

# Solid Ground

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*A Foundation for Building Ambassadors*

*May/June 2010*

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## Author's Foreword

Dear Friend,

When I faced off with New Age "guru" Deepak Chopra a few years ago for a national TV debate on Lee Strobel's "Faith Under Fire," I had a very specific strategy in mind to even the scales.

I knew it would be a mistake to pit my credibility against Chopra's. He was world famous. I was the local boy from L.A. In a "Chopra vs. Koukl" matchup, I was outgunned.

There was someone else on my side, though, who had a lot more firepower than either of us: Jesus of Nazareth. If I could position the debate as Chopra vs. Jesus, I knew I would fare much better in the eyes of the viewing public, because Jesus has tremendous credibility with virtually everybody.

My approach worked well with Chopra. It's also a sound strategy in assessing any worldview, especially new religious fads that claim to be consistent with Christianity.

In this month's *Solid Ground*, I match Jesus against this country's most influential "pastor" and spiritual guide, Oprah Winfrey. She has used her bully pulpit to preach "The Secret" of the Law of Attraction to her 22-million-person congregation.

Included in Oprah's fold is a multitude of Christians who see neither Oprah's view nor Jesus' view clearly, and thus are easy prey for this New Age deception. There is a way to quickly cut through the mist, however, and see the contrast with clarity.

In "The Secret: A Fatal Attraction," I equip you with a handy tool to help you easily compare the worldview "map" of Jesus with any competing religion or philosophy. When you do the match-up, any lie immediately becomes obvious.

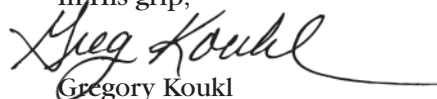
Read this article carefully. The information will not only help you steer Christians away from Oprah's nonsense. It will also give you the ability to put Jesus on your side, pitting His worldview against that of any challenger.

Promising to reveal a secret- a "secret" cover-up, a "secret" source, a "secret" inside story, a "secret" to happiness and fulfillment- is an enticing strategy to get attention in a market where hype sometimes matters more than substance.

And there is no secret to the success Stand to Reason has been able to have during our 17 years of service. We have a team that works hard. We have a God who is gracious. And we have friends like you who give. Each month we depend on gifts from people like you who have been helped by STR's influence in their life. Your support is needed.

No secret, just a solid foundation for successful ministry. And I invite you to share with us as partners to continue that success God has granted us all these years.

In His grip,

  
Gregory Koukl

# The Secret: A Fatal Attraction

By Greg Koukl

## Oprah's Got a Secret

Oprah Winfrey is the “pastor” of the largest church in the country. “[The Church of O.](#)” *Christianity Today* noted, has a congregation of 22 million vigorous, faithful, evangelistic members, making Oprah Winfrey “one of the most influential spiritual leaders in America.”<sup>1</sup>

Oprah’s theology is based on a secret. That secret is in a book: [The Secret, by Rhonda Byrne](#).<sup>2</sup> Oprah and Byrne think their secret is consistent with Christianity, as do tens of thousands of their followers. Many of them consider themselves Christians.

The Secret, though, has no kinship with Christianity. It is something completely different. It trades on Christian language and biblical prooftexts, but uses them to construct a view of reality that is totally foreign to the worldview of Jesus. In fact, the secret of The Secret is that it is not the deep wisdom of the universe, but the oldest lie in the universe.

## What Is “The Secret”?

The Secret, introduced in the book by Rhonda Byrne and 24 other “teachers”-and aggressively promoted by Oprah-is what Byrne calls the “Law of Attraction.” According to the authors, the universe responds to each of us according to an inviolate natural law that works like a magnet in reverse. (7) With magnets, opposites attract. According to this secret law of the universe, though, “like attracts like.” (25, 157)

Think good thoughts and good things will happen because you attract them to yourself. Like a genie who always says, “Your wish is my command” (46, 59), or a catalog you flip through and point to the person, product, or experience you want (48, 101), the Law of Attraction discharges on your every desire.

Think bad things, though, and bad things find you just as easily. If you are poor, it’s your fault because you “are blocking money from coming to [you] with [your] thoughts” (99). If you are in a car accident, you have no one to blame but yourself because you

attracted it (27-28). For good or for ill, the Law of Attraction is at work creating your reality from the thoughts and images you give it to work with.

The Secret endows its user with virtual omnipotence: “There isn’t a single thing you cannot do with this knowledge,” Byrne writes. “It doesn’t matter who you are or where you are, The Secret can give you whatever you want” (xi).

According to this book, the greatest thinkers and the finest creative minds in history have known The Secret, from Plato to Lincoln, from Galileo and Newton to Shakespeare and Beethoven, from Carnegie to Emerson, Einstein, and Edison. You alone, it seems, have been left behind.

And this, Byrne claims, is the same secret known and practiced by all great religious masters-

including Jesus-and taught by all religions-including Christianity. Indeed, Byrne writes, “The creative process used in The Secret...was taken from the New Testament in the Bible” (47)-with verses cited in support (54). Even Mother Theresa knew, understood, and practiced The Secret (143). Therefore, The Secret is consistent with Christianity.

But is it? To answer this question, we need to answer two other questions. First, what is the worldview of Byrne’s book *The Secret*? Second, what is the worldview of Christianity? Armed with that information, we can make a side-by-side comparison. To help with the assessment, I want to give you a simple tool that I’ve found invaluable for this task.

## The Worldview of The Secret

Worldviews are like maps of the reality. They tell us the lay of the land, so to speak, what the world is like. Every worldview “map” has four elements that help us see what the structure of reality looks like according to that view.

“Creation” tells us how things began, the source

The worldview of Jesus is quite different. It can be outlined with five words: God, man, Jesus, cross, and resurrection.

of our origins, and what ultimate reality is like. “Fall” identifies the problem, describing what has gone wrong with creation. “Redemption” gives us the solution, the way to fix the problem. “Restoration” describes what the world would look like once the repair is in place.

Let’s use this worldview tool to help understand how *The Secret* maps reality. What is the worldview of *The Secret*? Here we are immediately faced with an ambiguity.

At first blush, Byrne et al, seem to say that the universe is God and we manipulate Him (it?) with the Law of Attraction to get what we want. Note: “You are the master of your life, and the Universe is answering your every command” (146). “The Universe offers all things to all people through the Law of Attraction” (150). “Trust the Universe” (57). “Allow the Universe to do it for you” (51).

Other times Byrne seems to say each of us is sovereign over our own reality, using *The Secret* to create our own universe: “The Secret means that we are creators of our universe” (113). “You know that nothing comes into existence from the outside, and everything first comes from thinking and feeling it on the inside. Your mind is the creative power of all things” (148).

So, is the universe God, or are we God? The mystery is solved when the authors of *The Secret* describe their view of ultimate reality. As it turns out, both are true:

*All that exists is the One Universal Mind, and there is nowhere that the One Mind is not. It exists in everything. The One Mind is all intelligence, all wisdom, and all perfection, and it is everything and everywhere at the same time. If everything is the One Universal Mind, and the whole of it exists everywhere, then it is all in You! [sic] (160-161)*

*So whichever way you look at it, the result is still the same. We are One. We are all connected. And we are all part of the One Energy Field, or the One Supreme Mind, or the One Consciousness, or the One Creative Force. Call it what you want, but we are all One. (162)*

This worldview is an ancient one. It is called “monism” (“one”-ism). There is a single reality, and that reality is a perfect, undivided unity: “Divine Mind is the one and only reality” (161). Therefore, God is everything and everything is God. Indeed, *you are God*:

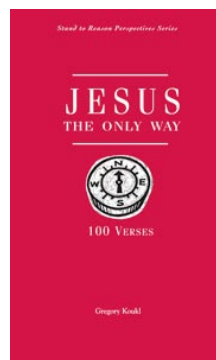
*You are God manifested in human form,*

*made to perfection. (164)*

*You are God in a physical body. 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. (164)*

The idea that god is everything is called “pantheism” (literally, “everything-god-ism”). The worldview of *The Secret*, then, is pantheistic monism. It is nothing more than an Americanized, romanticized, prosperity-driven version of an

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ancient religion called Hinduism.

Here is the map:

- *Creation* (ultimate origins and ultimate reality): God. Period. God is, and god is all there is. God is an undivided unity. The particulars are illusions. Ultimately, you and I don't exist at all as distinct individuals. Brahman is atman and atman is Brahman: pantheistic monism.
- *Fall (the problem)*: We forgot we are god.
- *Redemption (the solution)*: We remember we are god and that we are the masters of the universe.
- *Restoration* (how things get repaired or resolved): We exercise our divinity, creating our reality using *The Secret*.

I hope it's beginning to dawn on you that this is a problem. Hinduism and Christianity are



completely different religions. They are competing, not compatible, worldviews. How do I know? By comparing their worldview maps.

### The Worldview of Jesus

Jesus saw the world very differently from Oprah, Byrne and their ilk. The worldview of Christianity can be outlined with five words: God, man, Jesus, cross, and resurrection. These five concepts interconnect with the four basic elements of worldviews in this way:

- *Creation*: God created the world and is therefore the rightful sovereign over all.
- *Fall*: Man rebelled against his sovereign, becoming guilty of sedition and sin.
- *Redemption*: God became a man in Jesus, died on a cross, and rose from the dead to make payment possible for the guilt of man's rebellion.
- *Restoration*: In the final resurrection of all men at the end of history, those who received God's pardon will enjoy the perfect life in friendship with Him that He intended at the first. Those who continue in rebellion will be banished to a place of misery, darkness, and ruin forever.

So now, a short quiz. In the worldview of Jesus, who is the creator and sustainer of the universe? God. Who is the Lord, the master of the universe? God. Who is all powerful? God. Therefore, who is the center of the universe? God.

By contrast, in *The Secret* who is the creator and sustainer of the universe? You (your "creative power" is the Law of Attraction). Who is the Lord, the master of the universe? You. Who is all powerful? You. Therefore, who is the center of the universe? You.

Lest there be any doubt, notice Byrne's celebration of our divinity at the close of *The Secret*.

*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 [sic]. 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. (183)*

Can you see the contrast between the worldview of *The Secret* and the worldview of Jesus?

Everything the Bible says God is, Rhonda Byrne says you are. The Bible and Christianity are not saying the same thing as *The Secret*, but just the opposite. Does this sound like compatibility? Notice that when you have a clear fix on the truth, seeing the lie is pretty easy.

### The Oldest Lie

So let me ask a final question. In Genesis 3, what was the specific temptation facing our human parents, the carrot Satan offered Eve that caused the original breach between God and man? Here it is: "You surely will not die. For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God..." (Gen. 3:4-5).

Rhonda Byrne (and Oprah, et al) are offering to those who employ *The Secret* the very thing the serpent offered Eve: Their eyes will be opened and they shall be as God (or, more accurately, they'll realize they already are God). Byrne is peddling the oldest lie in the world, with the same materialistic payoff Satan offered Jesus:

*And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory, for it has been banded over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours."* Luke 4:5-7

Just "bow down" to *The Secret* and everything shall be yours, no strings attached. And no moral restrictions spoiling the party, either. Byrne concludes, "Now that you have learned the knowledge of *The Secret*, what you do with it is up to you. *Whatever you choose is right*. The power is all yours" (184). [emphasis added]

This same lie comes in many guises. It rears its head in most New Age beliefs, certain Eastern and "metaphysical" religions, and in Mormonism. Even atheistic humanism is a variation, putting man at the top of the heap as master of his own fate and captain of his own soul.

### Why Does the Secret Seem to Work?

Generally, no spiritual lie is pure falsehood, but rather a clever example of truth twisted. There is always some legitimacy in even the darkest deceptions. That's what makes them so appealing. It's also what makes them so nefarious. The Secret is no exception.

The smidgen of truth found in *The Secret* is this: If you mentally focus on some end, you are more likely to accomplish that end. Note Byrne:

*The reason visualization is so powerful is because as you create pictures in your mind of seeing yourself with what it is you want, you are generating thoughts and feelings of having it now. Visualization is simply powerfully focused thought in pictures, and it causes equally powerful feelings. (81)*

Byrne is right on this. Thoughts *can* cause feelings. Words *can* translate into action. Visualization *can* influence behavior. Athletes know this, and a host of positive mental attitude (PMA) advocates have successfully put this into practice. Words, reflections, and imaginations *do* affect reality, but *not for the reason Byrne says*:

*When you are visualizing, you are emitting that powerful frequency out into the universe. The Law of Attraction will take hold of that powerful signal and return those pictures back to you, just as you saw them in your mind. (81)*

This is nonsense. Images are inert. They have no power in themselves to beckon things into being. Visualizing doesn't send out any vibes that the Law of Attraction can "take hold of." There is a better explanation for why the Law of Attraction sometimes seems to bear fruit.

Humans are teleological beings. This means we are designed by God to pursue certain ends, certain purposes. We are also designed to create *our own* ends-our own goals-and God has given us mental tools that help us pursue our goals to completion. He has formed our souls such that vivid thoughts, precise words, and clear images help focus our wills to accomplish the ends we desire.

This is why Scripture warns us to be careful what we fix our minds on:

- "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things" (Phil. 4:8).
- "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing your mind" (Rom. 12:1-2).
- "Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Col. 3:1-2).

We must also guard our speech:

Let no unwholesome word proceed from

your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear (Eph. 4:29)

David's prayer captures both ideas: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, oh Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer" (Ps 19:14).

Incidentally, "As a man thinks in his heart, so he is" (Proverbs 23:7) is not one of those verses. This passage is frequently distorted by people both

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inside and outside the church. Both groups would do well to follow the rule "never read a Bible verse" and read the full context of this proverb (23:6-8):

*Do not eat the bread of a selfish man, or desire his delicacies, for as he [the selfish man] thinks within himself, so he is. He says to you, "Eat and drink!" but his heart is not with you. You will vomit up the morsel you have eaten, and waste your compliments.*

This passage is a warning. It speaks not of *any* man, but of a particular kind of man - a selfish, deceitful, double-dealing person. It warns of the dangers of duplicitous people, not the virtues of positive thinking. Note Proverbs 26:24-25, which gives the same warning about duplicity:

*He who hates disguises it with his lips, but he lays up deceit in his heart. When he speaks graciously, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart.*

#### The Fatal Attraction

*The Secret* is a lie because what it teaches is false. It's appealing because it takes something true (the ability to use thought and language to focus our wills to accomplish important goals) and twists it into something poisonous by grounding it in a lie: You are God.

You are *not* God. You are *not* the creator of the universe. You are *not* the center of reality. The Earth does *not* turn on its orbit for you. The oceans do *not* ebb and flow for you. The birds do *not* sing for you. The sun does *not* rise and set for you. The stars do *not* come out for You.

Rather, *God* is the Creator of the universe. *God* is the center of reality. We are His rebellious subjects. We are under His judgment. And unless we surrender, we are destined for an eternity of suffering and anguish that will never end, this at the hand of the real Master of the universe.

Oprah Winfrey's and Rhonda Byrne's so-called secret "Law of Attraction" is a fatal attraction. No power of positive thinking will rescue anyone from the power of the Lord Jesus when He "will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in

flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess. 1:7-8).

The truth is no secret. It is being proclaimed from the rooftops by Jesus' faithful followers. There is rescue for rebels, forgiveness and eternal friendship with God for those who lay down their arms and appeal for peace on God's terms.

And the only "law of attraction" in operation is the one that flows from the cross: "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32).

1 LaTonya Taylor, "The Church of O," Christianity Today, April 1, 2002.

2 Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret* (New York: Atria Books, 2006).

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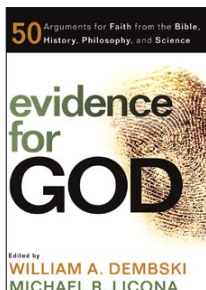
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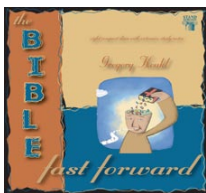


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## STR Speakers' Schedules

### Greg Koukl

#### July

- **23-25** Heights Cumberland Presbyterian Church Retreat, Santa Fe, NM  
Contact: <http://www.heightscpc.org>
- **28** Journey of Faith, Manhattan Beach, CA 6:30 p.m. Leadership training Topic: Bad Arguments against Religion Contact: <http://www.journeyoffaith.com/> or (310) 372-4641

#### August

- **1** Living Oaks Community Church, Newbury Park, CA 8, 9:30, 11:15 a.m. Topic: TBD  
Contact: <http://www.livingoakschurch.com> or (805) 376-1800
- **5-7** CrossExamined Instructor Academy, Matthews, NC
- **25** Summit Ministries worldview training camp Contact: <http://www.summit.org/>
- **27** Berachah Baptist Church, Middleton, OH Schedule TBD Contact: (513) 422-1672 or [www.placeofblessing.com](http://www.placeofblessing.com)
- **29** South Valley Community Church, Gilroy, CA 8:45 & 10:30 a.m. Topic: TBD  
Contact: (408) 848-2363

### Brett Kunkle

#### July

- **1** Christian Surfers Newport Beach, Costa Mesa, CA 7:30 p.m. Topic: Why I Am a Christian  
Contact: [www.christiansurfersnb.org](http://www.christiansurfersnb.org)
- **17** First Chinese Baptist Church, Walnut, CA Time: TBD Topic: Mind Games: How Media Messes with Your Mind Contact: (909) 468-0098 or [www.fcbcwalnut.org](http://www.fcbcwalnut.org)
- **25** Christ Community Church, West Covina, CA 9:00 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. Topic: The Trinity: A Solution, Not a Problem Contact: (626) 960-4444 or [www.ccc-online.org](http://www.ccc-online.org)

#### August

- **5-7** CrossExamined Instructor Academy, Matthews, NC Topic: Training for instructors  
Contact: [www.crossexamined.org/academy.asp](http://www.crossexamined.org/academy.asp)
- **9** Jesus University, Snohomish, WA 7:30 p.m. Topic: True for You, but Not for Me?  
Contact: [www.jesusu.org](http://www.jesusu.org)

### Alan Shlemon

#### July

- **2-4** Chinese Church in Christ Missions Conference, San Diego, CA Topics: The Case for Intelligent Design; Jihad, War, and Killing in Islam and Christianity; Homosexuality: Truth and Compassion; Relativism, Tolerance, and Truth Contact: (408) 945-1368 or [www.coffeetalkccc.org](http://www.coffeetalkccc.org)
- **24** Lutherans for Life, Green Bay, WI Topic: Making Abortion Unthinkable  
Contact: (888) 364-5433 or [www.lutheransforlife.org](http://www.lutheransforlife.org)
- **25** Our Savior Evangelical Free Church, Wheeling, IL Topics: Ambassadors for Christ: The Essential Skills, Homosexuality: Truth and Compassion 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.  
Contact: (847) 459-4440 or [www.osefc.org](http://www.osefc.org)

#### August

- **9** North Coast Church, Vista, CA 7:00 p.m. Topic: TBD Contact: (760) 724-6700 or [www.northcoastchurch.com/ncu](http://www.northcoastchurch.com/ncu)
- **14** Oregon Right to Life, Salem, OR 11:00 a.m. Topic: Tactics in Defending the Faith  
Contact: (503) 463-8563 or [www.ortl.org](http://www.ortl.org)
- **19** North Coast Church, Vista, CA 7:00 p.m. Topic: TBD Contact: (760) 724-6700 or [www.northcoastchurch.com/ncu](http://www.northcoastchurch.com/ncu)

**To get information about inviting an STR speaker to your church, email [Amy@str.org](mailto:Amy@str.org) for Brett or Alan, or [Melinda@str.org](mailto:Melinda@str.org) for Greg.**

## Putting Your Knowledge into Action

- As good ambassadors for Christ, we need to be discerning when anyone claims to have a “new” way of thinking that is consistent with Christianity.
- The way to test a view is to determine the worldview behind what is being taught. We can use the four elements of the worldview “map” – creation, fall, redemption, and restoration – to see the structure of reality according to the view we’re testing.
- Remember, no spiritual lie is pure falsehood, but rather a clever example of truth twisted.
- Scripture warns us to be careful what we fix our minds on, and also to guard our speech.



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