The New Age Peale Factor: (Part 4) Schuller – “The Real Leader”

By Warren B. Smith
Excerpted from A Wonderful Deception, pp. 69-74
Continued from The New Age Peale Factor: (Part 3) Rick Warren’s Email

On April 24, 2005, five days after the Lighthouse Trails press release regarding Ken Blanchard, Bruce Wilkinson was Robert Schuller’s Hour of Power guest speaker at the Crystal Cathedral. Wilkinson—the man Rick Warren described as “one of my best friends in the whole world”2—led the Crystal Cathedral congregation in a standing ovation for Schuller. He did this after favorably referencing George Mair’s newly published book, A Life with Purpose, which described Schuller’s key role in the formation of today’s Church Growth movement. Sidestepping, yet building upon Mair’s comments about Norman Vincent Peale, Bruce Wilkinson hailed Robert Schuller as “the grandfather of it all”—“a visionary” and “the real leader.” Enthusiastically praising Schuller and his Crystal Cathedral, Wilkinson told the congregation:

I love this church. I love being here. I love walking on this property. I just felt like I was one step away from heaven when I came on this property this morning. I read a book this past week. Somebody gave it to me, and it traced the past fifty years of Christianity in America and it began to talk about how the transition occurred in our country that eventually led to seeker service, it led to Rick Warren, it led to Bill Hybels and Willow [Creek]. And do you know this book—you probably haven’t even seen it yet—this book brought all that back to a person who said this was the grandfather of it all who influenced this person, this person, and this person and from that it became the massive movement it is today. And the person that they named in the book was none other than the pastor of this church. That’s amazing ladies and gentlemen! Truly amazing! It is truly amazing! Yes! [The congregation gives Schuller a standing ovation] You know it’s only if you are a visionary do you know the price tag it takes to be the real leader, I mean way out front on the edge. People like to shoot people on the edge.3

But Bruce Wilkinson’s strong supportive words stood in stark contrast to the posturing and
distancing Rick Warren was attempting to construct between Robert Schuller, Norman Vincent Peale, George Mair’s new book, and himself. Wilkinson certainly seemed to have no objections to Schuller or with George Mair’s description of a Church Growth movement that was founded by Peale and Schuller. The ironic twist here was that while Warren had supposedly distanced himself from Schuller, one of his “best friends in the whole world,” Bruce Wilkinson, was preaching from Schuller’s pulpit and calling Schuller “a visionary,” and the real leader.

The double irony pointed out in Deceived on Purpose was that two years earlier, Bruce Wilkinson had come directly from speaking at the Crystal Cathedral one week to speak at Saddleback Church the next week.4 The theme at both churches was preparing the church for “God’s Dream.” As already mentioned, “God’s Dream” was a term that Robert Schuller had been popularizing for decades.5 Wilkinson had come to Saddleback at the request of Rick Warren to help prepare Saddleback Church for the unveiling of Warren’s P.E.A.C.E. Plan—the Schulleresque P.E.A.C.E. Plan that Warren just happened to be calling “God’s Dream For You—and the World.” Yet Warren’s Saddleback apologists were now trying to convince everyone that Warren had distanced himself from Schuller.

In July 2005, a hastily written book authored by Richard Abanes, who by that time had moved into the role of Rick Warren’s chief apologist, would suddenly seem to answer everyone’s questions about Rick Warren. This book, titled Rick Warren and the Purpose that Drives Him, was published by Harvest House. Contrary to all publishing standards, this obvious damage-control book was offered free to any pastor in the world requesting a copy. I spoke with a pastor’s wife who had called for a free copy of the book. She said a Harvest House representative told her the publishing house had not provided the funding for the free books. The representative stated that the funding came from outside sources associated with the author.6

Blanchard “Moves Forward”

In mid-July of 2005, Ken Blanchard posted a statement on his Lead Like Jesus website, admitting that his New Age endorsements were “problematic.” He gave his “promise” that he would try to “exercise better discernment in the future.”7 Blanchard stated that a discernment ministry called Watchman Fellowship would “assist” him in becoming more discerning. Three days later, in spite of Blanchard’s considerable New Age entanglements and obvious spiritual confusion, Watchman Fellowship announced that Blanchard would remain at the helm of the Lead Like Jesus organization. On July 25, 2005, James Walker—the president of Watchman Fellowship—issued the following statement:

> After spending time with Mr. Blanchard we are now convinced that he is, in fact, a brother in Christ and are committed to assist him as he continues to work through the issues that have arisen as a result of these past endorsements. We encourage you to pray for Ken and the Lead Like Jesus staff as they move forward.8

Thus, while George Mair and Lighthouse Trails continued to be heavily criticized by those associated with Rick Warren and Saddleback, Ken Blanchard forged on with his Lead Like Jesus movement. It wasn’t too long after this that Blanchard would endorse another New Age
book. In January 2006, just six months after the assurance that Watchman Fellowship would be providing oversight and that Blanchard would stop endorsing New Age books, Blanchard endorsed Jon Gordon’s *The 10 Minute Energy Solution*.9 In this book, Gordon favorably quotes and references numerous New Age sources including *A Course in Miracles*, Wayne Dyer, Marilyn Ferguson, Paramahansa Yogananda, and others. The book also points readers to New Age writings by Deepak Chopra, Marianne Williamson, and Gary Zukav. Gordon’s New Age-promoting book, bearing Blanchard’s endorsement on the cover, was published after Blanchard’s own 2005 book—*Lead Like Jesus*—was released. Thus, while Blanchard’s book was teaching everyone how to “Lead Like Jesus,” the Blanchard-endorsed book by Gordon was simultaneously promoting the New Age “Jesus” who was “another Jesus”—the “Jesus” of the New Age/New Spirituality.

But Ken Blanchard’s continued lack of discernment didn’t seem to faze Rick Warren or any of the other Christian leaders who so readily supported Blanchard and his *Lead Like Jesus* book and organization. Nor did Blanchard’s persistent New Age affections prevent Rick Warren from continuing to sit on Blanchard’s Lead Like Jesus National Board.10

**Blanchard’s Continued Confusion**

In a personal interview with Saddleback’s Richard Abanes that was published in Abanes’ book *Rick Warren and the Purpose that Drives Him*, Rick Warren offered an additional line of defense regarding Ken Blanchard’s New Age sympathies. By all appearances, Rick Warren had distanced himself from Blanchard—just as had been the case with Robert Schuller. Warren stated that Blanchard was not a “deep Christian” and that he had recently told Blanchard “You started in ministry before you got to maturity.” Continuing to emphasize Blanchard’s immaturity as a believer, Warren stated: “He just needs to be taken aside and instructed in the ways of the Lord.”11 But what Warren did not mention in the interview was why he would endorse Blanchard’s book, *Lead Like Jesus*, sit on Blanchard’s Lead Like Jesus National Board, and let someone who was “not a deep Christian” and “who needs to be instructed in the ways of the Lord” play such an important role in the Purpose Driven P.E.A.C.E. Plan. How could Rick Warren ever expect someone lacking Christian maturity to train countless people around the world to “lead like Jesus?”

Ken Blanchard’s on-going New Age affections have been carefully documented by ministries like Christian Research Service and Lighthouse Trails Publishing. For example, in 2007 Blanchard provided a new foreword and his continued endorsement for Jim Ballard’s New Age book *Little Wave and Old Swell*. Then, in early 2008, Blanchard was one of the featured speakers at a Southern California conference that was highlighting the New Age book *The Secret*.12 Incidentally, he spoke at the same event in 2009 as well, sharing a platform with some of the most prolific New Age authors today, including Wayne Dyer, John Gray, and Mark Victor Hansen. And in 2008, Blanchard’s endorsement was on the front cover of another book by New Age sympathizer Jon Gordon.13 He has also remained a member of the Advisory Council of the New Age-based Hoffman Institute,14 an organization that promotes the Hoffman Quadrinity Process. The Quadrinity Process was devised by psychic Robert Hoffman15 and is based on the foundational New Age belief that God is “in” everything. In 2010 Ken Blanchard endorsed New Age Leader Deepak Chopra’s book *The Soul of Leadership*. Blanchard called it a “godsend.”16

Rick Warren’s involvement with Ken Blanchard cannot be conveniently excused and explained away. His association with Blanchard is symptomatic of a Purpose Driven ship without scriptural bearings.
For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

One further note regarding the origin of Ken Blanchard’s Lead Like Jesus campaign. In a radio interview with WMKL in Miami, Florida, Blanchard, as the author of The One Minute Manager, recounted a visit he had had with Robert Schuller at the Crystal Cathedral. Schuller had told him that Jesus was the “greatest one-minute manager of all time.” Blanchard said in the interview that it was after this Schuller remark that for “the first time I started thinking of Jesus as a leader.”

Much like Rick Warren’s reference to Bernie Siegel in The Purpose Driven Life, Warren’s association with Ken Blanchard was just one more in a string of New Age implications that have yet to be adequately accounted for.

Endnotes:

1. Hour of Power, April 24, 2005. Bruce Wilkinson speaking at the Crystal Cathedral. Transcribed by author. No longer available online on Hour of Power website. (Note: Some of the actual comments made by Wilkinson in the telecast were changed or omitted from the edited Hour of Power online transcript.)
2. Saddleback Church, October 26, 2003. Internet broadcast from Saddleback Church, transcribed by author.
3. Ibid.
5. Ibid., pp. 124-126.
10. For many years, Lead Like Jesus posted a list of their board members on their website. That list is no longer on their site. The following is a cached file from 2004: http://web.archive.org/web/20040718032248/http://www.leadlikejesus.com/clientImages/21633/11.

• Share this:
The Calling, part 4 is the fourth part of chapter IV in the plot of Return of the Obra Dinn. It reveals the fate of passenger Bun-Lan Lim. In an attempt to save Lim's life, her fellow passenger, It-Beng Sia, takes a shell in the chest's drawer and places it into the upper compartment, releasing columns of energy that stun mermaids attacking the boats. Unfortunately, at this time, Lim has succumbed to her wounds. At age 34 Dr. Peale accepted a call to Marble Collegiate Church. A common sight in his years as pastor were tourists lined up around the block to hear him. With Marble as his base, Dr. Peale launched far reaching innovations in the decades of the 1930's, 40's, and 50's. In 1933 he began a weekly radio broadcast that continued for a record setting 54 years. The year 1938 saw the founding of the innovative clinic for Christian psychotherapy, the Institutes of Religion and Health. Norman Vincent Peale’s groundbreaking self-help classic, The Power of Positive Thinking, has dramatically transformed countless lives throughout the world with its powerful message of constructive affirmation.