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Before He died Kenneth Hagin warned against today's materialistic gospel.

By J. Lee Grady

Charismatic Bible teacher Kenneth Hagin Sr. is considered the father of the so-called prosperity gospel. The folksy, self-trained "Dad Hagin" started a grass-roots movement in Oklahoma that produced a Bible college and a crop of famous preachers including Kenneth Copeland, Jerry Savelle, Charles Capps, Jesse DuPlantis, Creflo Dollar and dozens of others—all of whom teach that Christians who give generously should expect financial rewards on this side of heaven.

Hagin taught that God was not glorified by poverty and that preachers do not have to be poor. But before he died in 2003 and left his Rhema Bible Training Center in the hands of his son, Kenneth Hagin Jr., **he summoned many of his colleagues to Tulsa to rebuke them for distorting his message.** He was not happy that some of his followers were manipulating the Bible to support what he viewed as greed and selfish indulgence.

Those who were close to Hagin Sr. say he was passionate about correcting these abuses before he died. In fact, he wrote a brutally honest book to address his concerns. *The Midas Touch* was published in 2000, a year after the infamous Tulsa meeting.

Many Word-Faith ministers ignored the book. But in light of the recent controversy over prosperity doctrines, it might be a good idea to dust it off and read it again.

Here are a few of the points Hagin made in *The Midas Touch*

1. Financial prosperity is not a sign of God's blessing. Hagin wrote: "If wealth alone were a sign of spirituality, then drug traffickers and crime bosses would be spiritual giants. Material wealth can be connected to the blessings of God or it can be totally disconnected from the blessings of God."

If the man who pioneered the modern concept of biblical prosperity blew the whistle on his own movement, wouldn't it make sense for us to listen to his admonition?

2. People should never give in order to get. Hagin was critical of those who “try to make the offering plate some kind of heavenly vending machine.” He denounced those who link giving to getting, especially those who give cars to get new cars or who give suits to get new suits. He wrote: **“There is no spiritual formula to sow a Ford and reap a Mercedes.”**

3. It is not biblical to “name your seed” in an offering. Hagin was horrified by this practice, which was popularized in faith conferences during the 1980s. Faith preachers sometimes tell donors that when they give in an offering they should claim a specific benefit to get a blessing in return. Hagin rejected this idea and said that focusing on what you are going to receive “corrupts the very attitude of our giving nature.”

4. The “hundredfold return” is not a biblical concept. Hagin did the math and figured out that if this bizarre notion were true, “we would have Christians walking around with not billions or trillions of dollars, but quadrillions of dollars!” He rejected the popular teaching that a believer should claim a specific monetary payback rate.

5. Preachers who claim to have a “debt-breaking” anointing should not be trusted. Hagin was perplexed by ministers who promise “supernatural debt cancellation” to those who give in certain offerings. He wrote in *The Midas Touch*: “There is not one bit of Scripture I know about that validates such a practice. I’m afraid it is simply a scheme to raise money for the preacher, and ultimately it can turn out to be dangerous and destructive for all involved.”

(Many evangelists who appear on Christian television today use this bogus claim. Usually they insist that the miraculous debt cancellation will occur only if a person “gives right now,” as if the anointing for this miracle suddenly evaporates after the prime time viewing hour. This manipulative claim is more akin to witchcraft than Christian belief.)

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Hagin condemned other hair-brained gimmicks designed to trick audiences into emptying their wallets. He was especially incensed when a preacher told his radio listeners that he would take their prayer requests to Jesus' empty tomb in Jerusalem and pray over them there—if donors included a special love gift. “What that radio preacher really wanted was more people to send in offerings,” Hagin wrote.

Thanks to the recent resurgence in bizarre donation schemes promoted by American charismatics, the prosperity gospel is back under the nation's microscope. It's time to revisit Hagin's concerns and find a biblical balance.

Hagin told his followers: **“Overemphasizing or adding to what the Bible actually teaches invariably does more harm than good.”** If the man who pioneered the modern concept of biblical prosperity blew the whistle on his own movement, wouldn't it make sense for us to listen to his admonition?

***The Midas Touch* is available through Kenneth Hagin Ministries/ Rhema Bible Training Center**