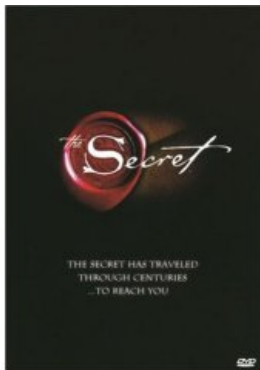


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It's All About You? The Truth About "The Secret"

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Ever heard of the "Law of Attraction?" Rhonda Byrne learned it from a book entitled *The Science of Getting Rich*, written by Wallace Wattles in 1910. Wattles was an evangelist for positive thinking and he promised readers that they could attract everything they wanted — including money, fame, success, or love — by using his "Law of Attraction."

According to press accounts, Rhonda Byrne was given Wattles' book at a breaking point in her life. Transformed by Wattles' philosophy, Byrne got to work updating the "Law of Attraction" for a new generation. She turned the idea into an Internet-based movie and a book entitled *The Secret*. Now, the book is a runaway best-seller, ranking number one on *The New York Times* listing.

We should be very concerned to live in a country in which so many citizens evidently want to be told that they, individually, are the very center of the universe. *The Secret* is just the latest form of American esoteric positive thinking run amok. The nation seems to endure periodic waves of positive-thinking nonsense, and every generation seems primed to believe that it can have all it wants and more. Can anyone actually believe this stuff?

Evidently so. [Oprah](#) is a big fan, as are other Hollywood and entertainment types. Byrne has attracted publicity, books sales, and attention, if nothing else.

According to Byrne, every object and mind in the universe operates on its own frequency, and minds can attract matter. "Thoughts are magnetic," she argues, "and thoughts have a frequency. 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 its source. And the source is you." Yep. You are the center of the universe.

"You are the most powerful magnet in the Universe!," she exclaims. "You contain a magnetic power within you that is more powerful than anything in this world, and this unfathomable magnetic power is emitted through your thoughts."

If you learn to operate by the Law of Attraction, she promises, you can attract anything you want. Success, riches, material objects, weight loss, acclaim . . . all these are to be yours if only you believe.

Food doesn't make you fat — thinking that food makes you fat makes you fat. You are not sick; you only think you are sick. Reverse the thought and you will be well. If you are not rich, it is only because you are trapped in negative mental patterns. "Every negative thought, feeling, or emotion is blocking your good from coming to you, and that includes money."

Similar teachings are represented in movements like Christian Science and in the American gurus of success who have been around at least since the mid-nineteenth century. But Byrne seems to take the argument further than most. She suggests that you are God.

"You are God in a physical body," she writes. "You are spirit in the flesh. You are Eternal Life expressing itself as You. You are a cosmic being. You are all power. You are all wisdom. You are all intelligence. You are perfection. You

are magnificence. You are the creator, and you are creating the creation of You on this planet.”

It is almost impossible to read those words with a straight face. Is anyone believing this?

Jerry Adler, writing in *Newsweek*, makes this observation:

You'd think the last thing Americans need is more excuses for self-absorption and acquisitiveness. But our inexhaustible appetite for "affirmation" and "inspiration" and "motivation" has finally outstripped the combined efforts of Wayne Dyer, Anthony Robbins, Dr. Phil and Mitch Albom. We have actually begun importing self-help—and from Australia, of all places, that citadel of tough-minded individualism, where just a couple of years ago Byrne was a divorced mother in her 50s who had hit a rocky patch in her business and personal lives. It was in that moment of despair, when she "wept and wept and wept" (as she recounted to Oprah on the first of two broadcasts devoted to her work), that she discovered a long-neglected book dating from 1910 called "The Science of Getting Rich." In it she found how to let your thoughts and feelings get you everything you want, and determined to share it with the world. She called it "The Secret."

And it was that stroke of marketing genius that turned what might have been a blip on the Times's "Advice, How-To, Miscellaneous" best-seller list into a publishing phenomenon that Sara Nelson, editor of Publishers Weekly, says "could become this decade's 'Tuesdays With Morrie'." "Nobody," she adds, "ever went broke overestimating the desperate unhappiness of the American public." Self-help books roll off the presses with the regularity of politicians' biographies, and sell much better; Wayne Dyer all by himself has written 29 of them with sales estimated at 50 million. But Byrne had something else going for her. "It was an incredibly savvy move to call it 'The Secret'," says Donavin Bennes, a buyer who specializes in metaphysics for Borders Books. "We all want to be in on a secret. But to present it as the secret, that was brilliant."

Donald S. Whitney, Associate Professor of Biblical Spirituality at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, gets to the heart of the problem with *The Secret*:

There's no mention of sin in The Secret. The cause of all the problems in the world and in our individual lives is merely bad thinking, specifically the failure to recognize and appropriately use the law of attraction. Therefore the solution to everything lies within us. And that, of course, eliminates the need for a Savior, a Substitute, or a Sacrifice. The cross and resurrection of Jesus become irrelevant.

More:

The problem with The Secret is that it focuses our hope selfward and not Godward. It is all about self-empowerment, self-fulfillment, and getting whatever we want. But Jesus warned, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). The Secret disregards the fact that God has a Law and we have broken it (James 2:10). What Byrne fails to realize about her law of attraction is that our sinful hearts deceive us (Jeremiah 17:9) and attract not only more sin and guilt, but ultimately, the wrath of God.

However, God in His mercy sent His Son to receive this wrath as a Substitute for all who will repent of their selfishness and believe in Him. And "through the true knowledge of Him"—not Rhonda Byrne's book—"His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3).

"The Secret to everything" (to use Byrne's term) is God Himself. And God, the "Great Secret," has been revealed in Jesus Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). God has freely told us in the Bible everything we need to know about discovering the unlimited "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" found in Christ. And He remains an unknown Secret only to those who will not look for Him there.

In the end, *The Secret* points to the most basic question of life. Is it all about us, or about the glory of God? The elevation of the self in *The Secret* is truly breathtaking:

The earth turns on its orbit for You. The oceans ebb and flow for You. The birds sing for You. The sun rises and it sets for You. The stars come out for You. Every beautiful thing you see, every wondrous thing you experience, is all there for You. Take a look around. None of it can exist, without You. No matter who you thought you were, now you know the

Truth of Who You Really Are. You are the master of the Universe. You are the heir to the kingdom. You are the perfection of Life. And now you know The Secret.

There is no real secret to *The Secret*. It is just the same old self-worship packaged for a new generation.

We discussed *The Secret* on the March 23 edition of *The Albert Mohler Program*. Dr. Donald S. Whitney was my guest. The program can be found [here](#). Dr. Whitney's full article on *The Secret* is available [here](#).

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