

Kenneth Hagin Sr., Dead at 86, Was 'Father of Faith Movement'

The prolific author founded the Rhema Bible Training Center

Prominent charismatic Bible teacher Kenneth Hagin Sr. died on Sept. 19 after collapsing five days earlier in Tulsa, Okla., where his worldwide ministry has been based since 1966. He was 86.

Known internationally as the father of the Word of Faith movement, Hagin began his ministry in Texas in 1949 and later moved to Oklahoma to establish the Rhema Bible Training Center in the Tulsa suburb of Broken Arrow. He was considered a spiritual father by many well-known charismatic ministers including Kenneth Copeland, Joyce Meyer, Jerry

Savelle, Keith Butler and Casey Treat—and by thousands of pastors and evangelists who either graduated from the Rhema school or were influenced by his books and recorded teachings.

“When I heard Kenneth Hagin teach the Word 47 years ago it totally changed my life,” said Marilyn Hickey, whose ministry in Colorado has reached millions through television and conferences. “Of all the influences in my life, he influenced me the most. I learned from him that the Bible is applicable and powerful.”

International evangelist Christie Moore of Twin Falls, Idaho, got her Bible training by listening to Hagin's tapes and by attending a Rhema-affiliated church where the pastor based his sermons on Hagin's messages. “[Hagin's] teachings on faith and

the gifts of the Holy Spirit laid the foundation for my ministry. There's no way I could have been released into my call without those teachings," Moore said.

Hagin focused his message on healing and faith. He eventually formed a network of churches, the Rhema Ministerial Association International, which now serves 1,440 congregations. Most of them emphasize biblical prosperity, healing and the power of positive confession.

Hagin's many books provided instruction on the use of spiritual gifts. His own dramatic encounters with God in visions led him to write *I Believe in Visions* and *I Went to Hell*.

His best-selling book was *The Believer's Authority*, which has sold more than 1 million copies. In all, more than 53 million copies of his 125 titles are in circulation, a Rhema spokesperson said.

"Brother Hagin had a divine assignment, and that was to teach God's people about faith," said Billy Joe Daugherty, pastor of Victory Christian Center in Tulsa. Although Daugherty did not graduate from the Rhema school, he took classes there in 1978 after he and his wife, Sharon, prayed for God to show them how they could receive Bible training.

"The message of faith changed our lives," said Daugherty, whose church is now one of Tulsa's largest.

In total, more than 23,000 students have graduated from the Rhema school, and it has campuses in 13 other nations.

Hagin's doctrines were sometimes criticized, most vehemently by D.R. McConnell in the 1988 book *A Different Gospel*. But neither Hagin nor his son, Kenneth currently pastors the 8,000-member Rhema Bible Church in Tulsa and leads the Rhema ministry—rarely addressed their critics or responded to accusations. In fact, Hagin wrote a favorite phrase in his Bible that said: "The Bible says it, I believe it, and that settles it."

In a statement, Kenneth Hagin Jr. said his father did not simply practice what he preached. "He preached what he lived. His great legacy of faith will live on in the countless lives that have been healed, touched and changed through his ministry," Hagin Jr. said.

Hagin Jr., 64, will continue to lead the Rhema church as well as all other facets of the Hagin ministry, which include Faith Library Publications, the Faith Seminar of the

Air radio program, and the Rhema Prayer and Healing Center.

Because Hagin Sr. experienced divine healing during his youth, he placed special importance on healing and wanted all Christians to know that they had spiritual authority over sickness. Numerous testimonies of healings have been published in Rhema's magazine, *The Word of Faith*, which currently has almost 250,000 subscribers.

A ministry spokesperson said Hagin collapsed after eating breakfast on Sept. 14. He was admitted to a cardiac intensive care unit, where he stayed until his death. His wife, Oretha, son Kenneth Jr. and daughter Pat Harrison were by his side. Hagin Sr. also had five grandchildren and eight great-

grandchildren.

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