

CPR Notes
Healthy Church
Session #5 Giving

True or False. Feel free to discuss the validity/accuracy of the following statements:

1. “Jesus bled and died for us so that we can lay claim to the promise of financial prosperity.”
2. “Some people come to me and say, well I came here to get some peace, not money, and I tell them, you need money otherwise you ain’t gonna get no peace. Some people say it’s about peace, joy and love. No! It’s about money!”
3. “If I give \$50 you mean God will give me \$5,000? Yes! If you give \$1000 in the offering this morning, will God give you \$100,000 by tomorrow? Yes!”
4. “If you obey GOD you will never be broke another day in your life.”
5. “Being poor is a sin.”
6. “Jesus and the disciples were rich, only rich people could take off for three and a half years.”

These are statements taught in Prosperity Gospel Churches and they aren't biblical. You will often here the following verses, repeated time and time again, from churches that promote prosperity teaching.

The signature verse of the prosperity gospel, John 10:10

1. John 10:10 — “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

This verse is used to suggest that God loves his followers and wants them to have every good thing. But interpreting this verse to promise physical gain neglects the depth suggested by its context. The verses preceding this verse illustrate the parable of the sheep and their good shepherd, Jesus, who calls them by name. The sheep know the good shepherd’s voice and follow. Verse 10 contrasts Jesus with false shepherds who steal and kill and destroy. The abundant of life suggested here has to do with knowing and being known by Jesus, not material things.

2. James 4:2 — “You do not have because you do not ask God.” This verse is used to bolster the “name it and claim it” part of the prosperity gospel — if you don’t “have,” it’s because you haven’t prayed enough. This interpretation ignores the verse that follows, in which James says, “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasure.

Creflo Dollar says this of prayer: “When we pray, believing that we have already received what we are praying, God has no choice but to make our prayers come to pass.”

3. Mark 10:29-30 — “No one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age.”

Prosperity preachers are known for their emphasis on giving, which on its face seems to line up with scripture. However, the motivation they teach — giving in order to get — distorts the biblical tradition. In God’s Will Is

Prosperity, Gloria Copeland writes of this verse, “Give \$10 and receive \$1,000; give \$1,000 and receive \$100,000 . . . in short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal.” But of course, that’s not what this verse is promising. The reward indicated here is fellowship with hundreds and thousands of other believers. The following verse (10:31) provides further clarity: “But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” This verse encourages ordinary, obedient discipleship, not personal gain.

4. 2 Corinthians 8:9 — “Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”

Prosperity teachers read this verse to suggest that Jesus’ sacrificial death affords us temporal wealth. Most Christians agree that when Paul says that Jesus was “rich,” he’s referring to his status as the Son of God. And his becoming poor was his voluntary act of stepping into humanity — the incarnation.

Indeed, Paul was telling early Christians that because of the grace afforded them, they should empty themselves. The goal was equality, and in verse 15, Paul recalls Exodus 16:18, saying, “as it is written: ‘The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.’”

5. Malachi 3:10 — “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse . . . and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”

This verse is a powerful fundraising tool for prosperity preachers, manipulating believers into tithing more by saying God will return the favor exponentially. But as D. A. Horton explains, this verse has nothing to do with individual riches; rather, it arises from a particular historical situation for Israel: “The Israelites were robbing God by not giving enough food to the national storehouse that was used to feed the priests of Israel. So the priests were having to leave their priestly duties and take up farming to survive (see Neh. 13:10-13). God therefore exhorts Israel to test him by giving obediently. If they did, he would reward them as he did in the past.”

6. John 14:14 — “You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”

Similar to James 4:2, prosperity churches misinterpret this verse to suggest that God will answer the prayers of the faithful the way that want their prayer to be answered.

A typical thing heard in prosperity teaching is the following statement: “We are all in agreement that we want Jesus to do _____.” This means that because we agree that Jesus will be forced to answer our request. This isn’t the meaning of James 4:2 and John 14:14 to mean that we can force Jesus to do what we want because we agree that we know what’s best for us.

Jesus speaks the words in John 14:14 as a way of encouraging his disciples to spread the gospel of his kingdom. The verses before and after provide useful context: “Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do” (14:12); and, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (14:15).

Challenge Question: Take a look at Jeremiah 29:11. Who is God speaking to in the passage? What is the context of this verse? Is this a verse that we should quote to a person that just lost a loved one or just lost a job? Is it a verse that we should tell someone that has just experienced some type of terrible life experience?

Here's an interesting activity. If you have right now media, take a look at a segment called The 10 Most misunderstood Bible verses. If you do not have access to right now media, it's as simple as a Google search....simply type "Misused Bible Verses" or "How Jeremiah 29:11 is misused".