

“The Truth About the Prosperity Gospel”

PDF Version of the eDevo Series

the truth about the prosperity gospel part 1



"And the man became great and gained more and more until he became very wealthy and distinguished; he owned flocks, herds, and a great supply of servants, and the Philistines envied him."
Genesis 26: 13-14, AMP

Should you prosper, feel guilty for your wealth, take a vow of poverty or give all your money to the poor? These days, you'll get all kinds of opinions from people on the subject of "The Prosperity Gospel." Thankfully, God's not confused about the subject, and His Word outlines a clear, balanced pattern for Biblical prosperity. (In light of the recent economy, it makes one wonder if over the past several years the Holy Spirit has been trying to prepare Christians for these times through what seemed like an emphasis on prosperity?)

We need to settle it once and for all: the Lord has a plan to prosper our lives! The best way to discover that plan is to dig into the Word to understand the dynamics of the life God blesses.

When we study God's Word, we find that prosperity includes many things. Spiritual prosperity is the most important part of our prosperity, but it's not the only part. Mental, emotional, relational, physical, influential prosperity are important and God wants us to experience abundance in those areas, but there is more. Material and financial prosperity that distinguishes you is also included. The

Bible is full of examples of this very thing.

In many ways, prosperity is relative. The way an American defines prosperity might be different than the way someone from Dubai defines it. The way someone from Mexico defines prosperity might be different than the way someone from India defines it. Prosperity—however we define it—is a part of the blessing of God for those who walk with the Lord. Walking closely with the Lord is evidenced by serving God, obeying His Word, giving sacrificially, being generous and living by faith. Those with this lifestyle will ultimately experience these types of things: increase, blessings, riches, prosperity, influence, material wealth, ownership, helpers/staff...and persecutions! The Bible is full of examples.

Abraham—the one mentioned in the text above—fit the profile of a person God could and did bless with immense wealth, prosperity and favor. Jesus called Abraham the "father of our faith"—in other words, he's a good role model, someone worth following. Not only did Abraham live the exceptionally blessed life, so did his son Isaac and the many Patriarchs that followed him.

Have you ever studied Isaac's life? He walked in the same prosperity of his father. How about Joseph or Moses? They were loaded with all kinds of blessings, provisions, wealth and prosperity...and many persecutions. What about the entire nation of Israel? They left Egypt with gold, silver, jewels, riches and wealth. Have you studied Job's life? The man was loaded and blessed, and the enemy wanted to destroy Job. At the end of his great persecution, God restored Job and doubled all of the blessings he had! How about King David? Have you looked at his life? He was the apple of God's eye, greatly persecuted and very generous. In fact, David gave the modern equivalent of billions of dollars from his own personal savings account to God's house back in the day. The result? God showered him with wealth beyond comprehension. What about Solomon, David's son? His wisdom and wealth surpassed everyone's! Even the Queen of Sheba said it took her breath away! God's people have always prospered when they followed God's ways. They have been blessed and they have been a blessing to others.

What about Jesus? People like to depict Him as a homeless guy who wore ratty sandals and a burlap robe. That's not the way the Bible describes Him. Jesus was prosperous. He started his life with wealth. Remember the wise men? At Jesus' birth, they brought gold, frankincense and myrrh to Mary, Joseph and Jesus in a nice "baby shower" gift that set them up for life! Jesus had a nice "car" at His disposal when He rode around on a young colt. To our modern mind, that may seem like low-living—but back in the day that was considered to be the superior transportation of the rich. Jesus had ministry partners that gave financial gifts to support His ministry—so much so that He was able to support twelve disciples and their families for at least three years. Jesus had nice clothes. His robe was woven into one piece and was quite valuable. Notice, when they crucified Jesus, they didn't suggest His clothes go to "Goodwill"—they cast lots for his tunic. Jesus had a home and invited Nathanael to come and see it. Compared to His home in heaven and the streets of gold He knew, His life on earth would be considered "poor" but compared to the culture of His day—Jesus lived what we would consider a nice, prosperous life. Second Corinthians 8:9 describes this, *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."* Often, we don't really read the Scriptures and consider their actual implications.

However, when we study Jesus' life, it's apparent that He walked closely with His Father; He served God, obeyed His Word, gave sacrificially, demonstrated generosity, lived by faith and experienced continued increase, tremendous blessings, riches, prosperity, influence, material wealth, ownership, helpers/staff/disciples...and persecutions!

Jesus practiced and experienced the very thing He preached to us! *"Then Peter began to say to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You.' So Jesus answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'" (Mark 10:28-31, NKJV)*

Why not settle the matter once and for all in your own heart—God wants you to prosper! Yes, there will be seasons of sacrifice and persecutions as you walk with the Lord—but as you continue to obey His Word, serve God, give generously and live by faith—in due time, you will be blessed to be a blessing! The writer of Proverbs summarized it: *"The blessing of the Lord makes one rich and He adds no sorrow to it."* (Proverbs 10:22, NKJV)

"Father, I know it's Your will to prosper my life in every area. I believe You want me to live the abundantly blessed life—so that I can be a blessing to others. Today, I rededicate myself to walk closely with You, to serve You, to obey Your Word, to give sacrificially, to demonstrate generosity and live by faith. I know that You will lead me and in due time, I will experience increase, blessings, riches, prosperity, influence, material wealth, ownership, helpers/staff...and persecutions. I thank You for the truth of Your Word concerning my prosperity. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Note: *There's more to come on this topic—stay tuned for tomorrow's edevo...["The Prosperity Gospel—Truth or Heresy?—Part 2"](#) We also recommend Beth's book, ["Getting a Grip on the Basics of Prosperous Living"](#) for those who want to spend some extra time studying the Word on this topic.*

Blessings,



Beth Jones

the truth about the prosperity gospel part 2



"Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.' But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, 'Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!'"

Mark 10:21-25, NKJV

This week, we're talking about God's will to prosper and bless His children.

Did you know the issue isn't money—the issue is trust! The real core issue when it comes to money, wealth, riches, fortunes and prosperity is: trust! Jesus never rebuked anyone for having riches. He rebuked people when riches had them. The rich young ruler in the passage above didn't have great possessions; great possessions had him! That's where the real problem is. When we trust in riches, possessions and things more than God, they become our master. When we love money more than the Lord, we become its slave.

The Bible is clear. Money is not the root of all evil—it's the love of money that is the root of all evil. Money is neutral. Wealth can be used for evil purposes or godly purposes. Wealth in and of itself is neutral. The heart of the person with the money determines what those funds will do. Jesus never admonished people who had money or wealth—He simply challenged their heart condition by asking them to obey Him in giving it away. He rebuked the rich young ruler because he trusted in his riches more than in God; therefore, he was unable to part with them when Jesus told him to sell all that he had and give to the poor. Jesus praised the poor widow because she gave away the little bit of money she had. She was in control of her money; it was not in control of her. She trusted in God, not in her riches.

Here's a simple litmus test to determine if you have money or if money has you. Over the course of your Christian life have you been willing to give away anything

and everything, anytime the Lord asks you to do so—with a cheerful heart?

This is how we determine if money is our tool or our master. This is how we evaluate whether we're trusting in God or in uncertain riches. We have the opportunity to pass this test every day, every week and all throughout our lives.

What this means is this: those who trust in God keep a loose grip on their stuff—wealth, possessions, things—because they know everything belongs to the Lord. They trust Him and know that anytime He asks them to give money or things away—He will replenish them.

On the other hand, those who trust in money will always have conditions. They will never find a "good time" to be generous because their bills, debt or desires will crowd out thoughts of giving. They might give a few bucks to their local church, but they won't tithe. They'll give their hand-me-downs to the poor, but not their expensive clothes or jewelry. They set a limit on their giving and it's always somewhere way below 10%. There is always a condition, reason, excuse or explanation for their lack of giving. There is no freedom or joy in this way of living.

The issue isn't money—the issue is trust. If you struggle with trusting in money more than the Lord, meditate on these passages and ask God to set you free to enter into real prosperity!

Trust in the Living God: *"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy 6: 17-19, NKJV)*

Don't be Deceived by Riches: *"Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." (Mark 4: 18-20, NKJV)*

Don't Let Your Possessions Own You: *"Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.' But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, 'Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'" (Mark 10: 21-25, NKJV)*

Use Money, Don't Love It: *"But those who crave to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish (useless, godless) and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction and miserable perishing. For the love of money is a root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have been led astray and have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves through with*

many acute [mental] pangs." (1 Timothy 6: 9-10, AMP)

"Father, I trust in You. I will not put my trust in my possessions, my riches or my money. I will keep a loose grip on things. I want You to know that You have the freedom to ask me to give anything to anyone at anytime and I will obey. I know that true prosperity comes into my life when I am free from the love of money and trusting in uncertain riches. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Note: *There's more to come on this topic—stay tuned for tomorrow's edevo... "The Truth About the Prosperity Gospel—Part 3." We also recommend Beth's book, "Getting a Grip on the Basics of Prosperous Living" for those who want to spend some extra time studying the Word on this topic.*

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Beth Jones', with a stylized, cursive script.

Beth Jones

the truth about the prosperity gospel part 3



"But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray Him, objected, 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it."

(John 12:4-6, NIV)

So, if it's true that when we walk closely with the Lord as evidenced by serving God, obeying His Word, giving sacrificially, being generous and living by faith, and, if it's true that the issue when it comes to riches isn't the money itself—but rather the love of money and putting our trust in uncertain riches instead of the Lord—then who wouldn't want us to prosper? Who would argue with that balanced, biblical presentation of "the prosperity gospel"?

In other words, if it's true that according to the Word of God, the Lord really wants His people to prosper, then who doesn't want Christians to prosper? Where do people get the idea that God's people should be poor, broke and living on barely get-along-street while giving all their money to the poor? Where did "the poverty gospel" come from?

They get that idea from: Judas! Millions of sincere, but misguided Christians have gotten their prosperity theology from Judas! How many times have you heard the Judas-types echoing these words to Christians—especially those who are prosperous: "You shouldn't be blessed. You shouldn't live in that house, drive that car, wear those clothes, own that toy, use that perfume...those things could have been sold and the money given to the poor...." Who does that sound like?

The sad thing is this: if the truth be known, most of the people who say those types of things have never given one cent to the poor, much less to their church. The Judas-people always talk like self-righteous experts on how you should spend your money, but they don't practice the very things they preach. Let's take a look at the Judas profile.

Judas was the ultimate hypocrite—and often those who parrot him fall into the

same category. *"Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray Him, objected, 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it."* (John 12:3-6, NIV)

Judas was nothing but an opportunistic betrayer. He's the poster child for prosperity message critics. He didn't care about the poor. He was a mooch, a freeloader and a thief. He was stealing money from Jesus! Today, the pattern continues!

If you dig a little deeper into the lives of the loudest critics of the prosperity message, you will usually find the same type of stinginess and accusatory attitude in their hearts. They are almost always moochers (enjoying the benefits of a ministry others have paid for), non-tithers, non-givers and not generous. They want to come to your party, but not bring anything. They want to join your Thanksgiving feast, but not bring a dish to pass. They want to attend your church and send their kids to your programs, but not give one red cent to help cover the costs. They almost try to make you feel guilty for having anything that is better than what they have and they almost always try to sound like the most spiritual person in the room, misquoting one verse after another. Sadly, we've seen this pattern too many times over the years. The root is simply the same root that lived in Judas' heart: they are jealous and envious about the blessings of God that rest on others.

So—don't let Judas rain on your parade. You are blessed to be a blessing and don't let Judas talk you out of it.

If you're a Christian whom the Lord has blessed—it's very likely because you are...

...A person who walks closely with the Lord, serves God, obeys His Word, is very generous and lives by faith—therefore, God has blessed you according to His Word. *"The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it."* (Proverbs 10:22, NKJV) No apologies needed!

...A person who's given your life to serving God, serving others or serving the Gospel—and one who's been persecuted for being blessed. *"Peter said to Him, 'We have left everything to follow You!' 'I tell you the truth,' Jesus replied, 'No one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father children or fields for Me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'" (Mark 10:28-31, NIV)* Rejoice and be glad, Jesus predicted it!

I hope you'll reread "The Truth About the Prosperity Gospel—Parts 1, 2 and 3" and study these few Scriptures for yourself. We are confident the Lord wants His people to prosper. He needs on-fire, Jesus-loving, generous Christians to be

blessed in mighty ways so they can also bless others with their wealth. We cannot give what we do not have—it's imperative that believers prosper so they can help others and they can finance the work of the gospel around the world!

"Father, forgive me if I've been like Judas—accusatory, envious and jealous. Help me understand Your plan for prosperity so that I am truly blessed to be a blessing in even greater ways. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Note: For further study, we recommend Beth's book, "Getting a Grip on the Basics of Prosperous Living" for those who want to spend some extra time in the Word on this topic. [Click here](#) for more information.

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