

## **Congregational Responses to Preachers' Sermon on Prosperity Messages: A Textual Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

The gospel of prosperity has been widely and critically discussed from the point view of supporting or against the belief. However, this study delved into the critical analysis of textual implication and congregational responses of the preachers' rhetoric on prosperity sermon. The study adopted the textual research method to analyse biblical texts and beliefs on prosperity sermon. The study also analysed the implication of David Oyedepo's assertion on wealth creation by giving to God. The study disagreed with the notion of prosperity preachers that giving to God is the basis for attracting God's blessing. The biblical texts used discovered that the true intent of the text does not support the notion of transactional God. The study recommended that the true meaning of biblical text should be preached and preachers should avoid using the bible to extort parishioners.

**Keywords:** Prosperity, Sermon, Preachers, Biblical text, Congregational responses.

### **Introduction**

Christian preachers now debate about whether or not to preach a message of prosperity. Many preachers instill in their listeners the idea that wealth is a direct result of how much they contribute to God. Their discourse is skewed in favour of the idea that donating to God is the foundation for their money and physical blessings here on earth. Prosperity preachers paint a vision of a transactional God, one who will not bless His obedient followers without receiving material goods in exchange. Bishop Benson Idahosa, Pastor David Oyedepo, Pastor David Ibiyeomi, Pastor Enoch



Adeboye, Pastor Chris Okotie, Pastor Paul Enenche, and Pastor Johnson Suleman are notable preachers who are among the leading prosperity preachers in Nigeria. Among the first books on wealth to be written was David Oyedepo in 1995 entitled: "Breaking Financial Hardship". Oyedepo (1995) book shaped the mindset of Christians and how Christianity is perceived in Nigeria.

The most dangerous thing about the prosperity gospel is that it preaches a contradictory message to the true gospel of Jesus. For instance, Jesus said you must take up your cross and follow him daily, prosperity theology teaches that if you "sow seeds of faith," you won't experience hardship (Mbewe, 2017). Whatever the distortion, the prosperity gospel ultimately takes our eyes off Jesus and his true Word that says this life is about God's glory, not our own.

The prosperity gospel, a controversial theological movement that promises financial success and material abundance as a reward for faith and donations, has gained significant traction in many Christian congregations around the world. While prosperity preachers often employ persuasive rhetoric to promote their message, the responses of congregations to these messages vary widely. This paper, therefore, explores the diverse reactions and attitudes of congregants towards prosperity preaching, drawing insights from the provided search results and additional research.

The term "prosperity gospel" refers to a collection of beliefs that link Christian faith and material, especially financial success. These beliefs are common among evangelical charismatic preachers. It has a rich history in American culture, thanks to celebrities like Osteen and Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, glam and extravagantly dressed televangelists whose Heritage USA, a Christian theme park that combines elements of Disneyland and Bethlehem, was once the third most popular tourist destinations in the country (Burton, 2017). The idea of tithing, or contributing money to the church through many means such as first fruits or first earnings, church donations, seed sowing, and many more, was central to the prosperity gospel. Many prosperity gospel preachers claimed that this money was an investment. According to a verse in the bible, the congregation can receive a "hundredfold" return on their investment by demonstrating confidence.

According to Copeland's Laws of Prosperity pamphlet (1974), Christians should give and allow God to double their donations if they want a hundredfold return on their investment. This type of



100% return on investment is not offered by any bank or investment company worldwide. This way of thinking views tithing as a prudent financial decision. It's a bet on the belief that God acts in the present to reward people who have both faith and a suitably developed work ethic. It's a demonstration of faith as well as a wise investment (Burton, 2017). The crowd responds by donating and has unwavering trust that God has commanded them through His prophet to give, resting on the promises of God to bless more than they ask.

The gospel of prosperity has been widely and critically discussed from the point view of supporting or against the belief on prosperity sermon. However, this study delved into the critical analysis of textual implications and congregational responses of the preachers' rhetoric on prosperity sermon. The paper, therefore, identify some of the historical backgrounds that propel the belief of prosperity. The study also analysed the implication of David Oyedepo's assertion on wealth creation by giving to God.

### **Historical Background of Prosperity Sermon**

The roots of the prosperity gospel are easily traced back to the United States. Without any iota of doubt, the United States of America is the source of many good things, such as the rich Christian legacy that dates back to the 18th and 19th centuries and the Evangelical tradition (Adeleye, 2015). However, the "prosperity gospel" propagated by American televangelists has mostly elevated the quest of materialism and upward social mobility. It will be acknowledged by many Americans that this gospel is nothing more than the classic American Dream dressed up in biblical garb. Don McConnell claims that the ideology of prosperity is a heinous illustration of how the church has culturally accommodated American materialism's worldly ideals. The "success gospel," according to Wiersbe (1980), is ideal for American culture since it "worships health, wealth, and happiness." Fee (1990) asserts that, although having virtually little in common with the gospel, the so-called "wealth and health" gospel is spreading quickly throughout American Christianity. In more straightforward versions, it merely declares, "Serve God and get rich."

This cultural trend that has infiltrated the church is appropriately referred to as the "dragon of materialism" by Stephen D. Eyre in his book "Defeating the Dragons of the World". Regarding its



consequences, Eyre (1987) proposed that the Dragon of Materialism causes us to get fixated on the worldly aspects of existence. All our time, energy and thoughts are focused in the physical aspects of life. We became practical materialists. We know that there is more to life, but the way we live shows that we have adopted the creed of the Dragon of materialism, "Matter is all that matters.

This misconception goes against the idea that wealth is created; the average American, aside from lottery winners, truly acquires their affluence via laborious effort. The televangelists employ this individualized and self-serving interpretation of the Bible to deceive others and draw in immediate profit. It is important to recognize that the prosperity gospel that has emerged from its cultural setting and gained influence through television is nothing more than consumerism gone bad that has turned into an idol and dragon that has enslaved its creators. In an interview with Charisma, Jim Bakker, the founder of the PTL ministry and Heritage USA, said as much. His empire fell apart in 1987 but he has since repented. He acknowledged that PTL had turned into the Tower of Babel. Moreover, he stated, "I allowed the PTL ministry to grow to the point where the buildings at Heritage USA almost overshadowed the message of Jesus Christ." I fought day and night to keep this monster alive because my vision was so vital (Bakker, 1997). The prosperity gospel now has its roots in almost every region of the world.

Oral Roberts and his son Richard Roberts, whose "seed-faith" gospel has affected the church in Africa, are two well-known Americans whose prosperity gospel has had an impact. Next are Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, who promote the doctrine of the "hundredfold return," John Avanzini, also portrays Jesus as exceedingly wealthy, and Frederick Price, says he follows Jesus' example by driving a Rolls Royce. Robert Tilton and Morris Cerullo also modeled the trend. The majority of them belong to the televangelist movement. Kenneth Hagin, Fred Price, and Paul Couch are some religious instructors who are intimately linked to their philosophy (Adeleye, 2015).



## Empirical Issues

Bishop Benson Idahosa, the indisputable founder of the prosperity gospel in Nigeria, adopted and taught Oral Roberts' teachings, which had the biggest impact on the development of the gospel in that country. Oral Robert's seed-faith theory stems from an idea that struck him as profoundly obvious one day in his early 50s. "Whatever you can imagine and believe you can do" is the guiding principle. According to Roberts (1992),

“I could feel my inner man begin to stir. I could feel myself standing up on the inside. I became excited as I began to see the meaning of the idea that God brought into my mind, *whatever you can conceive, and believe, you can do!* I saw God had first conceived the world and man. I saw He had believed. And what faith it was! God had believed in man enough to create him with the power to choose good and evil, to live positively or negatively, to believe or to doubt, to respond to God or to denounce Him”.

Roberts missed at least two things right away. He was not God in the first place, as he could not conceive of "whatever." Second, biblical faith is confidence in God rather than "conceiving whatever." However, Roberts was persuaded by that idea that "everything God does starts with a seed planted." Consequently, they came to believe that "God will only multiply what you give him" (Roberts, 1992). Even if God multiplied your donation, it would still be nothing if you made none. Thus, Roberts (1970) says, our sacrifices to God, or tithes, are Seed-Faith. 'Seed season and harvest and cold and heat, summer and winter and day and night shall not stop while the earth remained'. Genesis 8:22 is the foundation upon which Oral Roberts developed his theory of seed-faith. God will only return to us the amount we sowed as seeds. Giving seeds is a seed-faith. According to Roberts, the seeds we sow are multiplied and returned to us, giving us more than enough for our own needs and providing us with "meat" in our homes. This gave rise to Oral Roberts' "Expect a Miracle" theory, which emphasises that all seemingly intractable issues can be resolved by providing seeds. In a sense, God takes on the role of an insurance agent, one who takes investments expecting profits.



### **The Appeal of Prosperity Preaching**

Prosperity preaching has gained appeal primarily because it speaks to the hopes and challenges that many members of the congregation share. Financial blessings and material success can be tempting in countries where poverty, economic misery, and inequality are common. Prosperity preachers frequently appeal to their listeners' innate yearning for a better life by framing their teaching as a means of achieving happiness and success. Furthermore, preaching prosperity is consistent with the individualistic, independent, and optimistic cultural norms that are present in many nations. Prosperity preachers capitalise on the human need for agency and control over one's circumstances by highlighting the individual's ability to create their own reality by faith and positive confession. (Ukoma, *et al.*, 2016).

### **The Dangers of Prosperity Preaching**

Prosperity preaching has its detractors, despite its allure. The prosperity gospel, according to many theologians and religious authorities, offers a twisted and incoherent message in comparison to the genuine gospel of Jesus Christ. Prosperity preachers frequently guarantee that devout Christians will only receive blessings and will not encounter any difficulties, despite Jesus' teachings on the value of picking up one's cross and enduring tribulations in this world (Pillay, 2021). Furthermore, preaching prosperity can breed a materialistic and self-centred understanding of Christianity that prioritises serving oneself over God and others. This change in emphasis may cause essential Christian virtues like humility, selflessness, and compassion to be overlooked.

Nyambo (2023) critically examined the risks associated with prosperity sermons. He explains that the prosperity gospel's emphasis on donating in order to get wealthy has confused Lutheran parishioners. This has caused some people to believe that being poor is a sign of being cursed. Misunderstandings regarding God's grace and benefits have resulted from such teachings. The prosperity gospel confuses people more and more as it embeds itself deeper in adherents' beliefs, making the wealthy feel superior and the impoverished feel inferior. In response, members plant seedlings to demonstrate their acceptance of the teachings.



In their article “Africa New-Pentecostal capitalism”, Pillay (2021) Through the prism of Ujamaa, explained that the prosperity gospel manifests itself in secular, capitalist commercial ventures, with the result that many preachers of this kind of gospel are motivated by the desire to make money. Because of this, when the gospel is preached, its existence causes the gospel to become commercialised.

According to Ukoma *et al.* (2023), 3 John 1:2 is not a reliable foundation upon which to invalidate Deuteronomy 15:11. It is false because, based on demonstrable evidence among believers, it is impossible. For example, how many people, by fervently claiming to have something, actually obtained it? Instead, it breeds jealousy. The position of this study is strengthened by the simple reality that no two fingers are alike. While it is desirable for the Church to prosper in all respects, believers should be reminded that holiness and contentment are valuable possessions that should be highly valued. Prophets and other anointed men of God may never stop preaching about wealth, but in order to prevent heresy in Africa in the twenty-first century, they must modify their message to reflect the clean word. Their research also revealed that several aspects of prosperity teaching have biblical roots, and the Bible validates these truths below. While acknowledging the horrible social conditions in which this teaching thrives and the glimmer of hope it provides for those in need, one does not want to be wholly pessimistic.

The prosperity gospel's most ardent proponents teach that the Bible is seriously distorted and false, that their practices are frequently immoral and not of Christ, that their influence is detrimental to many churches' pastoral and spiritual well-being whose teachings offer no lasting hope, and may even divert people from the message and means of eternal salvation.

### **Methodology**

The study anchors on the ideas of the Neo Religious Movement which is basically characterized as a charismatic form of Christian science. The idea behind the movement is connected with the positive confession movement of Word-Faith movement. It has involved two distinct but closely related factions: the Norman Vincent Peale/Robert Schuller Positive-Possibility thinkers/Positive Mental Attitude, with their roots in New Thought; and the Kenneth Hagin/Kenneth Copeland Positive Confession and Word-Faith groups, which have their roots in E.W. Kenyon, William



Branham, and the Manifest Sons of God/Latter Rain movement... It does not yet constitute a new denomination, but it certainly represents innovative teachings outside of mainstream Christianity. The prosperity preachers believed that giving by faith attract God's blessing and positive thinkers encourage innovative thoughts and produce results that will lead to prosperity.

The study used the textual analysis to biblical text related to prosperity message. The textual analysis was adopted to understand the various meanings by identifying the "who", "what", "when", "where", "why", and "how" of the text.

### **Biblical Textual Analysis of the concept of Prosperity Messages**

The text used for this study is Deuteronomy 28's section on blessings and curses. It is true that God would grant Israel material prosperity as long as it complied with all of the requirements of the Mosaic Covenant (the book of Deuteronomy) which is the covenant Israel made with God on Mount Sinai, mediated by Moses. That is, not every single Israelite, but rather National Israel. The entire wording of the Covenant is addressed to Israel as a country, not to individual Israelites. Knowing who the recipients are is fundamental hermeneutics 101. If a person is not a part of the nation or covenant in question, you cannot expect God to bestow upon them a blessing that is a part of the national covenant. We are unable to "exceed written word" (1 Cor. 6:4).

Even the Mosaic Covenant does bring monetary prosperity; the "prosperity" teaching on this subject makes a number of logical and hermeneutical flaws that show up in the form of inconsistent or inaccurate application of the Mosaic Covenant and appeals to it. God made a promise to protect Israel from diseases in Deuteronomy 7:15. However, there is a logical argument that suggests the Old Covenant was superior to the New Covenant as God could accomplish the same task under the Old Covenant but not under the New. We must acknowledge that the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant are two different covenants in order to completely comprehend these differences between the two. The apostle Paul clarifies that a person can only switch from one covenant to another through death in Romans 7.

“Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is





living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.” Romans 7:1-4 (NASB)

Why do you think you may apply a clause (or curses, see question 6) from the Mosaic Covenant directly to the believer in the New Covenant since a person can only be a party to one of the two covenants, to the Law or to Christ? Is it possible for a Nigerian national residing in the United States to contest an Australian citizen's citizenship benefit? No, he doesn't reside in Australia and isn't an Australian citizen.

In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also...No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matthew 6:19-24).

In Mark 10:17–25, the Lord Jesus then addressed a wealthy young ruler who desired eternal life—so long as he was spared from having to give up his enormous fortune. The Bible says that he was dismayed when Jesus instructed him to sell everything he owned and give it to the needy so that he might have treasure in paradise. He left in despair because he had so many valuables.

Jesus went on to make the unequivocal statement, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God...! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” You never hear these words from the lips of prosperity gospel preachers. Rather, they give the impression that being materially wealthy is the sure sign that all is well between your soul and God.

One more example from the ministry of Christ should suffice. On one occasion, someone in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Jesus



refused. This should surprise not only prosperity gospel preachers but also advocates of the social gospel. Instead, Jesus warned the person asking for this favour from him. He said, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:13–15). Material wealth is not blessedness. Jesus further commented on this with a parable when he said,

“The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:16–21).

### **The Apostles Teaching on Prosperity**

A good example is the Apostle Paul’s Writing to Timothy, his spiritual son. Paul mentioned about “people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, who imagine, that godliness is a means of gain” (1 Timothy 6:5). There isn’t a better way to characterise preachers of the prosperity gospel. These are people with corrupted minds and a lack of morality who see godliness as a method to achieve financial success. They have lost the substance of the authentic gospel because they have no interest in seeing souls saved. Paul sternly warned aspiring preachers to abstain from materialistic gain and conceit.

Paul wrote in Timothy 6: 6-8 that

“But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content”.

It is very clear that the Apostle Paul warns against an insatiable thirst for wealth. He says, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. But as for you, “O man of God, flee these things”



(Timothy 6:9-10). Many of their followers have pursued wealth at considerable cost to their relationships and families, and spiritual life due to a refusal to heed such wise guidance.

The book of Hebrews confirmed these counsels: “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Hebrews 13:5). This is the general interpretation in the Bible about wealth. It is the exact opposite of what prosperity gospel preachers are saying. The message of the Bible is that we harm our souls and the souls of others when we make them chase after wealth as an end in itself. From these biblical texts, it is against the gospel Jesus brought to mankind. In Matthew 1: 22 it says “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins”. The purpose of the coming of Jesus and His message is very clear. Jesus did not come to make us wealthy but to save us from our sins. Jesus said, “You cannot serve God and money.

### **Nigeria Case Study: David Oyedepo:**

David Oyedepo is a prominent proponent of the prosperity gospel. He has been a very good student of Benson Idahosa, John Avanzini, and Oral Roberts. By fusing his own inventiveness with everything he has gained from them, Winners Chapel Enterprises is growing not only in Nigeria but also in other African countries. By his own admission, he believes in “sweat-less success” and teaches his followers that “the knowledge and the practice of the truth make you a sweat-less winner. His essential philosophy is that life is meant to be a smooth cruise, free of all struggles and full material wealth. “Not all winners sweat to win. Sweating is a curse. It symbolises struggles.” Oyedepo believes poverty is a curse and self-made. He uses Malachi 3:6-9 to establish this. According to him, “it comes largely as a result of a wilful act of disobedience to the law of abundance by the believers.”

So, are we to believe that everyone who endures extreme poverty in different regions of Africa is benefiting from their deliberate disobedience? According to Oyedepo, God has given him the task of eradicating it. He feels that making others wealthy is his main purpose and calling. He said that God had given him the covenant hammer to break free from all bonds of poverty. “I took hold of it and declared, ‘I can never be poor!’ That was not an empty confession; I knew what I was saying,



and what had been delivered to me. It has never disappointed me once! Friend, it is time to begin to hunger and thirst for this same hammer to be delivered to you.” He recalls how he received this call, I remember very clearly, in 1987, I was in the United States of America, attending a meeting when the Lord said to me, “Get down home quick and make my people rich.” They were very strong, compelling and powerful words. So, I abandoned everything I was doing, I cancelled all engagements, and rushed down home immediately.”

Although it's unclear how many people Oyedepo has made wealthy, there's no denying that he has amassed enormous wealth. Former architect Oyedepo is now a preacher. After establishing his Winners Chapel with Living Faith Ministries in Kaduna, he relocated to Lagos and spent at least 400 million Naira (\$5 million US) building his World Mission Centre. His first Church building accommodated at least 8,000 per session. He used to run three major services on Sundays, which attracted at least 30,000 people. Today he has built the largest church in Africa (and probably in the world) that seats over 50,000 people at once. He has a multimillion Naira press called Dominion Publishing House (Wikipedia, 2024). He claims to have purchased a tiny plane for preaching in addition to his collection of pricey cars. The majority of these were presumably purchased with regular donations and tithes that his devotees were required to pay. They are led to believe that God offers you more in return the more you give.

Oyedepo is a Nigerian televangelist who flaunts his riches and wealth. Some of his works are on material wealth and well health. Keys to Divine Health, Anointing for Breakthrough, Born to Win, Breaking Financial Hardship, Success Buttons, Covenant Wealth, and the Mystery of the Anointing Oil are a few of them. In Breaking Financial Hardship, he says: “Friend there is no place your mouth cannot take you to. When you talk mediocrity, it will become your garment and if you talk lack you will have it until you become lack yourself, If you want to have a living financial experience, speak life to your finances” (Oyedepo, 1995).



## Congregational Responses to Prosperity Preaching

The responses of congregations to prosperity preaching can be broadly categorized into three main categories: acceptance, skepticism, and rejection.

### Acceptance

Some members of the congregation genuinely accept the prosperity gospel message and hold fast to the promises of material wealth and financial blessings. These believers frequently take an active part in the prosperity preaching customs of tithing and planting "seeds of faith" through monetary contributions. To achieve their goals, they could also practise visualisation techniques and positive confession. Prosperity preaching gives many of these congregation members a sense of hope and empowerment in the midst of adversity. By believing in the promises of the prosperity gospel, they can maintain a positive outlook and work towards a better future (Ukoma *et al.*, 2023).

The prosperity gospel message speaks to people's natural yearning for material plenty and financial blessings, which may speak to members of the congregation who are struggling financially (Deut 28:11, Prov 3:9-10, Mal 3:10).

Some members of the congregation fully subscribe to the prosperity gospel, tithing and "sowing seeds of faith" among other practices, and they have complete faith in the promises of wealth. (Ps 1:3, Ps 37:4, 3 John 1:2).

### Skepticism

Other congregants approach prosperity preaching with a more cautious and skeptical attitude. While they may find some aspects of the message appealing, they are hesitant to fully commit to the prosperity gospel due to concerns about its theological soundness and practical implications. These congregants may question the selective use of biblical texts by prosperity preachers, arguing that the prosperity gospel fails to consider the broader context and meaning of these passages. They may also be concerned about the emphasis on financial giving and the potential for manipulation or exploitation of vulnerable individuals.



Other congregants approach prosperity preaching with caution, questioning the selective use of Bible verses by prosperity preachers and the emphasis on financial giving (1 Tim 6:5-11, Heb 13:5).

These congregants are concerned about the theological soundness and potential for manipulation or exploitation associated with prosperity preaching (Prov 30:8-9, 1 Tim 6:6-8).

### **Rejection**

Some churchgoers vehemently disagree with the prosperity gospel doctrine, seeing it as a heresy that runs counter to Christianity's authentic teachings. These Christians contend that the prosperity gospel dehumanises God and treats Him like a "heavenly sugar daddy" who must only be used to achieve monetary success. They might also be worried about the possibility of idolatry, in which reverence and adoration of God are subordinated to the desire for money and material belongings. Congregants who reject the prosperity gospel frequently stress the significance of understanding the Bible within its correct context, the necessity of putting more emphasis on spiritual development and service than on worldly gain, and the significance of suffering and difficulty in their Christian life.

Some congregants outrightly reject the prosperity gospel, viewing it as contradictory to true Christian teachings about the role of suffering, the importance of spiritual growth, and the dangers of idolatry towards wealth (Matt 6:33, Luke 12:15, 1 Tim 6:9-11).

These believers emphasize the need for proper biblical interpretation, contentment, and a focus on serving God and others rather than pursuing material gain (Josh 1:8, Prov 11:25, Phil 4:19).

### **The Impact of Prosperity Preaching on Congregations**

According to the differing perspectives of academics and clergy regarding prosperity message, preaching about wealth can have a significant and complex impact on congregations. For those who accept the message, it might, on the one hand, offer a sense of community, empowerment, and hope. Prosperity preachers frequently cultivate a culture of positivism and encouragement among their congregants by establishing a sense of community and belonging. Prosperity preaching, nevertheless, can often backfire on congregations. It may result in the disregard of



crucial theological and moral issues, such as the necessity of humility, sacrifice, and compassion, as well as the significance of suffering in the Christian life. Furthermore, congregants may find it extremely difficult to comply with the emphasis on financial contribution, especially if they are already experiencing financial difficulties. Prosperity preaching occasionally causes disputes and divisions among congregations about the distribution of resources and theology, which can exacerbate trust and unity concerns.

### **Negative Impacts of Prosperity Preaching**

Important Christian characteristics like humility, sacrifice, and compassion may be neglected as a result of the prosperity gospel since it places more emphasis on achieving personal success than on serving God and others. (1 Tim 6:5-11, Heb 13:5).

Congregants may find it more difficult to give financially when there is a strong emphasis on it. (Prov 3:13-14, Jer 29:11).

Additionally, disputes and rifts over theological matters and resource distribution within congregations can be exacerbated by prosperity preaching. (1 Tim 6:9-11).

The biblical scriptures show how congregations responded to prosperity preaching in a variety of ways, from whole acceptance to open rejection. The writings stress the value of contentment, spiritual development, and a focus on serving God and others while cautioning against the perils of greed, consumerism, and a skewed understanding of the gospel (Linne *et al.*, 2024).

### **Conclusion**

The study disagreed with the notion of prosperity preachers that giving to God is the basis for attracting God's blessing. The message of painting an image of a transactional God is rejected by many scholars and the notion that God will not bless His obedient followers without receiving material goods in exchange is a false teaching. The biblical texts used discovered that the true intent of the text does not support the notion of transactional God.



Congregations' reactions to prosperity preaching are intricate and varied, representing the various theological stances, cultural contexts, and individual Christian experiences. Some members of the congregation accept the prosperity gospel message wholeheartedly, while others view it with suspicion or open rejection. In the end, congregational response to prosperity preaching is contingent upon the particular environment in which it is implemented and understood while the promise of material wealth and financial blessings can be alluring. It is crucial for believers to consider the theological validity and practical ramifications of prosperity preaching in the context of Christianity's larger teachings. By engaging in thoughtful and nuanced discussions about the role of wealth and prosperity in the Christian life, congregations can work towards a more balanced and holistic understanding of the gospel message. This may involve a greater emphasis on spiritual growth, service to others, and the importance of contentment and generosity, regardless of one's material circumstances.

The study recommends that the true meaning of biblical text should be preached and preachers should avoid using the bible to extort parishioners. Preachers should focus more on delivery message that will build the faith of parishioners on Jesus Christ and avoid earthly gains which contradicts the New Testament emphasis on spiritual richness over material wealth. True messages that focus on the grace and mercy of God should be the main sermon and focus rather than the transactional God theorization by many prosperity preachers.

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