



**WORLDVIEW MADE PRACTICAL**  
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**Whatever Happened to the Word-Faith Movement?**

By Tal Davis

Back in the late 1970s, following the rise of the popular charismatic movement in American evangelicalism, there sprang another unusual branch of that spiritual movement that took root and rapidly spread among Pentecostals. Led primarily by popular television evangelists, that spiritual crusade became known as the Word-Faith Movement. It had other designations as well including the "Word of Faith", the Health and Wealth Gospel; "Name and Claim It"; the "Faith" Movement; the "Positive Confession" Movement; and the Prosperity Gospel.

The Word-Faith movement actually had its origins in the early 20th century with the preaching of a New England Baptist pastor named E. W. Kenyon (1867-1948). Kenyon was influenced by 19th century faith-healing teachers like A. J. Gordon (1836 - 1895) and A. B. Simpson (1843 - 1919). Some researchers believe he was also influenced by the New Thought Movement of Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802-1866).

In the 1950s, Oklahoma Pentecostal preacher Kenneth E. Hagin (1917-2003) taught many of Kenyon's same ideas. Hagin claimed that God had spoken to him audibly and revealed his faith concepts to him. He wrote about them in numerous books and pamphlets in the 1960s and 70s. However, evidence was found that Hagin plagiarized much of his writings almost directly from Kenyon. In any case, in 1974 Hagin started the Rhema Bible Training Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It is still one of the world's primary training centers for Word-Faith pastors and teachers.

Today, many prominent preachers on Christian satellite television networks continue to promulgate the doctrines of Kenyon and Hagin (see list below). Naïve viewers send millions of dollars to them to support their ministries, raising serious questions as to the use of funds received and the ethical problems of the lavish lifestyles of the preachers and their families.

So what do the Word-Faith exponents teach? Though they differ on some issues, most Word-Faith teachers state that God is a spirit being who speaks "words of faith" to accomplish His will. That is, God Himself exercised faith to create the universe and everything in it. He continues to exercise this "God-kind of faith" to work in the world today. They say that, although humans have physical bodies, we are also spirit beings. Therefore we were created "in God's class" or as "little gods." This means that humans are able to speak "words of faith" just like God does. Humans can potentially express that "God-kind-of-faith", like God has, and can have power over the material world and bring healing and prosperity.

However, because of sin we lost the ability to express that kind of godly faith. Jesus, who perfectly understood this Word-Faith principle, died on the cross both physically and spiritually to restore our faith to be healthy and prosperous. So redeemed Christians, then, are essentially incarnations of God like Jesus and can do what He did. The key is to always "pray-believing." That is, we must pray a "positive confession" with the absolute expectation that we will get what we ask for. It is our confident word-of-faith that guarantees the answer. Many Word-Faith preachers say that an important principle for increasing positive faith is by making a "seed-faith" financial donation to

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their ministry (they rarely encourage viewers to give to their local churches). However, if we doubt, allow negative thinking to invade our minds, or harbor secret sins or sinful thoughts, it short-circuits the power of prayer and we will not get what we desire. So if we pray and don't get what we ask for, the explanation must be "You just don't believe strong enough or you must have secret sin in your life!" In other words, it is your fault if God does not heal your disease or provide you money when you ask for it. You just don't have enough faith. Or maybe you need to give more to the ministry to prove your faith.

Christian Researcher Robert Bowman of the Institute of Biblical Research in his Biblical analysis of these doctrines states that they are based on four fundamental mistakes in interpreting and applying Scripture.

#### **Mistake 1: Thinking a Good God Will Give Us Only Good Things**

Job rightly said that if we accept good things from God, we should also accept it when he takes them away or when bad things happen to us (Job 1:21-22; 2:10). God promises to work all things together for our good (Rom. 8:28); he does not promise that all our things will be good.

#### **Mistake #2: Confusing Spiritual and Physical Blessings**

When Paul tells us to set our minds on "the things above" (Col. 3:2), he means spiritual blessings, not a "higher" quality of material life.

The "spiritual blessings" God has given us are adoption, forgiveness, and the like (Eph. 1:3-14), not promises of physical blessings awaiting our positive confession.

#### **Mistake #3: Misreading Future Promises as Present Guarantees**

Ephesians 2:7 says that God will show us the surpassing riches of

his grace "in the ages to come"; the best is yet to come! In Hebrews 11, faith is not confidence of getting material things now but rather the assurance of our future heavenly home (Heb. 11:1, 8-16). God has promised us a life of perfect health and prosperity-in the resurrection (Rom. 8:18-23)!

#### **Mistake #4: Thinking That If We Believe What We Say it Will Happen**

God's words are inherently powerful; ours are not (Is. 55:11; Rom. 4:16-21). Human words are powerless, whether we believe them or not (Proverbs 14:23; 17:10; 26:23, 26; 29:19). Human words have consequences as people act on them (Prov. 6:1-2; 18:21). The Laodiceans confessed that they were rich-but they were wrong (Rev. 3:17)!

(Robert Bowman- Power Point: Biblical Response to the Word-Faith Movement. North American Mission Board)

Below is a list of some of the more prominent Word-Faith teachers from the 1990s and early 2000s and what their statuses are today.

**Kenneth (b. 1936) and Gloria Copeland** - They are the leaders of Kenneth Copeland Ministries and the *Believers Voice of Victory* TV in Fort Worth Texas. They, along with their daughter and son-in-law, are pastors of the Eagle Mountain International Church near Fort Worth. At that location they have their residence, a television studio, and a private airport with several personal use planes. They also have a Bible college on the property. They are reported to be worth around \$750 million.

**Charles Capps (1934 -2014)** - He formerly hosted the *Concepts of Faith* radio and TV ministries in England, Arkansas. He died in 2014. The current status of his ministry is unknown.

**Benny Hinn (b. 1952)** - Hinn was born in Jaffa, Israel. When he was a teenager his family moved to Canada in

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1968. In the 1970s he moved to the United States and was influenced by flamboyant faith healer Kathryn Kuhlman (1907-1976). In the 1980s he became pastor of the Orlando Christian Center in Orlando, Florida. He now leads mass healing crusades around the world and hosts *This Is Your Day* TV from Orange County, California. He has been the focus of a number of critical exposes of his claimed healings and of his personal moral behavior. In 2019 he stated that he was rethinking his association with prosperity theology, but his website continues to post his Word-Faith books and messages. Hinn's net worth is estimated at about \$60 million.

**Fredrick K. C. Price** (1932-2021) - Price was the pastor of Crenshaw Christian Center in Los Angeles, California, from 1973 until his death in 2021. Beginning in 1990 the church started meeting in the "Faithdome" auditorium that seats 10,146 people. He also was the host of the *Ever Increasing Faith* TV and Radio Ministries programs. He died of complications of COVID-19 in February 2021 at the age of 89. His son, Fredrick Price, Jr., a sort of "hip-hop preacher", took over his father's ministry upon his death.

**Creflo Dollar** (b. 1962) - Since 1986 Dollar has been the pastor of the World Changers Church International in College Park, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta. The church claims 30,000 members. Dollar also heads the Creflo Dollar Ministerial Association (formerly called International Covenant Ministries), Creflo Dollar Ministries, and Arrow Records in Atlanta. In 2015 He came under government and media scrutiny when he solicited funds to purchase a \$60 million jet airplane.

**Joyce Meyer** (b. 1943) - She is the head of Joyce Meyer Ministries in Fenton, Missouri. In the 1990s, Mey-

er and her husband came under scrutiny by the government for their lavish lifestyle. However, in 2009, after making significant financial reforms, her ministry applied for and was granted accreditation by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA). Hopefully her message has made a change as well.

**Paula White-Cain** (b. 1966) - She was formerly the co-pastor of Without Walls International Church in Tampa, Florida, a church she co-founded with her then-husband Randy White in 1991. From 2014 until May 2019, she was senior pastor of New Destiny Christian Center, in Apopka, Florida. During the administration of President Trump she served as one of his evangelical religious advisors. At this time it is not clear what she is doing, but in 2021 she was criticized for participating in a prayer rally in South Korea sponsored by the Unification Church (founded by the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon).

**Rod Parsley** (b. 1957) - He is leader of World Harvest Church, the Center for Moral Clarity, Breakthrough (a media ministry), the Bridge of Hope missions organization, Valor Christian College, Harvest Preparatory School, World Harvest Ministerial Alliance, Metro Harvest Church (an inner-city and prison outreach), Latin Harvest Church (a Spanish-language congregation) and The Women's Clinic, Columbus, Ohio.

**Marilyn Hickey** (b. 1931) - She is head of Orchard Road Christian Center, Marilyn Hickey Ministries, and the *Marilyn and Sarah* (her daughter) TV show in Denver, Colorado.

**Paul** (1934 -2013) **and Jan Crouch** (1938 - 2016)- They were founders of the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) in 1973, and hosts of the *Praise the Lord* TV show from Dallas, Texas. In 2012 they came under government scrutiny after allegations by

their granddaughter of financial irregularities surrounding their lavish spending habits. Since 2013 they have both died but TBN continues to broadcast numerous Word-Faith programs. Since 2015 their son, Matt Crouch, has been President of TBN and, with his wife Laurie, co-hosts the daily *Praise the Lord* TV show.

**Joseph Prince** (b. 1963) - In 1983 he was one of the founders of the New Creation Church in Singapore, and was soon named as senior pastor. His daily TV program, "Joseph Prince," has become popular worldwide over the past decade on the Trinity Broadcasting Network.

**Andrew Wommack** (b. 1949) - In 1978 he started Andrew Wommack Ministries on radio in Colorado Springs, Colorado. In 1994 he founded Charis Bible College in Colorado. Since 2000 he has hosted the daily TV show *The Gospel Truth with Andrew Wommack* on TBN and several other satellite networks.

So whatever happened to Word-Faith Movement? It is still around and is as popular as ever. Its theology is still as distorted as ever. Sadly, millions of sincere Christians are sending their gifts to support the teachers of this false gospel. They should be good stewards of God's resources by giving to their own local churches and to legitimate ministries that are working hard to spread the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ. A couple of ways to investigate if a ministry or church is doctrinally sound and financially trustworthy is to look online at those accredited by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) at [www.ecfa.org](http://www.ecfa.org) or go to MinistryWatch at [www.ministrywatch.com](http://www.ministrywatch.com).

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