

Series: GREATER THAN...June 24, 2007

THE SECRET: GREATER THAN ME!
Isaiah 55:8-9

Note: I'm deeply indebted to Bruxy Cavey and The Meeting House for a four part series they did entitled, "The Secret Revealed."

A. INTRO

Isn't that amazing? Man! It has **everything** a great novel, a great movie needs to have. Suspense! Mystery! Conspiracy! And a promise that you can have **everything** you've always wanted! Really! Just for the asking!

-And it kind of summarizes why **The Secret** is so popular. Now, I realize that there is probably a **huge** span of people here this morning. Some of you have read it, discussed it—and are maybe into it. Others of you are saying, "Wha....? I don't have a **clue** about what you're talking about!"

-Well, to bring you up to speed, it's the latest cultural phenomenon. It's become a best selling book—in fact, this past week, 150,000 people bought either the book or the DVD! It's been featured on Oprah—which **kinda** helped; the author, Rhonda Byrne, has been featured on Larry King Live. This stuff is **HOT!** Now, to be fair, it's not doing so well in Sudan, Nicaragua or Afghanistan—but it's over the top in North America. Why?

1. First of all, it's well done. The book and DVD are attractive and **really** well put together.
2. Second, it uses marketing that's **perfect** for our culture. It celebrates mystery, that truth is a puzzle--a mystery to be solved. And those who "know" invite those who don't know into this higher form of knowledge.

-And, of course, one of the things that has made this book and DVD so attractive is it's title: **The Secret**. When you say, "Pssst! I have a secret! I **want** to tell you, but I can't!" But if you pay \$31.99 for the DVD or \$16.49 for the book at Cosco, they will tell you.

-The core teaching of **The Secret** has actually been around for some time; it's **the law of attraction**. What if Rhonda Byrne had simply called it that? It would've been, well, **boring!**

3. And the third reason it's crazy popular is because it deals with everyone's favorite topic. Me. How I can get everything I've always wanted—how I can be rich, popular, sought-out, healthy, thin, young, in love—**everything** I've always dreamed about.

B. Okay, so—big deal—this is a hot topic. Why are **we** talking about it here? I'll tell you why.

1. First, we gather here regularly to see discuss what Jesus said about life and wrap our lives around it. The Secret claims to represent Jesus' teachings—and that's a direct invitation to the discussion. The question we would ask is, "If this is what Jesus taught—**how did we miss it?**"

2. Second, some of you as you head into summer or to the cottage are going to be picking up books to read—or have friends who will pick up books—and we want to help you have intelligent conversations about spirituality with them
3. Finally, we've been talking about pain, about deep, deep hurt, about fear, about some of the tragedy that goes on in our world.
The Secret offers a very different—and **troubling** perspective on pain and suffering. And I'm going to speak to that, today, at the end. So, lets dig in—and at the end we'll have a brief Q & A.

II. OVERVIEW OF *THE SECRET*

How many of you are familiar with the song, *When You Wish Upon A Star* sung by Jiminy Cricket in the Disney movie, Pinocchio. Just in case you forgot, let me remind you of the words:

When you wish upon a star
Makes no difference who you are
Anything your heart desires
Will come to you

If your heart is in your dream
No request is too extreme
When you wish upon a star
As dreamers do

Fate is kind
She brings to those who love
The sweet fulfillment of
Their secret longing

Like a bolt out of the blue
Fate steps in and sees you through
When you wish upon a star
Your dreams come true

Those words summarize the exact teaching of "The Secret" better any I can think of.

- A. What if I stood up here this morning and promised you that you could make **anything** happen—**ANYTHING**—just by **wanting** it to happen. That, in essence, the universe is your private genie—your personal shopping catalogue--**waiting** for you to place your order?
-You'd probably think I was either joking—or that someone put something in my tea this morning—I mean, wouldn't that be what you would **naturally** think? Well, that's the message of this book and DVD by Rhonda Byrnes—*The Secret*.
 1. **(The law of attraction says that like attracts like, so when you think a thought, you are attracting like thoughts toward you.)**
-Now, at face value, this seems true. Negative, whiny pessimistic people tend to see **more** to be negative about—and draw people like that around them. Positive, joyful, grateful and loving people, **generally speaking**, draw those Kinds of things and people.

-But Rhonda Byrnes and the teachers she's gathered turn this general principle into a scientific law that can be manipulated.

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[Thoughts are magnetic, and thoughts have a frequency. As you think thoughts, they 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—you... Your thoughts become things.]

2. Rhonda says that this law is as **infallible** and **unbreakable** as the law of gravity. You drop something—it falls every time. You think thoughts and energize them with emotion—and you will attract to yourself whatever you're thinking—every time. It's that simple.
 - The **result** is that everything you currently have or are experiencing is directly because of your thoughts and the frequencies they are emitting into the universe. Everything you **don't** have, every experience you **haven't** experienced is because you aren't thinking the kind of thoughts that will bring that to you.
 - This book says, ***The law of attraction works every time!*** Everything...**everything**...that's happening in the world and that has ever happened in history is the result of the **law of attraction**. Good **and** bad!
3. And the authors and writers lay out a simple three step process to get this law working for you. How many of you are wondering, "How can I get that to work for me! Well, there's a simple three step process that this book lays out:
 - a. The first step is to **ASK!** You have to ask—you have to send your requests out to the Universe. Write them down—and put them positively. For example, "I am so grateful and so blessed that the Universe is going to give me a million bucks—and that I will live in abundance!" Ask.
 - b. But it's not enough to ask, you have to **BELIEVE!** And you can't be wimpy about this—you have to live without a shadow of a doubt, with all your heart, mind, soul and strength—that it will in fact **be yours**.
 - c. And then you have to **RECEIVE** it—receive it emotionally. Live as if it were already yours! And on the DVD there are a number of testimonials. One single woman sent her request out for her dream partner, and he didn't **manifest**—insider lingo for "show up." Then she realized she wasn't acting like he was coming—she was parking her car in the center of her garage and sleeping in the center of her bed. Once she changed these things--he showed up.
 - Some of you are familiar with Feng Shui. Well, they fit this in too. How you arrange your house, even down to the paintings, affects your thoughts and what you attract to yourself.
4. The bottom line is that you can **create your own life—and yourself--exactly to your own specifications**. Think thin thoughts, you won't get fat. Think healthy thoughts, you won't get sick. Think abundance thoughts—and you'll never know want. In fact, you can create each day, just the way you want it—if you get good at this process. You can make checks come in the mail, not bills. You can bring good people into

your life who will fall in love with you—not bad people who will betray you and hurt you.

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[Expectation is a powerful attractive force. Expect the things you want, don't expect the things you don't want...To attract money, focus on wealth. It is impossible to bring more money into your life when you focus on the lack of it...Feeling happy now is the fastest way to bring money into your life...Make it your intention to look at everything you like and say to yourself, "I can afford that. I can buy that.]

-The focus of this book is **more—more for me**. More money. More stuff. More of **everything I want. I am in total control of it all. I am the master of my life and my future.**

B. Now, there are some great, positive, true things that that are taught in **The Secret**. I once heard someone say—all truth is God's truth. You **never** have to be afraid of truth.

1. **The Secret** picks up on something the Bible has taught for **thousands** of years. Our attitude toward life, in general, has a huge effect on us and who we become. It just does.

-For example, it says that a **gratitude attitude** has tremendous power. One guy says, "Whenever I wake up, I immediately find things to be grateful for—and it changes my day. And that is **true!** If you have a whining, complaining, negative attitude toward life, not only do you spoil life for yourself, you **do** attract whining, complaining, negative people toward yourself and drive the positive, uplifting ones away!

-I'll never forget the story in the **Toronto Star** of a guy who'd come from another nation—and mistook a skunk for a cat. Due to an accident, he'd lost his sense of smell and didn't even know there was a problem till he went to work and people started gagging.

The **Star** had this picture of him mostly naked—washing himself with tomato juice! He was wearing people repellent, and he didn't even **know** it! Well, a negative, ungrateful complaining spirit is like wearing people repellent!

2. This book, **The Secret**, also says that loving attitudes are the most powerful ones. That's not new. 1 John 4 says that God **is** love. Jesus taught that we are deeply loved and cherished—and that love is the quality God wants most to see in us and the way we live. And Jesus said that when we **judge** others instead of loving them, we will in fact be judged. To this extent, the **law of attraction** is true.

3. The Book of Philippians is one of the books in the Bible that's **very** focused on attitude—quite psychological in nature, actually. Paul was in horrible circumstances—chained to two Roman soldiers, no freedom. In those circumstances he writes an amazing section in his book:

First:

Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice (Philippians 4:4 NLT)!

What an incredible perspective: that living with **joy** is a **choice** we make.

Second: **Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace (Philippians 4:6-7a NLT).**

-And then Paul says that what we think about and dwell on is extremely important: **Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:8-9 NLT).**

4. Friends, we as believers need to *live* this truth, not just talk about it! Over the years, I've met a lot of Christ-followers who don't. All some people see is the negative in just about every situation—every discussion, every movie, every message. What they see might be quite accurate; the problem is, that's *all* they see. Seeing life this way makes you a VDP. **Very Draining Person.**

-Think of the healing, restorative power it would have in our lives if we all had positive, grateful attitudes—as much as possible—in all our relationships—with bosses, parents, kids, spouse, friends. But **let me be clear!** This isn't about sending the right vibrations into the Universe to get the law of attraction working. No. It **changes us!** It makes us attractive people!

-If you're married—particularly if you're having a tough time—imagine what it would be like if your spouse started listing things about you to be grateful for. How would you feel about that! Now, imagine **you** doing that for **them!** Here's the deal. You can't change and control others—but you **can** change **you!**

- C. So, what **does** *The Secret* say about Jesus? For the most part, all it says about Him is that He was one of many great teachers who knew and taught *The Secret*. The specific quote *The Secret* uses is from Mark 11:

Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart. I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours (Mark 11:22-24 NLT).

1. Now, that **sounds** like it's teaching the same content as *The Secret*, doesn't it? Faith, truly believing in your heart that you've already received it brings it into your life. But if you read it in the context of the verse immediately following it—it's not talking about treating the universe like a genie in a lamp.

-The verse that immediately follows it says:

But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too (Mark 11:25 NLT)."

First, it speaking **directly** to Jesus' disciples in the context of Jesus' mission in the world, and the specific issue isn't getting more money and stuff; it's about the healing of relationships.

-Imagine someone ripping a phrase out of a whole conversation you had—and acting like that's **all** you said. If Selina, my daughter, was putting candy bars on

the check-out belt at No Frills, and I sighed and said, “Okay, I’ll pay for them all” and someone took that phrase and applied to everything they bought. “Ken Davis said he’d pay for it all. Charge it to him!”

-The authors of *The Secret* seem to pick and choose what they want without *any* sense of context. When you read all of Jesus’ teaching—you find He actually taught the *opposite* of what they’re claiming.

2. The other disturbing message from *The Secret* is blatant materialism. *The Secret* says this:

...I highly recommend that you read The Millionaires of the Bible Series by Catherine Ponder. In these glorious books you will discover that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Jesus were not only prosperity teachers, but also millionaires themselves with more affluent lifestyles than many present day millionaires could conceive of (TS, p.109).

-Now, if you’ve grown up in the church or watched TV evangelists—does any of this sound vaguely familiar to you?

It’s the prosperity gospel; that God, without exception—wants you rich, healthy and happy all the time—**PLACE your hand on the TV set right now...!**

3. There is not a shred of evidence in the entire New Testament—or *anything* we know about Jesus that would hint that Jesus was a millionaire or prosperity teacher. **In fact**, Jesus cautioned us about money and told us not to wrap our lives around it—but to put Him first and use our resources to make a difference in the world. To store up our treasures in Heaven—not here!
4. Another way Jesus is quoted is when he says, **Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened.** The Secret takes this and basically says:

“See—you can satisfy *all* the desires of your heart! **Ask** for it! Believe it’s yours. Emotionally receive it—act like you already have it—and it will appear.” But that’s not what Jesus is saying. He goes on to say that even though parents get off track, the love to give good things to their children—and God loves to give good things to us, too. Jesus goes on to say:

So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him (Luke 11:13 NLT).” This is talking about a relationship with God—not getting more stuff.

-In every passage where Jesus talks about money and stuff, he urges people, “Put God’s purposes first! Don’t get pre-occupied by money and stuff—it doesn’t last and it’s not worth focusing your one and only life on!

5. Let me ask a question. If someone says something about you that’s *half* true—is it true? No. How about 90% true? Untruths **always** contaminate truth. In fact, most lies have at least a little bit of truth in them to make them believable. I don’t care whether someone is a motivational speaker on *The Secret* DVD or a prosperity preacher on TV—it is wrong to edit Jesus to fit the American or Canadian dream or gain a following or make money for a ministry. If it’s not **all** true—then it’s not true. Period.

III. A BETTER UNIVERSE

- A. One of the fascinating things about this book and DVD, *The Secret*, is how, throughout, it focuses on the Universe—capital **U**.

In the book, it becomes clear that the Universe is everything that exists everywhere—including us. In other Gnostic or New Age teachings, you sometimes here this referred to as the **Universal Mind**.

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-The theory goes that everything can be reduced to energy—and energy vibrates—it has a frequency—and to get what we want, we just get on same frequency or vibrations as what we want. You know, “I’m pickin’ up good vibrations...” But, according to Rhonda and the gang, the Universe is impersonal. It’s simply a law—like the law of gravity.

1. Now, there’s a basic philosophical inconsistency here. Remember, the book says, “figure out what you want—lifestyle, a partner, success—whatever it is you want, **ASK**, and the universe will provide! Even if it has to drop out of the sky!”
-Here’s the inconsistency. You **ask persons**—you don’t **ask** things. But, according to the book, the **Universe** is an impersonal force and the law of attraction is an impersonal law—that gives people what they are attracting with their thoughts and emotions. A little like electricity. Now, I understand a little of electricity—and respect it as a powerful force that can be used for good—or can kill me--like the Universe. But I don’t **ask** it to do something for me. I **use** it. I flick the switch.

-Do you see the disconnect? The Secret is teaching people, not to talk with a Heavenly Father who loves us and knows better than us, but to **manipulate a force** to get what you want. There is a **vast** difference between the two. Anyone here like being **used**? When you **use** a person—it’s degrading. We love people and use **things**. And God will not be used!

2. There’s something else I find very disturbing about *The Secret*—something that makes it vastly different than the Bible. It’s the focus on **Me**. It’s very clear—that you need to love yourself, that you are the center of the universe, that the **Universe** is your personal genie for crafting the world you want to live in and give you all the things and people you want in your life. Get wealth for—who? **Me!** Get special people for—who? **Me!** Craft a personal worldview for who? **Me!**
-Think about what babies are like. They’re born. Do they hesitate to scream and cry when they want something, “Poor Mom! She hasn’t had a whole lot of sleep lately; I’ve been running her pretty hard. I guess I’ll just wait till morning.” Nope! **Waaah!** They are hopelessly self-centered. And it’s okay.

Children are a little better—but they are still quite narcissistic. The world revolves around them. The **goal** is to grow up! Grow **out** of that. What happens when you grow up? You start thinking of others—putting others before yourself.

-What *The Secret* does is import the **worst** of western civilization. We live in the **Me** generation that has what 96% of the world can’t participate in. *The Secret* says that’s okay—it’s a good thing—to be wrap your life around yourself and what you want. Does that sound right to you? To train people to revert to an earlier

immature psychological state? “Hey! Rich people in the West! Learn how to be **more** ego-centric!” That, friends, is **not** good news for the planet!
 -And to say that Jesus knew that secret and taught it is to defy everything He said, everything he lived for, and everything He died for!

3. Another **huge** issue for me. **The Secret** teaches that not only do good, positive, gratitude filled thoughts bring good things your way, but **everyone** is **also** responsible for all the bad things that happen to them. (TS, Joe Vitale, p. 27-28). Let me quote Rhonda Byrne, the author:

Often when people first hear this part of the Secret, they recall events in history where masses of lives have been lost, and they find it incomprehensible that so many people could have attracted themselves to the event. By the law of attraction, they had to be on the same frequency as the event. It doesn't necessarily mean that they thought of the exact event, but the frequency of their thoughts matched the frequency of the event (TS, p. 28).

-This friends, is the law of karma. That the universe **is** just—and bad things have happened to people because they've brought them on themselves and **deserve** them.

Bob Proctor, one of the main speakers and writers of **The Secret** was asked on **Nightline** if the starving children of Darfur had brought on their own misery. In all seriousness he said, “I think the country probably has.”

-To their credit, the authors of **The Secret** don't even try to hide this. That all the misery that has ever existed—the Holocaust, the 2005 tsunami, 911, slavery--every accident, every birth defect—**all of it**—has been brought on by people thinking the wrong thoughts.

-It goes further. Ironically, they quote Mother Theresa in the book—but then strongly discourage people who want to practice their teaching to stay away from suffering people because it could cause them to have negative thoughts and bring the same thing to them.

-Do you see how repulsive this is? That all the rich, healthy, young, successful, and good-looking people should congratulate themselves because they alone are responsible for all these good things—and **deserve them!**

The message to them is, “just **keep the system going!** Don't worry about the others—and don't sacrifice or inconvenience yourself by entering into their pain.

-That, friends, couldn't be **further** from the message of the Bible and the message of Jesus—and from everything considered noble and good by rational people. That appeals to the darkness in us—to our pride, our greed, our selfishness and callousness.

4. There's another problem. It's the message about God—or the absence of one. I was blown away by what Rhonda Byrne wrote at the very end of her book. Listen:

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 (TS, p. 183).

- a. Let me tell you where this teaching comes from. Genesis makes it clear that the downfall of humans came from a spiritual being, Satan, whose specific temptation was that if Adam and Eve listened to his advice, they could be like God. In listening to Satan's line—they blew the incredible life they had and launched the world on it's current tragic course. And that's always been the line: ***Be god of your life! Be your own master!*** And the urge to be God is what ***The Secret*** appeals to.
 - b. Listen to this quote from Rhonda Byrnes. She talks about using the two most powerful words in the universe to your advantage. **I AM. I AM receiving every good thing. I AM happy. I AM abundant. I AM healthy. I AM love. I AM always on time. I AM eternal youth. I AM filled with energy every single day (TS p. 168)**

- I AM is the name God revealed Himself as to Moses. Jesus used these words to refer to himself as God. See how this book switches things? In fact, according to ***The Secret***, the only distinguishing characteristic of Jesus is that He knew The Secret.

There is no sin to repent of; only karma. There is no need for compassion or mercy or grace. This teaching is deceptive and dangerous.
5. Please understand, I am not trying to be mean or unkind but some of the teachings are just plain silly. Like the Aladdin's lamp thing. Like the teaching that it's fat thoughts that make you fat, not food. Like that claim that thinking young thoughts can reverse the aging process. And listen to this quote from Rhonda Byrnes—this one takes the cake:

If you are seeking an answer or guidance on something in your life, ask the question, believe you will receive, and then *open this book randomly*. At the exact place where the pages fall open will be the guidance and answer you are seeking (TS, p. 172). This is just plain bad advice.
 6. But this stuff takes on a much darker tone.

There's a woman used in the first DVD and printed edition of The Secret by the name of Esther Hicks. There's a quote from her in that original video that says, "You are extensions of ***force energy***. ***You are that which you call God***." Esther Hicks worked very closely with Rhonda Byrnes—so closely that she wanted to be considered as the co-author. Rhonda wasn't willing to share the rights, so she was cut out. But her teachings do actually form the core.

-So, who's Esther Hicks? Well, she's a channeler and a medium for a community of spirits she calls **Abraham**. The teaching of the Bible is that humans are **forbidden** to try to access God's spirit messengers, called angels. The only spirits we have access to are evil, lying spirits—the spirits Jesus cleansed people from when he walked here.

-Friends, it's not that **The Secret** is just incomplete in its teaching—and promotes self-centeredness. It's not just that it teaches some silly stuff. This teaching taps into dark, dangerous forces. When you do the stuff it suggests—you are **not** appealing to God. He's already made it clear that we come to Him in prayer through Jesus, His only Son. People who follow this advice are appealing to the forces of darkness—and, according to the Bible, any response they get comes from them, not God. We live in a relational world. Good is personal—it's God. But so is evil—and it's Satan. We need to be **very** careful where we direct our hearts. And that's my warning to you!

QUESTION AND ANSWER

B. I want you to think about where a life leads that's centered around me? We tend to think, "If I could just get **more...**I'd be happy. More money. More people who love me. More attention. A more prestigious job, a bigger home, a better car, a thinner or more muscular body. It's the next hit, the next win, the next award.

1. Jesus specifically taught that this stuff **doesn't** bring what it promises. In fact, it brings the opposite. Listen to His words.
Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed? (Luke 9:23-25 NLT)

-Jesus said that the way up is down. Jesus didn't tell us to call ourselves **I AM!** Or **God**. He told us to humble ourselves and that God would exalt us as **His Kids**. Jesus said that the blessed of the world are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, who hunger and thirst for righteousness, who are meek, who are not afraid of suffering.

-So. Who are **you** going to believe? Rhonda Byrnes or Jesus. You can't believe both. I'd say that Jesus has the better track record—but don't take my word for it; check it out for yourself.

2. Here's my bottom line. I am convinced, without a shadow of a doubt, that there is a **much better universe** out there than the one **The Secret** tells us about. And the ruler, the Supreme authority is not me or some impersonal force called the **Universe**. And I'm **so** glad. It's a God who is loving and generous and kind. Who loves to give good things to his children.

He's not some impersonal force who gives everyone what they deserve—who responds mechanistically to the one who can think and believe the good thought

first. Truth is, I get my desires screwed up. I'm **glad** God doesn't always give me what I ask for!

-See, He knows better. Listen to what He says:

“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts (Isaiah 55: 8-9 NLT).”

-He is always good. And what He wants most from us is a relationship. He loves us and works when we're thinking positively and grateful and even when we're not. He knows when to say **YES, NO** or **NOT YET!**

Any parents here who have always given your kids every single thing they wanted—and think that's a healthy way to parent? It's not! That's not love—that's devastating! And God, as Father, reserves the right to say yes to something better than what we ask for. In fact, the Bible says He's inclined to give us what we could never ask for or imagine.

-And the **best** news is that He doesn't run away from the hurting, the broken, or those crushed under the weigh of oppression. He asks us to join Him as the God of the oppressed—and **grow**. He asks us, when we suffer, not just to think better thoughts—but to persevere and have His character created in us. He **is** the Master of the universe, not me. Or you!

-There **is** a true secret to life. It's understanding that God is love—and that he is greater, **way Greater**, than **me!** And that's a really good thing!