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## *The Secret Exposed*

*Why Oprah and millions of readers can be wrong.*

Mel Lawrenz | posted 6/18/2007 08:47AM

You can gain anything you want in life—wealth, health, the perfect mate, business success, respect from others—literally anything. That is the promise of the No. 1 best-selling book *The Secret* (Beyond Words). The editor, Rhonda Byrne, explains that "the secret" can be found in everything from Babylonian religion to Buddhism to Albert Einstein. *The Secret* (available as both a book and a DVD) is no secret now, however. It has become a global video event, a clever cross-promotional marketing plan, and a book touted by Oprah.

Byrne, an Australian television talk-show producer, discovered the secret just over two years ago. The book's contributors are described on the official website as: a "philosopher" who "developed The Science of Success and Harmonic Wealth® which teach [sic] people how to yield unlimited results in all areas: relationally, intellectually, physically, and spiritually" (James Arthur Ray); a "business building and moneymaking" expert (John Assaraf); a "doctor," "philosopher," and "international speaker" (John DeMartini); a "metaphysician" and "one of the top marketing specialists in the world" (Joe Vitale); and "a nonaligned, trans-religious progressive" (Michael Beckwith). Such titles reveal the new kind of gurus to whom millions of people give credence today.

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The secret is simply "the law of attraction." Think about wealth, and you will become wealthy. Think about that new car, and it will come. Think about getting a good parking spot, and one will open up. Think about your ideal weight (really, dwell on that number, write it on your scale), and you will attract that reality to yourself. Byrne reports that since deciding her "perfect weight" was 116 pounds, she has reached it, and nothing has moved her from it, no matter what she does or eats.

"Thoughts are magnetic, and thoughts have a frequency," the book assures us. "As you think, those thoughts are sent out into the universe and they magnetically attract all like things that are on the same frequency. Everything sent out returns to the source. And that source is you."

Now here's the bad news: Whatever happens to you—the good and the bad—was attracted by your thoughts. Appendicitis? Auto accident? Poverty? You brought it on yourself.

### **Obsessed with the Self**

Bible verses are misquoted. Ray, "an expert on many Eastern, indigenous, and mystical traditions," says: "Here's the question I want you to consider—do you treat yourself the way that you want other people to treat you?" Ray's twist on the Golden Rule becomes the ultimate form of self-centeredness. Oh, and you can attend Ray's "harmonic wealth weekend" for only \$997. Somebody has figured out how to attract wealth to himself.

*The Secret*, you see, is all about the self—it's for the self, obsessed with the self. *Newsweek* offers this

critique: "On an ethical level, *The Secret* appears deplorable. It concerns itself almost entirely with a narrow range of middle-class concerns—houses, cars, and vacations, followed by health and relationships, with the rest of humanity a very distant sixth."

Professor Robert Thompson of Syracuse University says: "*The Secret* promises this heaven on Earth in one fell swoop by simply desiring something, by simply wanting it. It's amazing how we really are a nation of, at best, great optimists, at worst, real suckers."

What *The Secret* reveals is that so many people are so desperately unhappy that they will snatch up anything offering hope—or simply offering quick and easy wealth. My question is, who will be there to pick up the pieces when they discover that they bought into a lie? And who will help the people who believe that they brought every misfortune on themselves because they sent negative thoughts and feelings out into the universe like a human radio transmitter?

How different from the message of Jesus: *The first will be last, and the last will be first. Lose your life, and you will find it.*

### Seizing Faith

To illustrate the contrast, consider Pete Greig and his wife, Samie. The Greigs were energetic leaders of a prayer movement called 24-7, which began in England and expanded to dozens of countries. If anyone had the ability to move divine power, it was Pete. One morning six years ago, however, Samie awoke but felt as if her extremities were still asleep. Then, as Pete watched, helpless, Samie's body began to contort and convulse.

Testing revealed a brain tumor the size of an orange. Surgery followed. Successful surgery. But not complete healing. Samie had epilepsy, somewhat controlled by medication. At times, Pete still finds his wife convulsing on the ground where their two young boys go to school.

Pete, who wrote the new book *God on Mute: Engaging the Silence of Unanswered Prayer*, told me that on two occasions he prayed during a seizure and watched as the episode seemed miraculously to subside. But there have been hundreds of other seizures. Pete and Samie have experienced the kind of faith during which we throw ourselves on the mercy of God. We see such faith in the Thursday prayer of agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. In Jesus' prayer from the cross on Good Friday. In the silence of Saturday. And then, *finally*, comes Sunday—Resurrection day.

Contrary to the real gospel, *The Secret* proclaims: "The universe is supporting me in everything I do. The universe meets all my needs immediately."

Byrne says she is most gratified to hear of children discovering *The Secret*. But having raised two kids, I've always thought that one of the most important lessons young people must realize is that the universe does not revolve around them, that they are not God. When we believe in a God above us, apart from us, beneath us, and for us—*then* we find help and hope.

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*The Secret* says it is an "astonishing program"—a DVD ([trailer](#) available) and book—that "reveals *The Great Secret* of the universe. It has been passed throughout the ages, traveling through centuries ... to reach you and humankind." A [blank check](#) from the Bank of the Universe is also available on their website.

[Oprah's](#) website promotes the book in a slideshow, with photos, information on author Rhonda Byrne, and testimonials.

*The Secret* is at the top of the [New York Times bestseller](#) list (hardcover). This is its twentieth week on the list. The NYT Book review's "[Inside the List](#)" comments on the book's popularity.

Other responses to the book include:

[The Secret's Out: A Review of \*The Secret\* by Rhonda Byrne](#) | I just can't pile up enough superlatives about the new book *The Secret*!

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