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The New Look of the Prosperity Gospel Joel Osteen Offers You Your Best Life Now

by Gary E. Gilley

Rhonda Byrne's New Age book and video, *The Secret*,¹ teaches that we can "create [our] own happiness through the law of attraction." Whether it is cash, health, prosperity, or happiness, all can be ours if we will just learn to use "the secret." Byrne tells us, "Disease cannot live in a body that is in a healthy emotional state." But he warned: "If you have a disease and you are focusing on it and talking to people about it, you are going to create more disease cells."²

Such rhetoric should sound familiar to anyone even faintly aware of the Word-Faith movement, often called "the prosperity gospel." This teaching has been infiltrating evangelicalism for decades and its adherents are now the world's fastest-growing segment of Christianity. For example, some have estimated that up to 90 percent of Africans claiming to be Christians believe in the prosperity gospel.

Well-known personalities within the movement include Kenneth Copeland, Robert Tilton, David (Paul) Yonggi Cho, Benny Hinn, Marilyn Hickey,

Frederick Price, John Avanzini, Charles Capps, Jerry Savelle, Morris Cerullo, Joyce Meyer, and Paul and Jan Crouch. The late Kenneth Hagin was an influence on Copeland and many of the others.



Word-Faith adherents believe that faith works like a power or force. Through faith we can obtain anything we want: health, wealth, success, and more. However, this force is released only through the *spoken word*. As we speak words of faith, power is discharged to accomplish our desires.

In *Christianity in Crisis*, Hank Hanegraaff summarizes the theology (continues on page 16)

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