Positive Confession: Our Words Have Creative Power & Our Thoughts Control Reality

Both the metaphysical cults and the Word of Faith teachings distort the truth and embrace the false teaching that Our Thoughts Control Reality.

- What you think or believe will happen is ultimately what controls what will happen.

If you think negative thoughts or are lacking in faith, you will suffer or not get what you want. If I acknowledge hardships, poverty, illness, etc. and thus accept them, I refuse the ease, wealth, and health God has planned for me.

Joel Osteen: Don't just accept whatever comes your way in life. You were born to win. You were born for earthly greatness; you were created to be a champion in life." Anyone can create by faith and words the dreams he desires. If you develop an image of success, health, abundance, joy, peace, nothing on earth will be able to hold those things from you.

- The list does not include repentance, brokenness, humility, holiness, purity of heart, worship, sacrifice, unselfishness, sacrificial love,
- What is on the list? Health, wealth, prosperity, success --- all TEMPORAL, material
- About earthly, not heavenly desires

Consider: When our thinking becomes contaminated, it is no longer in line with God's Word.

Col. 3:1-4 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ² Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. [Stand confident in God's promise]

Positive Confession: You have the ability to determine your own reality with your own words. You can actually create what you believe Scripture promises >> Health & wealth.

Kenyon: "A spiritual law that few of us realize is that our confessions rule us."

What we say, we become. If I say I am depressed, I will become depressed.

Osteen: We have to call the things that are not as if they already are.

Don't speak defeat into your future. "I may not feel up to par, but I know it is only temporary. You will get what you call in." [Law of Attraction]

Osteen: Our words have creative power. When we speak something out, we are giving it the right to come to pass. There is healing in your mouth. The miracle is in your mouth.

Hagin: "You can have what you say. You can write your own ticket with God. The first step in writing your ticket with God is to say it."

Supreme Influence: Change Your Life with the Power of the Language You Use

- Secular book and author

Change Your Words, Change Your Life: Understanding the Power of Every Word You Speak

- Book by Joyce Meyer

Meyer: "If it is in your mind, it will wind up coming out of your mouth. Words have creative power. God said, "Let there be light." His words were so powerful because He is totally powerful, totally pure. When we speak faith-filled words, it goes into the spiritual realm and begins to create in that realm that we don't see - things that we desire into this realm where we can see it. Words are a big deal. They are containers for power, and we have to decide what kind of power we want our words to carry. ... I believe that our words can affect the answers to our prayers and have a positive or negative effect on our future. ..."

Osteen: The Scripture says that God wants to pour out both His heart and favor on you.

God wants this to be the best time of your life, but if you are going to receive this favor, you must enlarge your vision. You can't go around thinking negative, defeating thoughts.

Osteen: "Why did God shut Zechariah's mouth? He knew Zechariah's negative words would cancel out God's plan. God knows the power of our words. He knows that we prophesy our future. He knew that Zechariah's negative speech would stop God's plan."

Kenneth Copeland's ministry has said that God does not use suffering for our benefit.

Truth: This idea is "a deception of Satan" and "absolutely against the Word of God."

"If someone is not experiencing prosperity, it is because they have given Satan authority over their lives, and God will not do anything except when a believer invites him to."

"As the seeds of prosperity are planted in your heart, will and emotions, they eventually produce a great financial harvest."

It is argued that Jesus and the apostles had worldly wealth, owning homes and businesses.

The following arguments have been offered for this claim:

- Jesus' ability to travel without apparently working to earn a living for three years
- References by Jesus and the apostles to owning homes
- The businesses that each of the apostles apparently owned/worked in
- Jesus had a treasurer = Judas Iscariot
- Jesus consorting with the upper echelons of society

- Jesus' miraculous ability to command abundance - feeding the 5 thousand, finding tax money in a fish, telling Peter where the fish would overflow his net, etc.

This is contrary to the traditional view of Jesus as a poor, wandering teacher.

Based on their belief that Jesus and his apostles were wealthy, the historical examples of wealthy Christians, and the promises of prosperity throughout the Old and New Testaments, Word of Faith proponents teach that modern believers also have access to the blessing of financial wealth. Copeland states that "as the seeds of prosperity are planted in your heart, in your will and in your emotions...they eventually produce a great financial harvest."

They base their claims on a misinterpretation of certain Scripture passages.

When we look at 1 verse of 1 short section of Scripture, without considering its proper context, we can make those mistakes.

III John 1:1-4 The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

² Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. ³ For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, *that is*, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. {NASB} Always note the CONTEXT:

- *It is a salutation, not a prescription for all Christians.*
- It is clear that Gaius was a man whose "spiritual health" was evident to all.
- He was recognized as a man who obeyed the Word of God and "walked in truth."
- The truth was in Gaius and enabled him to walk in obedience to God's will.
- It seems John might have been hinting that Gaius was not physically well and John was praying for his physical health to be restored.

However, Word of Faith teaching twists this passage [all respects you may prosper and be in good health] and holds that God wants his people to prosper in all areas of life, including finances, health, marriage, and relationships. Word of Faith teaches that God's blessing empowers his people to achieve the Bible's promises.

- Thus, suffering does not come from God, but from Satan.
- Your health and wealth are connected to your spiritual development.
- It teaches that the salvation won by Jesus on the cross included wealth and prosperity for believers.

Distinctive Word of Faith teachings include physical, emotional, financial, relational, and spiritual healing or prosperity for those who skillfully manage their covenant with God.

The movement urges believers to speak what they desire, in agreement with the promises and provisions of the Bible, as an affirmation of God's plans and purposes.

God SPOKE THINGS INTO EXISTENCE

Many Word of Faith teachers have argued that God created the universe by speaking it into existence and that God has endowed believers with this power. Thus, making a "positive confession" of God's promise and believing God's word stirs the power of resurrection which raised Christ from the dead [Eph. 1:19-20; Eph. 3:20], and brings that promise to fulfillment.

Benny Hinn: "There is power in me to speak life and death. I am speaking something into existence." Does this sound like God's act of creation?

- This diminishes the deity of God to make him look more human and exalts man.

Creflo Dollar: As spiritual beings who possess the nature of God, we have the ability to speak things into existence, just like God did in Gen. 1.

- The practice of saying aloud what you want to happen with the expectation that God will make it a reality.
- Words have creative and spiritual power. What you say determines everything that happens to you.
- If you think positive thoughts, "positive confession," or have "enough faith," then you can have health, wealth, happiness now. [Law of Attraction].
- Your confessions, especially the favors you demand of God, must all be stated positively and without wavering.
- Then God is required to answer (as though man could require anything of God!). Thus, God's ability to bless us supposedly hangs on our faith.

Below is a passage they use as a proof text that we can speak things into existence.

Romans 4:17, which speaks of "the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not." Many prosperity teachers latch onto the phrase "calls into being things that were not" and try to use it as Biblical evidence that we can do the same thing.

Paul is clearly talking about God, not man, calling things into existence.

Speaking things into existence is God's domain.

A 2nd passage in Scripture plainly shows man's inability to speak things into existence.

Lamentations 3:37 asks the rhetorical question, "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? The answer, of course, is "no one." None of us has the power to speak and bring things to pass through the sheer force of our word.

God's decrees will stand. Given the clarity of this verse, we can only assume that those who falsely teach that we can speak things into existence rely on their hearers not ever reading the book of Lamentations.

God's Word: Speaking things into existence is solely within God's power and exclusively His right. When God created the world, He simply spoke Light appeared [Gen. 1:3]; the sky was formed [7-8]; dry land emerged [9]; vegetation sprang up [11]; the sun, moon, and stars appeared [14-15]; fish, birds and animal life appeared [20-21, 24]. God's act of creation shows His unique and mighty power in a way that can never be duplicated. God is the only one who can speak things into existence.

Passage Used As A Proof Text That Man Can Speak Things Into Existence:

Mark 11:22-24 Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God."²³ Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be *granted* him.

²⁴ Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be *granted* you.

Pray with faith: The term word of faith itself is derived from Romans 10:8

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

WOF Teaching: When Jesus talked about speaking to the mountains, he meant for us to speak to our problems. He didn't say to pray to the Father about our problems; he told us to speak to our problems ourselves.

Context Is Important: The scene was Jerusalem and the time a few days before His death.

➤ Mark 11:1-11 Jesus sends for the colt and rides into Jerusalem

➤ Mark 11:12-14 Jesus examines the fig tree with "nothing but leaves;" cursed the tree

Its foliage signals that it should have early figs, but upon examination, it has "nothing but leaves" to illustrate the barren state of Israel due to unbelief. It had the promise of fruit and looked good on the outside. Expectation without satisfaction > Jesus cursed that tree.

If you claim to have faith without putting it to work in your life, you are like the barren fig tree. There was life, but NO FRUIT

➤ Mark 11:15-19 Jesus cleansed the Temple [fulfilled prophecy; Malachi 3:1-3]

Consider: The Temple was to be a place of worship, but true worship had disappeared.

Consider People came to the Temple hungry for God but found no help to connect with Him.

➤ Jesus showed His anger at religious life without substance. Corrupt on the inside Jesus cursed the tree for its fruitlessness in the same way God would judge the temple and the nation of Israel for its spiritual fruitlessness only a few decades later.

➤ Mark 11:20-21 Next day> Peter notices> Fig tree is dried up from the roots

➤ Mark 11:22 Jesus' reply: Have faith in God [Constantly be trusting God]

Context: Barren and non-fruit bearing lives; lack of true worship - Jesus uses this to teach His disciples about the nature of faith and the power of prayer.

In Jewish imagery, a mountain signifies something strong and immovable, a problem that stands in the way. [Zech. 4:7] We can move these mountains only by trusting God and leaning on Him.

Consider: Prayer that moves mountains is prayer for the fruitfulness of God's Kingdom. It would be impossible to move a mountain into the sea, so Jesus used that picture to show that God can do anything. God will answer our prayers, but not as a result of our positive thoughts or words.

Mark 11:23 "For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says," [This is the power of faith in God.]

This should not be taken as a blanket promise or command to change terrain. We have no record in the New Testament of an apostle, gifted Christian or believer changing terrain (moving mountains into the sea).

Consider: We can face and conquer great difficulties by faith in God. The challenges we face in life often seem like huge mountains we cannot climb and cannot cross. Deeply rooted, active faith in God is our strength to confront these mountains and move them out of the way.

Adrian Rogers: Glance at your problem; Gaze on Your Lord. Christ won't transform my problem [mountain] until I transfer it to Him.

I Pet. 5:6-7 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:⁷ Casting all your care upon him; for He careth for you.

- Our prayers are often motivated by our own interests and desires. Can have anything!
- Jesus prayed with God's interests in mind.

Example: Jesus prayed, "All things are possible unto thee...nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." [Mark 14:36]

Mark 11:24 Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.

- The only way to spin this verse into a blank check to get anything you ask for, is to ignore the context. Remember, the topic is identified in verse 22: "have faith in God." I cannot use verse 24 for anything that would not harmonize with faith in God.

I John 5:14-15 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:¹⁵ And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

We are told to submit to God's will in our prayers.

We are never given the power to speak things into existence.

Matt. 6:33 Jesus taught, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

- ❖ When we seek God first and align our thoughts and desires with His thoughts and desires, then we are showing true faith. This leads to us asking for the things that God wants, not the things that we want. Our desires become His desires, and our prayers become requests to fulfill His desires rather than our own. The purpose of prayer is not to speak things into existence but to conform our will to God's [Luke 22:42].

"If your faith rests in your idea of how God is supposed to answer your prayers, your idea of heaven here on earth or pie in the sky or whatever, then that kind of faith is very shaky and is bound to be demolished when the storms of life hit it. But if your faith rests on the character of Him who is the eternal I AM, then that kind of faith is rugged and will endure."

— Elisabeth Elliot, *Suffering Is Never for Nothing*

Lessons & Application: Fruitlessness Leads To Judgment.

- ❖ The fig tree is associated with the nation of Israel. [Jer. 8:13; Hos. 9:10; Nahum 3:12]
- ❖ As Israel was God's own special planting, they were to yield spiritual fruit as His covenant people [Ps. 1:3; Jer. 17:8-10].
- ❖ The time had come for God's people, Israel, to yield fruit that would bless the world [Isa. 27:6]. The prophets describe God as inspecting Israel for "early figs," as a sign of spiritual fruitfulness [Mic. 7:1; Jer. 8:13; Hos. 9:10-17]—but he finds "no first-ripe fig that my soul desires." So in two exiles [Assyrian and Babylonian], God pours out the curse of barrenness [Hos. 9:16], and Israel becomes a rotten fig [Jer. 29:17].

God promises to one day replant Israel and produce healthy figs from her again.

[Joel 2:22; Amos 9:14; Mic. 4:4; Zech. 8:12; Ezek. 36:8].

- ❖ Like the fig tree Jesus cursed, Israel had "nothing but leaves." Note the tree dried up from the roots. Three years earlier John the Baptist had put the ax to the roots of the tree. [Matt. 3:10], but the religious leaders would not heed his message. Whenever an individual or a group "dries up" spiritually, it is usually from the roots.

Recall: Earlier in Jesus' ministry, God's people were called to produce spiritual fruit.

[Matt. 3:8-10; 7:16-20; 13:8; Luke 3:7-9]. Jesus has pursued the children of God with compassionate seriousness. Luke 13:34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

Mark 11: Now the Jewish crowds were gathering to celebrate God's past act of redemption [Passover/exodus]. They have just hailed Jesus as "king" while He leads a new exodus on a meaning-laden donkey [Zech. 9:9]. They think He is setting up His Kingdom.

The eschatological restoration has arrived. Israel's fruit will now be harvested; blessing will now pour forth. While the rest of the nations—the other fig trees—are not yet in season, this *one tree* is "in leaf." Matthew and Mark, by "sandwiching" the fig tree episode, focus the lens on where it will all transpire: Jerusalem.

"However, there's no fruit. The fig tree, once again, has failed. The Passover celebration, the tumult, the crowds, the singing—it's all a show. Jesus enters God's house of prayer and finds it a "den of robbers" [Mark 11:17]. Lots of action, lots of bustle, but no righteousness.

Leaves, but no fruit.

So upon inspecting the fruitless tree, Jesus pours out divine judgment via two sign-acts: the future-pointing act of cursing the temple, and the enacted metaphor of cursing the tree."

Consider: Light bulbs should have immediately gone on in the minds of Jesus's disciples as he re-enacted Israel's history by cursing the fig tree.

When the disciples asked Jesus to explain what just transpired, he pivots and talks about prayer. Why? Though they do not yet fully understand, they will be the new caretakers of God's people [Matt. 21:33-45].

The point: Peter and the other disciples would need this kind of faith (as opposed to the unbelief demonstrated by the withered tree).

They will be instruments by which Israel is transformed—when the Jewish nucleus of Christ-followers extends branches worldwide and brings forth fruit from all nations (beginning in Acts). As Jesus teaches here, they will do this by the power of faithful prayer.

L.A. Stauffer: "Casting mountains into the sea is not a specific objective of the will of God or Christ, but does illustrate vividly and memorably the unlimited power of God when working through men who believe and doubt not (Truth Commentaries, Mark, by L.A. Stauffer, p.#270).

James 1:2-8 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³ Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴ But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. ⁵ If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

⁶ But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. ⁷ For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. ⁸ A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Although the fig tree cursing is about historical Israel, application can be made to the people of God throughout time.

Consider My Spiritual State

The Old Testament expectation that God's covenant people bear fruit did not wither on that road between Bethany and Jerusalem when that poor fig tree met its cursed fate. In fact, the mandate that God's people bear spiritual fruit has actually *intensified* in the new era, not weakened [John 4:36; 15:2-16; Rom. 1:13; 6:21; Gal. 5:22; Phil. 1:11; 4:17; Heb. 12:11; Jas. 3:17]. We do not EARN God's "gardening affection"—but we yield to His work in us.

This passage does not just remind us that a Christian by definition must produce spiritual fruit. It's also about the threat of and temptation toward false pretenses of fruit.

The fig tree, like the bustling temple courts during Passover, was putting on a good show. And that made it all the worse. It's one thing to lack fruit out of season. It's another thing to lack it while pretending you have it.

So let us be warned.

Our personal lives can look like "in leaf." Our leaves may look like those of a supermom, a winner, a perfect family, an A-team Christian with an overstuffed schedule of ministry activities. But the root may be withered. There may be no fruit of holiness and no intimacy with God. What's worse—my leaves may even fool and deceive me.