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The Leaven of Lakewood Joel Osteen's Appealing But Aberrant Message

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Many would look at Houston's Lakewood Church, with its 30,000 people attending services each Sunday in a 16,000-seat arena that once was the home of the Houston Rockets basketball team, as the epitome of church success. But that success was achieved at a cost to sound doctrine and spiritual integrity.

Lakewood, a Charismatic, Word Faith powerhouse in the 21st century, was founded by the late John Osteen, who started his pastoral career as a Southern Baptist. After receiving "the baptism in the Holy Ghost in 1958,"¹ he became enamored with the Charismatic renewal movement. In 1959, he left the Southern Baptist Convention and described his exodus in these terms:

"One day I was sailing through life in my little Baptist boat. I began to study the Bible in my search for deeper things. As I read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, I saw the Son of the Living God. He was healing the sick. He was casting out demons. He was setting the captives free. He was bringing men to God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Oh,



how it thrilled me! I cried, 'Jesus, I want to do what I see You doing.' He said, 'Come!' Thank God, I marched out of my little

Baptist boat and walked out to do what Jesus was doing. Others have stayed in the boat where it is safe. They are not in danger of sinking, but they are not out where the miracles are. Oh, for men and women who will risk all for Jesus. Oh, for people who will rise up and walk out, trusting only in the power of Jesus!"²

Osteen eventually became associated with the Word Faith movement. "A Tribute to Pastor John Osteen," found on the church's web site, offers further details of the church's genesis, mission, and history:

"John Osteen began Lakewood Church in a dusty, abandoned feed store on Mother's Day 1959. ... John Osteen was driven by an amazing love for people of all ages, races, nationalities and walks of life. ... The late John

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