Date	Sunday, October 4, 2026
Title	The Prosperity Gospel vs. the Gospel of Jesus Christ
Scripture	1 Timothy 2:12
Memory Verse	James 1:1-12

James 1:1-12

James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.

[2] My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

[3] knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

[4] But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

[5] If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

[6] But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

[7] For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

[8] he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

[9] Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation,

[10] but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away.

[11] For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.
[12] Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Sunday School Lesson: The Prosperity Gospel vs. the Gospel of Jesus Christ

The gospel promises reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, not guaranteed wealth, health, comfort, or worldly success. Scripture teaches us to trust Christ whether we have abundance or suffer want.

Primary Text: 1 Timothy 6:3–12
Supporting Texts: Matthew 6:19–21, 24–34; Philippians 4:10–13; 2 Corinthians 8:9; 2 Corinthians 11:3–4; Mark 8:34–38; Acts 14:21–22; Hebrews 13:5; James 2:1–7.

"If someone told you, 'Give $1,000 to God and He will give you $10,000 back,' what would you think?"

"What if that person said the reason, you aren't wealthy is because you don't have enough faith?"

The prosperity Gospel teaches both.

What Is the Prosperity Gospel?

The Prosperity Gospel, sometimes called the Health-and-Wealth Gospel or associated with the Word of Faith movement, is a theological teaching that places

significant emphasis on the idea that faith, positive confession, giving, and obedience can produce God's blessings in the form of financial prosperity, physical healing, success, favor, and material abundance.

Prosperity Gospel can be described as prosperity theology that teaches God rewards faith and, in some forms, substantial giving with financial blessing.

There are different versions of prosperity teaching. Some teachers make an explicit "give and get" connection, while others use a softer message emphasizing positive thinking, personal success, health, abundance, and God's desire for believers to prosper.

The basic prosperity message can be summarized like this:

1. God wants you wealthy.
2. God wants you physically healthy.
3. Poverty is generally a curse.
4. Sickness is generally something believers should overcome through faith.
5. Positive confession releases God's blessings.
6. Giving financially can activate a greater financial harvest.
7. The amount of your faith can determine the amount of your blessing.
8. Success and material abundance are often presented as evidence of God's favor.

The problem is not that Scripture ever speaks about God's provision or blessing. It does. The problem is when material blessing becomes the measure of Christian faithfulness and when God's promises are turned into a formula for obtaining earthly benefits.

The First Major Problem: It Makes God a Means to an End

Read: Matthew 6:19–21

19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Jesus teaches us to lay up treasures in heaven rather than making earthly treasure our primary pursuit.

"What is the difference between wanting God's blessings and wanting God Himself?"

That's one of the most important questions in this entire lesson.

The prosperity message can subtly change Christianity from:

"I love God because He is God."

to:

"I love God because of what He can give me."

That is a serious theological problem.

Matthew 6:24

24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Jesus teaches that a person cannot serve both God and mammon. The issue isn't simply having money. The issue is who owns your heart. A Christian can possess money without money possessing the Christian.

The Second Major Problem: It Misrepresents Suffering

Read: Philippians 4:10–13

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished
again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak in
regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how
to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned
both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all
things through Christ who strengthens me.

Paul says he learned how to live with both abundance and need. Notice something extremely important, Paul does not say, "Because I have enough faith, I will never experience need." Instead, he says that he has learned contentment in both conditions.

Read: 2 Corinthians 11:23–28

23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more
abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths
often. **24** From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. **25** Three times I
was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and
a day I have been in the deep; **26** in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of
robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the
city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false
brethren; **27** in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst,
in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— **28** besides the other things, what comes
upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

Paul experienced:

- imprisonment
- beatings
- shipwrecks
- hunger
- thirst
- cold
- danger
- persecution
- physical hardship

Yet nobody could reasonably argue that Paul lacked faith.

Read: Acts 14:22

22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

Paul and Barnabas taught believers that Christians would experience "many tribulations" on the way into God's kingdom. That directly challenges the idea that suffering necessarily means, "You don't have enough faith."

Jesus Himself Did Not Preach a Comfortable Gospel

Read: Mark 8:34–38

34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? 37 Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Jesus calls His followers to:

- deny themselves
- take up their cross
- follow Him

Jesus never said: "Follow Me and I will make you wealthy." He said to take up your cross. The Christian life is not fundamentally about getting more. It is about becoming more like Christ.

Luke 9:58

58 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

Jesus explained that He Himself did not have a place to lay His head. The apostles certainly did not live lives of guaranteed earthly prosperity. Yet they possessed something far greater: Christ.

The Third Major Problem: It Can Turn Giving Into a Transaction

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:6–8

6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who
sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in
his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And
God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all
sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

The Bible absolutely teaches generosity. But Paul says giving should not be:

- grudging
- compelled
- manipulative

Biblical giving says:

"I give because God has already given to me."

Prosperity manipulation can turn it into:

"I give so God will give me more."

Those are fundamentally different motivations. Are we giving to God because we love Him—or are we trying to get God to give something back?

The Fourth Major Problem: It Misuses Scripture

One of the most common methods of prosperity teaching is taking a biblical verse and removing it from its context.

Example: 3 John 2

"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health..."

This verse is frequently used to prove that God guarantees financial prosperity and physical health.

But notice what it actually is, John's personal prayer for Gaius.

It is not a universal promise that every Christian will always be wealthy and healthy.

Another example: Philippians 4:19, “And my God shall supply all your need..."

This is a wonderful promise. But Paul isn't promising, God will give you everything you want. The promise concerns needs, not unlimited wants.

The Fifth Major Problem: It Distorts the Meaning of "Blessing"

Read: Ephesians 1:3

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

Paul says believers have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Notice where the emphasis is, IN CHRIST.

Our greatest blessing isn't:

- a bigger house
- a better vehicle
- a larger bank account
- perfect health
- a promotion
- worldly success

Our greatest blessing is: Jesus Christ.

We have:

- forgiveness
- redemption
- adoption
- reconciliation
- eternal life
- the Holy Spirit
- fellowship with God
- hope of resurrection
- an eternal inheritance……That is biblical prosperity.

What Does the Bible Actually Say About Money?

Read these passages:

1 Timothy 6:6–10

6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing
into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and
clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into
temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in
destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for
which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves
through with many sorrows.

Paul warns about those who view godliness as a means of financial gain.

The famous warning is: "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." Notice that Paul doesn't say money itself is evil. The problem is the love of money.

1 Timothy 6:17–19

17 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. 18 Let
them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to
share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they
may lay hold on eternal life.

Those who are rich are not commanded to give all their money away simply because they are rich. They are commanded:

- not to be proud
- not to trust in uncertain riches
- to trust in God
- to be generous
- to be ready to share

Money is a tool. It is a terrible master.

The Biblical Gospel vs. the Prosperity Gospel

Biblical Gospel	**Prosperity Gospel**
Christ is the treasure	Blessing can become the treasure
Jesus is the reward	What Jesus gives becomes the reward
Salvation from sin	Salvation can become associated with earthly success
Take up your cross	Pursue your best life
Expect trials	Trials can be viewed as evidence of insufficient faith
Contentment in Christ	Dissatisfaction with present circumstances

Biblical Gospel	Prosperity Gospel
Give because you love God	Giving can become a means of obtaining blessing
Trust God in abundance or poverty	Faith is often connected with obtaining abundance
Eternal treasure	Earthly treasure
God's glory	Personal success

The Most Important Passage: 1 Timothy 6:3–12

3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the
words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, 4 he
is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words,
from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, 5 useless wranglings of men
of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means
ofgain. From such withdraw yourself.

6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing
into this world, [d]and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and
clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into
temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in
destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for
which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves
through with many sorrows.

The Good Confession

[11] But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. [12] Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Verses 3–5

Paul warns about people who teach contrary doctrine and use godliness as a means of gain.

Verse 6

"Godliness with contentment is great gain."

That's the opposite of prosperity theology.

The great gain isn't:

Godliness + money.

The great gain is:

Godliness + contentment.

Verses 7–8

We brought nothing into this world.

And we will carry nothing out.

Therefore:

food + clothing + contentment should be sufficient.

Verses 9–10

The desire to become rich can lead people into:

- temptation
- snares
- foolish desires
- destruction
- wandering from the faith

Verse 11

Paul tells Timothy:

"But you, O man of God, flee these things..."

What things?

The love of money and the pursuit of riches.

Then Paul says to pursue:

- righteousness
- godliness
- faith
- love
- patience
- gentleness.

That's biblical prosperity.

Discussion Questions

1. Can a Christian be wealthy and still be faithful to Christ?

2. Can a Christian be poor and still be greatly blessed by God?

3. Does sickness automatically mean someone lacks faith?

4. Does God promise to make every Christian financially prosperous?

5. What is the greatest blessing God can give us?

6. How can we recognize false teaching?

Five Warning Signs of Prosperity Teaching

1. "God wants every Christian to be rich."

Where does the New Testament make that promise?

2. "If you're sick, you don't have enough faith."

What about Paul's thorn? What about Epaphroditus? What about Timothy's stomach problems?

3. "Give money and God must give you more money."

Does God become our debtor? No. God cannot be manipulated.

4. "Your words create your reality."

There is tremendous biblical power in our words. But we are not sovereign creators. God alone is sovereign.

5. "Your circumstances prove whether you're blessed."

The cross destroys that argument. Jesus was rejected, beaten, crucified, and buried. Yet He was perfectly within the Father's will.

The Correct Christian View of Prosperity

Biblical prosperity is not:

"God, give me everything I want."

It is:

"God, give me what I need to faithfully serve You, and teach me to be content with whatever You provide."

Paul gives us the proper attitude in Philippians 4.

He knew, how to be abased and how to abound.

His contentment was not based on his bank account. It was based in Christ.