

ELEMENT

christian church



Destruction From Within.

"Having lost the ability to think biblically, postmodern Christians are being transformed from cultural change agents and initiators into cultural conformists and imitators." Hank Hanegraaff

2 Peter 2:1-2 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up.

Acts 20:30-31 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

This is going to be one of the most fun AND the most brutal of all the crazy religions we have looked at so far. Within Christianity there is a movement that is clearly unbiblical in nature but it is bought into by so many people. This movement within Christianity is threatening to undermine the very foundation of biblical faith.

The people are not obscure teachers, they are in print, radio and television and they promote the false pretexts of a give-to-get gospel. *"They are virtual rock stars who command the attention of presidential candidates and media moguls but they further themselves with make-believe miracles, urban legends, counterfeit Christs, and twisted theological reasoning."* Hank Hanegraaff They peddle an occult brand of metaphysics that continues to shipwreck the faith of millions around the globe:

- "God cannot do anything in this earthly realm unless we give Him permission."
- "Keep saying it- 'I have equality with God' -talk yourself into it."
- "Being poor is a sin."
- "The Jews were not rejecting Jesus as their Messiah; it was Jesus who was refusing to be the Messiah to the Jews."
- "You create your own world the same way God creates His. He speaks, and things happen; you speak, and they happen."

**If you need to PLEASE go back and look at the first week where we studied what biblical Christianity entails. We are starting from the premise that you know those basics.*

Much of this modern movement stems from a misread of history and truth. It stems from Christians trying to change Christianity from trusting God into some sort of voodoo that manipulates God into doing what they want.

Recently the book *The Secret* came out and became a huge best seller and it has zero to do with Christianity. In the book the secret (which is about the secret of health, wealth, successful relationships, maintaining your perfect weight, etc) Rhonda Byrne informs the world that she has discovered the "Secret to Life." This "secret" she says was harnessed by "the greatest

people in history: Plato, Shakespeare, Newton, Hugo, Beethoven, Lincoln, Emerson, Edison, [and] Einstein.” Oprah dubbed *The Secret* “life changing...The thoughts and the feelings that you put out into the world, both good and bad, are exactly what is always coming back to you, so you have the life that you have created. I’ve been talking about this for years on my show. I just never called it *The Secret*.”

The “secret” is “the law of attraction.” Byrne says “The greatest teachers who have ever lived have told us that the law of attraction is the most powerful law in the Universe...The law of attraction is the law of creation. Quantum physicists tell us that the entire Universe emerged from thought! You create your life through your thoughts and the law of attraction, and every single person does the same.”

Byrne says, “The Creative Process used in *The Secret*, which *was taken from the New Testament in the Bible*, is an easy guideline for you to create what you want in three simple steps” (*Emphasis mine*). What are these simple steps? Ask, Believe, and Receive.

Byrne uses herself as an example. To transform herself from fat to thin, she thought thin thoughts and did not so much as look at fat people: “If you see people who are overweight, do not observe them, but immediately switch your mind to the picture of you in your perfect body and feel it.” As a result she says, “I now maintain my perfect weight of 116 pounds and I can eat whatever I want.”° According to *The Secret*, the error is to think that food is responsible for weight gain:

The most common thought that people hold, and I held it too, is that food was responsible for my weight gain. That is a belief that does not serve you, and in my mind now it is complete balderdash! Food is not responsible for putting on weight. It is your thought that food is responsible for putting on weight that actually has food put on weight. Remember, thoughts are primary cause of everything, and the rest is effects from those thoughts. Think perfect thoughts and the result must be perfect weight.

You might think this just sounds stupid but she has many followers – and if taken to its conclusion, just as her followers must avoid fat people for fear of becoming fat, so they, too, must avoid cancer victims for fear of contracting cancer. Or poor people for fear of becoming poor. In other words, **you should avoid the very people Jesus exhorts us to care for**—do not so much as look at them!

The contributors to ‘*The Secret*’ are remarkably open with respect to the many dangerous hues of “the secret’s” dark underbelly. Byrne points out events in history “where masses of lives were lost.” While some might find it incomprehensible that multitudes could have attracted the same massacre, Byrne does not. “If people believe they can be in the wrong place at the wrong time, and they have no control over outside circumstances, those thoughts of fear, separation, and powerlessness if persistent, can attract them to being in the wrong place at the wrong time.” Says Byrne: “Nothing can come into your experience unless you summon it through persistent thoughts.”

Contributing authors of *The Secret* have made it plain that victims of suffering and tragedy attracted those circumstances to their lives. When asked by Larry King whether Jessica Lunsford, a nine-year-old Florida girl who was brutally raped and murdered, attracted this horror to herself, contributing author Joe Vitale responded, “We are attracting everything to ourselves and there is no exception.”

In short, thoughts are the primary cause of everything—whether good or bad. On one hand, thin thoughts produce thin bodies; on the other, six million Jews brought the horrors of the Holocaust upon themselves. As *The Secret* makes clear, “The law of attraction never slips up ... There are no exclusions to the law of attraction. If something came to you, you drew it, with prolonged thought.” Says Byrne, “You are the Master of the Universe, and the Genie is there to serve you.”

Why do I let you know about the secret? Because its logic is the same logic that many WITHIN Christianity are also telling masses of people from their pulpits. Many of these statements are exactly the opposite of scripture. Rhonda Byrne calls it the “law of attraction” while Joel Osteen calls it “the Word of Faith.” He is committed to the notion that faith is a force, that words are the containers of the force, and that through the force of faith, people can create their own realities. In his book *Your Best Life Now* he says, “Our words are vital in bringing our dreams to pass. It’s not enough to simply see it by faith or in your imagination. You have to begin speaking words of faith over your life. Your words have enormous creative power. The moment you speak something out, you give birth to it. This is a spiritual principle, it works whether what you are saying is good or bad, positive or negative.”

Osteen and Byrne have differences but they are united in the belief that the force of faith is so powerful that even God (however you define Him) is bound by its irrevocable reality. Osteen cites the birth of John the Baptist. Zechariah doubted that his wife could give birth to a son, thus God rendered him speechless during the entirety of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. “Why did God take away his speech?” asks Osteen. “It’s because God knew that Zechariah’s negative words would **cancel out His plan** . . . See, God knows the power of our words. He knows we prophesy our future. **And He knew Zechariah’s own negative words would stop His plan.**” (emphasis mine). – *Become a Better You* page 114

To make his points work Osteen abuses scripture. He buttress the belief that words create reality; Osteen writes, “The Scripture tells us that we are to ‘call the things that are not as if they already were.’” **BUT** Scripture says nothing of the sort. The very passage Osteen references (Romans 4:17) clearly communicates that it is “the God who gives life”—not we—God who “calls things that are not as though they were.” – *Become a Better You*

Osteen’s twisting of scripture is not unique. A host of prominent teachers have employed similar techniques and as a result are plunging Christianity into an ever-deepening crisis. In the late twentieth century, Word of Faith teachers like Kenneth Hagin, Robert Tilton, Marilyn Hickey, John Avanzini, and Morris Cerullo were at the fore. In the early twenty-first they are

being overshadowed by a new breed of prosperity preachers (Creflo Dollar, Rod Parsley, Joyce Meyer, John Hagee, T. D. Jakes, and Paula White) who have increasingly become mainstream.

What I will endeavor to do here is give some quotes from some of these people, broken out like the previous sections, so you can separate what is true from what is false. I do not know what resides in these teachers hearts, only God does (Jer 17:10, 1 Chron 28:9) but I will comment about their teaching. Scripture admonishes us to test all things and hold fast to that which is good (1 Thess 5:21, Acts 17:11); and Jude exhorts us to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3).

Gordon Lewis in talking about cults summarized it like this:

A cult, then, is any religious movement which claims the backing of Christ or the Bible, but distorts the central message of Christianity by 1) an additional revelation, and 2) by displacing a fundamental tenet of the faith with a secondary matter. (In his book *Confronting the Cults*)

A primary characteristic of cults is taking biblical texts out of context in order to validate their theological distortion. Many cults claim the name of Jesus but they grossly misstate who He and His purpose for coming. Jesus asked the greatest question in regards to himself, “Who do you say that I am” (Matthew 16:15). Many of the teaching in by some of the ‘leaders’ in Christianity today are simply cultic by definition.

Talking about errors can be difficult because there are serious and then not-so-serious types of errors. Everything we look at here should press you to spend more time in seeking God for truth and holding close the things that must be defended.

BRIEF HISTORY

Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802—1866), was known as the father of New Thought, and popularized the notion that sickness and suffering have their origin in incorrect thinking. Quimby’s followers held that man could create his own reality through the power of positive affirmation (confession) (*Spirits in Rebellion* page 121-123). Metaphysical practitioners taught adherents to visualize health and wealth and then to affirm or confess them with their mouths so that the intangible images may be transformed into tangible realities.

The similarities between Word/Faith theology and the teachings inherent in New Thought metaphysics are significant. Mike Dooley, New Thought entrepreneur and contributor to *The Secret*, summed up the most striking of such similarities in three words, “Thoughts become things!”

Proponents of Faith theology have attempted to sanitize the metaphysical concept of the “power of mind” by substituting in its stead the “force of faith,” for all practical purposes they have made a distinction without any true difference. New Thought writer Warren Felt Evans wrote, “faith is the most intense form of mental action.”

H. Emilie Cady, a well-known writer for Charles and Myrtle Fillmore's Unity School of Christianity, explained that "our affirming, backed by faith, is the link that connects our conscious human need with His power and supply." (*How to Use the Science of Mind*).

While New Thought metaphysics and Word of Faith theology have notable similarities (as well as obvious dissimilarities), the substance, style, and scams endemic to the movement are traceable to teachings and practices expressed primarily by certain post-World War II faith healers and Counterfeit Revivalists operating within Pentecostal circles. Kenneth Copeland and Kenneth Hagin point to T. L. Osborn and William Branham as true men of God who greatly influenced their lives and ministries. This despite the fact that Osborn himself consistently followed E. W. Kenyon's Scripture-twisting practices and Branham denounced the doctrine of the Trinity as coming directly from the devil.'

Benny Hinn gives Branham approval as well. Hinn gravitates more toward such Faith healers as Aimee Semple McPherson and Kathryn Kuhlman. Benny Hinn said he still visits their grave sites and experiences "the anointing," which he claims emanates from Aimee's bones.' (*Double Portion Anointing*). Hinn has given his endorsement to notorious revivalist A. A. Allen and Robert Tilton and Marilyn Hickey who have embraced many of the practices pioneered by A. A. Allen and Oral Roberts as well.

Oral Roberts claimed Jesus told him to find an effective treatment for cancer. In a lengthy appeal, Roberts then said that Jesus instructed him to tell his partners that "this is not Oral Roberts asking [for the money] but their Lord." (The project was completed, but has since been "shut down and sold to a group of investors for commercial development." And no cure for cancer was found.)

A. A. Allen scammed his followers by asserting that he could command God to "turn dollar bills into twenties." He also urged his followers to send for his "prayer cloths anointed with the Miracle Oil." He offered "Miracle tent shavings" as points of contact for personal miracles. Allen even "launched a brief 'raise the dead' program." (Of course, it died.)

Allen was eventually expelled from the Assemblies of God denomination when he jumped bail after being arrested for drunk driving. In 1970 he died from what news accounts report as "sclerosis of the liver." Even after Allen's well-documented frauds and fabrications, teachers like Benny Hinn continue to extol him as a great man of God.

When you examine the cultic progression of E. W. Kenyon's theology you will discover that his original deviations from orthodox Christianity were minor compared to those that characterized the later stages of his ministry. With each of Kenyon's successive disciples, the errors become ever more pronounced.

The progression from bad to worse has continued with people like Kenneth Copeland and Charles Capps, and is now sinking to new depths through ministry leaders such as Creflo Dollar, Frederick Price, and Benny Hinn.

Twisted texts, make-believe miracles, and counterfeit Christ's are common of the Faith movement.

SCRIPTURE

- ✓ *Psalm 8:5 You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.* "is the work of a gutless translator." – Creflo Dollar. *He says this because he believes that men are little gods and it should say "a little lower than the almighty." The word used in manuscripts is actually angelous (from which we get angel). Dollar wants to twist scripture to fit his views.*
- ✓ "This is the key to understanding the virgin birth. God's Word is full of faith and Spirit power. God spoke it. God transmitted that image to Mary. She received the image inside of her. The embryo that was in Mary's womb was nothing more than the Word of God...She conceived the Word of God." – Charles Capps (*Dynamics of Faith and Confession*)

GOD

- ✓ "I was shocked when I found out who the biggest failure in the Bible actually is...The biggest one is God." – Kenneth Copeland April 1, 1988 Praise-a-thon
- ✓ "Adam, in the garden of Eden, was God manifested in the flesh" – Kenneth Copeland
- ✓ Kenneth Copeland teaches that God is 6'2" weighs 200 pounds, and has a hand span of nine inches. (*Spirit, Soul, and Body audio tape*)
- ✓ "Those who attack Kenneth Copeland are attacking the very presence of God" – Benny Hinn
- ✓ Joyce Meyer teaches that God created men as "little gods." (I believe you can still hear the audio of this at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Y4eVu2oxP8>).
- ✓ "Because you came from God you are gods – you're not just human." – Creflo Dollar (*Sept 15 2002, World Changers*) – *John 1:18 says Jesus is the ONLY begotten son.*
- ✓ Trinitarians believe God is a Trinity, Oneness Pentecostals deny the Trinity completely. T.D. Jakes says the differences are simply a "mere matter of semantics." Despite the view of Oneness Pentecostals that unless you are baptized using the correct formula you are not even saved!
- ✓ "Why does God say, 'Ask of Me?' [Psalm 2:8] Why does He say that? Because God can't do it on His own!" – Rod Parsley (Praise the Lord Aug 7, 2003)
- ✓ "Did you know that from the beginning of time the whole purpose of God was to reproduce Himself?...Who are you? Come on, who are you? Come on, say it: "Sons of God!" Come on say it!...And when we stand up here, brother, you're not looking at Morris Cerullo; you're looking at God. You're looking at Jesus." – Morris Cerullo (*The End Times Manifestations of the Sons of God*)
- ✓ "If God's not gonna work for you, then why serve Him?" – Juanita Bynum (*Praise the Lord Nov 5, 2002*)

JESUS

- ✓ "The believer is as much an incarnation as was Jesus of Nazareth."—E. W. KENYON (the Father and his Family page 118)

- ✓ “Satan conquered Jesus on the Cross” – Kenneth Copeland (Holy Bible, Kenneth Copeland Reference Ed, page 129)
- ✓ “Don’t tell me you don’t have Jesus. You are everything He was and everything He is and ever He shall be” – Benny Hinn
- ✓ During Easter services Joel Osteen told attendees that Jesus did NOT finish the work of redemption on the cross (even though Jesus said ‘It is finished.’) Osteen says Jesus triumphed over Satan in Hell where Jesus “ripped the keys of death and hell out of Satan’s hands.” (Easter service 2004 *Discover the Champion in You*). *Hebrews 2:14 clearly says his DEATH finished it...not some brawl in hell.*
- ✓ “God rose up from His throne and said to demon powers tormenting the sinless Son of God, ‘Let Him go:’ Then the resurrection power of Almighty God went through hell and filled Jesus. On the earth, His grave, the tomb where they had buried Him, filled with light as the power of God filled His body, and He was resurrected from the dead—the first born-again man. The Bible calls Him “the first-born among many brethren” (Romans 8:29). He was the first so that now you can be one of the many brethren.” – Joyce Meyer (*The Most Important Decision You Will Ever Make pg42*). *In sharp contrast to Meyer’s assertion, the Bible never says that Jesus Christ was born again. Indeed, the biblical concept of being born again (John 3:3) applies solely to sinful humanity.*
- ✓ “John 1:38 says that Jesus turned to those who were following and said, ‘come with me,’ and they said, ‘where dwellest thou?’ He said, ‘Come and see,’ and Jesus took the crowd home with Him to stay in His house. That meant it was a big house.” – John Hagee (praise-a-thon 2002). He also teaches that Jesus wore designer clothes.
- ✓ The Jewish people “wanted [Jesus] to be their Messiah but he absolutely refused...the Jews were not rejecting Jesus as Messiah, it was Jesus who was refusing to be Messiah to the Jews.” – John Hagee (*Should Christians support Israel*)
- ✓ “And somebody said, well, Jesus came as God! Well, how many of you know the Bible says God never sleeps or slumbers? And yet in the book of Mark we see Jesus asleep in the back of the boat.” – Creflo Dollar on why Jesus cannot be God (*Dec 8, 2002, World Changers*)
- ✓ “Around 2003-2005, Jesus will break through the sky, and those of us who remain shall be changed and caught up to meet Him in the air.” Creflo Dollar (*The Miracle of Debt Release, 1999*)
- ✓ “My hands are tied because I can’t do any more for you than what you say.” T.D. Jakes putting words into the mouth of Jesus talking about how our words are more powerful than the Word of God in the flesh.

HOLY SPIRIT

- ✓ Prophesying about the birth of prophets Juanita Bynum said, “Then there is male and female, then there’s intercourse in the Spirit. And then there can be birth to the nation, and right now as we sit on this broadcast, prophets are being birthed out right now.” (*Praise the Lord march 8, 2001*)
- ✓ Todd Bentley once wondered why the power of God wasn’t moving and God told him “because you haven’t kicked that woman in the face.” He explains “There was this older lady worshipping right in front of the platform. And the Holy Spirit spoke to me. The gift

of faith came on me. He said “Kick her in the face – with your biker boot!” I inched closer and went like this [Bentley motions a kick] – Bam! And just as my boot made contact with her nose she fell under the power of God.” (you can see him explain it here http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAqLVFx_yh8)

SALVATION/MAN

- ✓ “Man was created on terms of equality with God, and he could stand in God’s presence without any consciousness of inferiority.” – Kenneth Hagin (Zoe, the God Kind of Life, page 35)
- ✓ After the resurrection “there still had to be a blood sacrifice for our sins. There still had to be a price paid.” – Joel Osteen (Easter service 2004 *Discover the Champion in You*).
- ✓ “There is no hope of anyone going to heaven unless they believe this truth I am presenting. You cannot go to heaven unless you believe with all your heart that Jesus took your place in hell.” – Joyce Meyer (*The Most Important Decision You Will Ever Make*).
- ✓ Jesus “was in the grave three days. During that time, He entered hell, where you and I deserved to go (legally) because of our sin. He paid the price there.”- Joyce Meyer (*Yet scripture says that he paid the price ON THE CROSS!!!*)
- ✓ “Do you think that the punishment for our sin was to die on a cross? If that were the case, the two thieves could have paid your price. No, the punishment was [for Jesus] to go to hell itself and to serve time in hell separated from God.” – Fred Price (*Ever Increasing Faith Messenger pg7*)

SIN

- ✓ “We hold that the physical death of Jesus did not touch the sin issue at all” – E.W. Kenyon
- ✓ “I am not poor, I am not miserable, and I am not a sinner. That is a lie from the pit of hell.” Joyce Meyer (*From the Cross to the Throne*).

HEAVEN/HELL

- ✓ “I’m sick and tired of hearing about streets of gold. I don’t need gold in heaven, I gotta have it now!” – Benny Hinn

PROPHECIES

- ✓ “The Spirit tells me Fidel Castro will die in the 90’s” – Benny Hinn
- ✓ On October 19, 1999 Benny Hinn predicted that instead of burying the dead, people around the world would line up caskets around television sets (watching TBN), place the hands of the dead on TV screens, and their loved one would rise from the dead.
- ✓ “The Lord also tells me to tell you in the mid-90s, about ’94, ’95, no later than that, God will destroy the homosexual community of America. But He will not destroy it with what many minds have thought Him to be [sic]. He will destroy it with fire.” – Benny Hinn (Prophecy for the 90’s...January 1st 1990).
- ✓ In 1993 Benny Hinn said that only 6 years remained till Jesus returned (Oct 10, 1993 Orlando Christian Center).

WEIRD STUFF

- ✓ “What I confess, I possess” – E.W. Kenyon
- ✓ Kenneth Hagin said that if preachers don’t accept his message they will drop dead in their pulpits. “There will be misters who don’t accept it and will fall dead in the pulpit.” (*I believe in visions* pg115)
- ✓ “Any image that you get down on the inside of you that is so vivid when you close your eyes you see it, it will come to pass” – Kenneth Copeland (this also includes an 82 foot yacht).
- ✓ Gloria Copeland attacked the Apostle Paul for not being healed, she says “Paul didn’t receive the healing he asked for (in 2 Cor 12:8) because he could have done it himself.”
- ✓ “Women were originally intended to give birth out of their side” – Benny Hinn (*Our Position in Christ*)
- ✓ In responding to some criticism by Hank Hanegraaff, Benny Hinn responded on TV “You have attacked me, your children will pay for it.” (Oct 23, 1992 TBN marathon about heresy hunters)
- ✓ “Words create reality” – Benny Hinn
- ✓ “Words are containers for power. They carry creative or destructive power, positive or negative power. And so we need to be speaking right things over our lives and about our futures if we expect to have good things happen. Because what you say today is what you’ll probably end up having tomorrow.” – Joyce Meyer (*Watch Your Mouth*)
- ✓ “Who do you think you are going around commanding God around? Well, that’s what the Bible said to do in the book of Isaiah. Command ye Me!” – Creflo Dollar (*Expanding Your Faith*). *He is referencing Is 45:11 where God is actually saying “How dare you try to tell me what to do with the work of my hands.”*
- ✓ “Why did he leave it up to a puny man to give them the names to the animal kingdom, the plant kingdom, and the vegetable kingdom? Because they belonged under the control of Adam and not of God...Why? He had dominion. Not God, Adam.” – Fred Price (*Every Increasing Faith* May 3, 1992)
- ✓ “What do you need? Start creating it. Start speaking about it. Start speaking it into being. Speak to your billfold. Say, “You big, thick billfold full of money.” Speak to your checkbook. Say, “You, checkbook, you. You’ve never been so prosperous since I owned you. You’re just jammed full of money.” – Marilyn Hickey (*Claim Your Miracles*)
- ✓ “Your world, first of all, starts on the inside of you, praise God. And then as you begin, begin to speak that world into existence. Now, I’m not talking about that you’re gonna be talking a car into existence, necessarily. The car is already out there somewhere, praise God. But what it will do is come into your world. The house is already out there somewhere, but thank God it will come into your world. The clothes you need is already out there somewhere, and they’ll come into your world, praise God. The finances you need—God’s not gonna rain twenty-dollar bills out of heaven, probably. If He wants to, He can. I’ll welcome that, but probably that’s not the way it will come. They’re already in here somewhere. They’ll just come into my world, praise God. Amen?” – Jerry Savelle (*Framing Your World With the Word of God*)

- ✓ “God does not want us to live in poverty or lack for he wants you to be prosperous...God wants you to have it all.” – Paula White (*Follow God’s Principles to Have it All*)

CREATION/FAITH – This quote is here to show how many of these teachers see “faith” – One quote but most of these people hold this view.

- ✓ “Now, God used faith substance to make everything that He made...in every one of those words they were filled with faith substance, because words are nothing but containers...every time God speaks, He can’t help but to speak words that are filled with faith...God’s guts are called faith stuff...Everything in Him is faith...What’s in His heart is faith... if you were to cut God open you’d see nothing but faith. Every time He opens His mouth now, He automatically fills those words with His faith material.” – Creflo Dollar (*The Just Shall Live by Faith*)

SOME COMMON SENSE

Nothing is more crucial to our concept of faith than a proper understanding of the nature of God (Theology). In fact, the very word theology is derived from the Greek words *theos*, which means “God,” and *logos*, which means “word” or “discourse.” Theology is a discourse on God.

In Christian theology, God is portrayed as the Sovereign of the universe. He is described as “spirit,” perfectly wise, self-sufficient, omnipotent, and omniscient. In ‘Faith Theology’ God is nothing but a “faith being.” Man, conversely, is deemed to be sovereign and God is portrayed as a pathetic puppet at the beck and call of His creatures.

Man is always trying to elevate himself and bring God low. It is like Satan’s cry in *Isaiah 14:14* *I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.*”

Where on earth do Faith teachers get this stuff? As hard as it may be to believe, the standard proof text used by Faith teachers is Hebrews 11:1, which in King James English reads, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Faith teachers read this and say “Faith is a substance!” Most, if not all the perversions just documented are based primarily on one brief passage, in an old translation, wrenched out of context, and presented as a proof text for the Faith message.

The Faith teachers interpret the word substance to mean the “basic stuff” out of which the universe is made. Kenneth Copeland says, “Faith was the raw material substance that the Spirit of God used to form the universe.”

Scripture must always be interpreted in light of Scripture. As such, faith cannot be rightly understood to mean “the building block of the universe,” since it is never used in that sense in the book of Hebrews, much less the entire Bible.

The word translated “substance” in the King James Version is more accurately rendered “assurance” (see NASB). Far from being a tangible material, faith is a channel of living trust—an assurance—which stretches from man to God. True biblical faith is only as good as the **object in whom it is placed**. God is both the object and the origin of our faith. So true biblical faith is faith in God as opposed to faith in substance.

The word translated “substance” in the King James Version is the Greek word hypostasis, which in the context of Hebrews 11:1 means “an assured impression, a mental realizing.” Other translations, in an effort to offer an accurate rendition, translate hypostasis variously as “being sure” (NIV) and “assurance” (NASB). Far from meaning “tangible stuff,” it specifically refers to the assurance that God’s promises never fail, even if sometimes we do not experience their fulfillment in our mortal existence.

Louis Berkhof stated, the writer of Hebrews “exhorts the readers to an attitude of faith which will enable them to rise from the seen to the unseen, from the present to the future, from the temporal to the eternal; and [to that] which will enable them to be patient in the midst of sufferings.” That is true faith.

Biblical faith (*pistis* in the Greek) encapsulates three essential elements. The first entails knowledge. The second involves agreement. The third ingredient is trust – combining these three we end up with a full-orbed, biblical perspective on faith.

Following basics is a great way to stay grounded and not led astray by a bunch of nut jobs. Basics look like this:

Prayer: this is our primary way of communicating with God.

Scripture: While prayer is our primary way of communicating with God, the Bible is God’s primary way of communicating with us.

Church: Scripture exhorts us not to neglect the gathering of ourselves together, as is the custom of some (Hebrews 10:25). Today, however, multitudes are turning from the church and tuning into television. We are being conformed to the ways of our culture rather than to the will of God.

Study: The defense of the faith is not just a suggestion; it is basic training for every Christian. Learning to defend your faith is not as difficult as you may think. It all boils down to being able to answer two key questions.

- ✓ Who is God
- ✓ What is Man

In answering these questions we realize that man is sinful and lost and that God has revealed Himself in the person of Christ for our salvation.

To help study basics for believers should include:

1. Commentary

A Bible commentary serves as a system of checks and balances through which you can evaluate your insights by the insights of others. There are a variety of good commentaries available

today, such as the International Bible Commentary, edited by F. F. Bruce, which is based on the NIV translation.

2. Exhaustive concordance

An exhaustive, or complete, concordance is an indispensable tool. With it you can find every citation of every word used in the Bible, along with a half-sentence excerpt to help you recognize the verse. With most editions, such as Strong's, you can also compare English words with the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

3. Bible dictionary

A good Bible dictionary will give you access to information about the history, culture, people, places, and events in Scripture. One of the best conservative volumes is the Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, edited by Ronald E Youngblood; another good choice is the New Bible Dictionary, edited by J. D. Douglas.

4. Systematic theology

Systematic theology simply refers to systematizing Scripture to provide a clear understanding of the foundational doctrines of the historic Christian faith. A grasp of systematic theology will enable you to understand, defend, and mature in the faith. Bruce Milne's *Know the Truth* is a good introduction to theology and recommends several more comprehensive systematic theologies. Also Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* is also a great resource.

Addition Resources:

Knowing Scripture – R.C. Sproul

Scripture Twisting – James Sire

Christianity in Crises 21st Century – Hank Hanegraaff

ESV Study Bible (Crossway Books)

A Book You'll Actually Read on Who is God – Mark Driscoll

A Book You'll Actually Read on The Old Testament – Mark Driscoll

A Book You'll Actually Read on The New Testament – Mark Driscoll

And just for grins -

Humility, True Greatness – C.J. Mahaney