

"Have You Learned the Secret?" (part 1)

THE BESTSELLING SECRET

Two weeks ago I happened to turn on the local news to check out how the Sabres were doing (I guess I won't be doing that anymore), and the newscaster asked, "Do you want to find out how you can change your life and have success? Find out what these three people here in Western New York found." Naturally, the story grabbed my attention. So what did these Western New Yorkers find that changed their lives? They found supposedly what is being called "The Secret." Have you heard about "The Secret?" "The Secret" is the title of the current number one bestselling book and DVD in America. The book tops the New York Times Bestselling Book list and the book and DVD fill the #1 or #2 spots at Amazon.com, Barnes and Nobles, and Borders Bookstores.

What is "The Secret," about? It's about how you can obtain what you want and how you can control your own destiny through what you think and feel. In other words, our thoughts and feelings not only can influence physical reality; they can determine what we receive in this life. The news story showed clips from the DVD – a picture of a woman looking at a diamond necklace in a store window and then after focusing on having it, she was wearing it! Or the young boy who wants a red BMX bicycle so he cuts its picture out of the catalog, concentrates real hard, and is rewarded with the sharp two-wheeler.

Now on the surface, anyone with a brain knows that this is a slick marketing tool to appeal to self-absorbed and materialistic Americans. In fact, Rhonda Byrne, the creator of the DVD and book, says she was inspired to put them together after reading the 1910 book *The Science of Getting Rich* by Wallace Wattles.

AN AGE OLD LIE

But this is more than a just slick gimmick to make people think they can get rich. It is rooted in the age old Satanic lie, "*You can become like God.*" (**Gen. 3:4-7**). You can have what you want if you so desire it. You see the Secret is no secret. It is based on what has been called the "Law of Attraction." This so-called principle contends that our feelings and thoughts attract real events in the world. It is embraced in Buddhism. The Buddha stated, "What you have become is the result of what you have thought." It is found in Hinduism and New Age philosophy, as well. The "Law of Attraction" also teaches that you should stay away from people who are chronically ill or troubled as that will introduce negative energy into your life. And that the bad things that happen to people are the result of poor thinking. They have brought it on themselves.

Now to bolster its authority, "the Secret" DVD contains interviews with numerous professionals and authors in the fields of quantum physics, psychology, metaphysics, coaching, theology, philosophy, finance, feng shui, medicine, and personal development, which they refer to as "secret teachers." And wouldn't you know, some of these teachers are now giving seminars across the country.

There is even a three-fold formula to the secret: ask, believe, and receive. Sound familiar? Know what you want and ask the universe for it. Feel and behave as if the object of your desire is on its way. Be open to receiving it. But who is out of the equation? A personal God. He's nowhere to be found. In

fact when one of the so called “Secret” teachers, Dr. Joe Vitale, was asked by a caller on the Larry King Live show, where does God come into the Secret?” Dr. Vitale responded, “God is all of us. “

Now like any good lie, there is some truth to this so-called “Law of Attraction.” Our thought life and attitude, our mental focus do influence what happens to us in life. They can help determine what we accomplish on earth. But there is one caveat. They don’t begin or end with us.

THE REAL SECRET TO SUCCESS

Now like any counterfeit, the only way you can expose a counterfeit is by knowing about the real thing. The Bible talks about a secret all right, and it is the true secret to lasting peace and fulfillment and happiness, and success. And this secret is free – there is no charge. And it’s not even supposed to be a secret. God wants us to shout it from the rooftops. Do you know what the secret is?

Please turn with me in your pew Bibles to **Philippians 4:10-13**: St. Paul is writing from prison to the Philippians thanking them for their help in the past. But even with or without their help St. Paul says these profound words: *“I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”*

THE SECRET IS FOUND IN A RELATIONSHIP

The Apostle Paul acknowledges the secret to contentment whether he has much or little. The secret is found in a relationship. It is found in a relationship with Jesus Christ. Note Paul’s words in v. 13 – *“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”* Who is the “him?” It is Jesus.

Let’s look back now to the previous chapter, to **Philippians 3:7-14**. Paul writes, *“Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in His death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”*

What’s the most important thing to the Apostle Paul? It’s a relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul says he suffered the loss of all things – his position, his prestige, his power, his rights, his riches (see **Phil. 3:4-6**). And what does he regard them as? Rubbish. Actually the Greek word translated here as “rubbish” literally means “dung” or “excrement.” All the things of this world are the equivalent to a manure pile when compared to knowing Christ. Doesn’t matter if we are rich or poor, the most important thing is knowing Jesus Christ as Lord. There is nothing of more value than knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s why we always preach about our relationship with Christ. That’s why any good church has as its number one priority, helping others enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ. If Jesus is not in the forefront, there is a problem.

THE SECRET IS LEARNED

Note what else is true about this secret – not only is it found in a relationship, it is something that is learned. Paul writes, “*I have learned the secret.*” How is it learned? It’s learned by getting to know the Lord in the relationship. How do we get to know the Lord? We do so through remaining in and obeying His Word. We do it through prayer – that is talking and listening to God. And we learn by life experiences.

Note again Paul’s words, “*I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in His death.*” Isn’t it true that everyone likes to talk about walking in the power of the Lord? We like to look to the power of Christ’s resurrection; and rightly so. But look what else Paul mentions? He wants to know Christ not only in the power of His resurrection, but also in the “sharing of His sufferings!” Why does Paul mention suffering?

Well let me begin by asking this question, do you learn about spiritually things and about what really matters in life when everything is going fine, when you have everything you need and want? Do you learn much when you are on the “mountain top?” Or do you learn more when you are under duress or when you are in difficult times, when you are in the “valley?” Think about it for a moment.

When it comes to our relationship with God, we learn about faith, we learn about real priorities, we learn about what’s really important in this world of ours in the hard times, don’t we? When things are not going well, we learn how to trust the Lord. When we are suffering, we learn about our inadequacies and our needs, and WHO is really most important in this life. We learn to look to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we learn that life is not about material possessions or pleasurable pursuits or personal fulfillment, it is about finding out God’s plan and will for our lives and then implementing that plan and will. We find out what’s really on the inside when we go through trials and hardship, don’t we? I don’t like such experiences, but that’s when I experience the most spiritual growth.

Paul knew what it was like to experience suffering and hardship. And it was when he suffered that he experienced God’s power. Listen for a moment to a few of the things he had to endure as mentioned in **2 Cor. 11:24-27**: “*Five times I have received from the Jews forty lashes minus 1, Three time I was beaten with rods, once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked. For a night and a day I was adrift at sea, on frequent journeys I was in danger from rivers, from bandits, from my own people, from Gentiles, danger in the city, in the wilderness, at sea from false brothers, in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked.*” And now Paul is in prison! Could you see why he said, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me?*”

THE SECRET WILL CHANGE US FROM THE INSIDE OUT

There’s something else that’s true about the secret. Not only is it found in a relationship and not only is it something we learn, it is something that will change us from the inside out. You see when we get to know the Lord, He gives us a new heart, a heart that looks to Him and a heart that loves Him. You have heard me say it before, our world can’t be changed simply by education, environment, law or religion. It can only be changed when people’s hearts are changed by Jesus Christ.

God told the prophet Jeremiah that “*the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt.*” God has to do radical surgery and He does if we ask Him to? What did David request of the Lord in **Psalm 51** after he confessed his adultery to the Lord? “*Create in me a clean heart O God, and*

renew a right spirit within me.” God’s grace is an inside job, God’s joy is an inside job, God’s peace is an inside job. It changes our hearts.

And when we get a new heart we get a new perspective and a new purpose and then God gives us the power to accomplish His plan for our lives. And when God changes us from the inside out we can then be used by God to change our circumstances and change the people around us. Jesus said, ***“Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*** That’s being a life changer.

Someone has said, *“Life is 10 percent what happens to you, and 90 percent how you respond.”*

How you respond to life’s challenges, to life’s disappointments, and to life’s successes shows what’s really inside you. Paul tells us in **Romans 12:21**, for example, ***“Overcome evil, with good.”*** When our hearts change, then our responses will change. We will respond the way God wants us to respond.

And so is attitude important? – Oh yes. We are to have the attitude of Christ (**Phlp. 2:1-5**). Is our thought life important – most definitely – **Romans 12:2** says, ***“Do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”*** Is faith important – absolutely – ***“without faith we cannot please God.”*** (**Heb. 11:6**). But it’s a faith grounded in a relationship with Jesus Christ, a faith that learns from God through the experiences of life, a faith that comes from a changed heart.

So have you learned the secret? Have you learned God’s secret to contentment, His secret to fulfillment, to peace, to happiness and success? May we answer like Paul, ***“I have learned the secret of having plenty and of being in need, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!