

# Church History: “Spiritual Deception”

(Part 6)

## What is Prosperity theology?

Prosperity theology (sometimes referred to as the **Prosperity gospel**, the **health and wealth gospel**, or the **gospel of success**) is a religious belief among some Christians, who hold that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for them, and that faith, positive speech, and donations to religious causes will increase one’s material wealth. Prosperity theology views the Bible as a contract between God and humans: if humans have faith in God, He will deliver security and prosperity.

“Generally known as the ‘Prosperity Gospel’ or the ‘Word of Faith Movement,’ this movement is now an international force that is gaining millions of enthusiastic followers around the world. Led by popular teachers and evangelists such as Kenneth Copeland, David Yonggi Cho and Reinhard Bonnke, the teaching has inspired some of the largest churches and evangelistic crusades in the history of the Church.

“The prosperity gospel is spreading beyond the confines of the charismatic movement, where it has been traditionally strong, and is taking root in the larger evangelical church. A recent survey found that in the United States, 46 per cent of self-proclaimed Christians agree with the idea that God will grant material riches to all believers who have enough faith.

“Though the church has historically repudiated greed and consumerism, that appears to be changing quickly. Nearly half of American Christians, in any denomination, and roughly two-thirds of American Pentecostals now embrace the basic premise of the prosperity gospel: God wants you to be happy, healthy, and rich.”

“Such a gospel is powerless to save. It is empowered by human desire, not the Holy spirit. Moreover, it offers temporal relief at the expense of eternal life. And even then, except for those in the highest positions of leadership, it rarely delivers as advertised.

“Strange Fire” John MacArthur p.14-16

“I am convinced – I would die saying it is so – that it is the plan of Our Father God, in His great love and His great mercy, that no believer should ever be sick; that every believer should live his full life span down here on this earth; and that every believer should finally just fall asleep in Jesus.”

“Seven Things you should Know about Divine Healing” Kenneth E. Hagin p.21

## Who popularized the Gospel of Health and Wealth?

“One day Oral Roberts opened his Bible randomly and spotted III John 2: “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.” He showed it to his wife, Evelyn and – utterly

divorcing that one verse from its proper context – the couple “talked excitedly about the verse’s implications. Did it mean they could have a ‘new car’, a ‘new house’, a ‘brand-new ministry?’. . . Evelyn looked back on that morning as the point of embarkation: ‘I really believe that that very morning was the beginning of this worldwide ministry that he has had, because it opened up his thinking.”

“Oral Roberts: An American Life” David E. Harrell Jr. p.66

“After he concocted his prosperity doctrine, Oral Roberts subsequently invented his best known and most far-reaching brainchild: the seed-faith message. . . . Money and material things donated to his organization were like kernels planted that would produce a crop of material blessings from the Lord. God, Roberts declared, would multiply in miraculous ways whatever was given to Robert’s ministry – and give many times more back to the donor. It was a simple, quasi-spiritual, get-rich scheme to poor, disadvantaged, and desperate people. It generated millions for Robert’s media empire. . . .the scheme was quickly adopted by a host of similarly oriented Pentecostal and charismatic media ministries.

“One of the primary emphases of Robert’s ministry was his concentration on alleged healing miracles. . . .As Pentecostal historian Vinson Synan stated shortly after Robert’s death, ‘More than any other person, he should be credited with starting the charismatic movement in mainline religion. He brought (divine) healing into the American consciousness’.

“The message of health and wealth is now the message multitudes think of when they hear the word gospel. Countless people worldwide think of the gospel as a message about material riches and physical healing rather than the infinitely greater blessings of forgiveness from sin, the eternal blessing of the believer’s spiritual union with Christ.

“Robert’s remarkable success on television spawned a number of spinoffs and copies. A flock of faith healers and charismatic fundraisers situated their headquarters in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Tulsa’s Oral Roberts University, founded in 1963, became a breeding ground for a new generation of televangelists and faith healers. Joel Osteen, Creflo Dollar, Ted Haggard, Kenneth Copeland, Carlton Pearson, and Billy Joe Daugherty are all alumni of ORU.”

“Strange Fire” John MacArthur p.156 – 158

## What characterizes Biblical healing?

### NT Healings did not depend on the faith of the Recipient.

Matthew 8:28,29 \_\_\_\_\_  
John 5:13 \_\_\_\_\_  
John 9:36 \_\_\_\_\_

### NT Healings were not performed for Money or Fame.

Matthew 9:27-31 \_\_\_\_\_  
Matthew 8:2,3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Acts 3:1-10 \_\_\_\_\_

### **NT Healings were completely Successful.**

Matthew 14:36 \_\_\_\_\_

The blind were given 20/20 vision, the lame could run and jump, the deaf could hear and the dead were restored to full health.

### **NT Healings were Undeniable**

John 11:47,48 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 4:16,17 \_\_\_\_\_

### **NT Healings were Immediate and spontaneous.**

Mark 10:52 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 3:8 \_\_\_\_\_

### **NT Healings Authenticated a True Message.**

Acts 2:22 \_\_\_\_\_

John 20:30,31 \_\_\_\_\_

“Strange Fire” John MacArthur p.162-173

### **Who are 5 Outrageously Wealthy Preachers?**

**Benny Hinn:** His ministry collects more than \$200 million a year, and he’s admitted to his salary being over half a million. Hinn owns a private jet, lives in a \$10 million house near the Pacific Ocean, stays in hotel rooms that cost thousands each night, and owns luxury vehicles. His lavish lifestyle was first exposed by Dateline NBC, and it’s now under investigation by the Senate.

**Joyce Meyer:** Since 1999, Joyce Meyer’s ministry has spent at least \$4 million on 5 homes for Meyer and her children. Meyer’s house is a 10,000 square foot home with an 8-car garage, a large fountain, a gazebo, a private putting green, a pool, and pool house with a new \$10,000 bathroom. Her salary was reported at \$900,000 back in 2003, and she also enjoys use of a private jet and luxury cars. Needless to say, Meyer has been questioned for years, and she is once again under investigation by the government for possibly violating nonprofit laws.

**Kenneth Copeland:** Despite being under investigation, Kenneth Copeland refused to submit financial information about his ministry, saying “You can go get a subpoena, and I won’t give it to you. It’s not yours, it’s God’s and you’re not going to get it and that’s something I’ll go to prison over. So, just get over it.” Copeland lives in a mansion that some have said is ‘the size of a hotel.’ He also has acquired a \$20 million Cessna Citation private jet for flying around the country to spread the word. And of course, he owns an airport for landing said airplane.

**Creflo Dollar:** Another televangelist who ignored the Senate’s request for probes into financial record. Dollar claimed he was concerned about the privacy of his donors, and he said that if the IRS requested it, he would send

it over. However, since it was Congress asking for the information, he wouldn’t do so without a subpoena.

His church made \$69 million back in 2006, and the church also provided him with a Rolls Royce. In Dollar’s words “Just because it is excessive doesn’t necessarily mean it’s wrong.”

**Joel Osteen:** “I think there’s a group that says, ‘Well, to be a Christian, to be a real believer you’ve got to be poor, you’ve got to be humble.’ I don’t see that. I think we should be leaders in our community, we should be able to bless others.”

This isn’t the first time that Osteen has defended his financial success, which reportedly comes from his book royalties and DVDs. He net worth is estimated to be around \$40,000,000. He told Piers Morgan in 2011, “I don’t even feel guilty because it comes from – it’s God’s blessings on my life. And for me to apologize for God’s - how God has blessed you, it’s almost an insult to our God.”

How do Osteen’s messages measure up against the Christ-centered, redemptive-historical theme of the Bible? Listen to his preaching:

“My message is a message of hope that God is a good God, and that no matter what we’ve done, where we’ve been, God has a great plan for our lives. . . Most people already know what they’re doing wrong. And for me to get in here and just beat ‘em down and talk down to ‘em. I just don’t think that inspires anybody to rise higher. But I want to motivate.”

This message of hope is not that Christ clothes believers with his own righteousness – something that they are not able to have no matter how obedient they are to God’s rules – but that the rules for one’s “best life” are easier and are attainable “now”.

So while many supporters offer testimonials to his kinder, gentler version of Christianity than the legalistic scolding of their youth, the only real difference is that God’s rules or principles are easier and it’s all about happiness here and now - not being reconciled to a holy God who saves us from ourselves, and that sin is failing to live up to our potential, not falling short of God’s glory. We need to believe in ourselves and the wages of such “sins” is missing out on our best life now!  
iPost.ChristianPost.com

### **What is biblical discipleship?**

Matthew 16:24 \_\_\_\_\_

### **What can disciples expect?**

John 15:18 -21 \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 8:18 \_\_\_\_\_

II Corinthians 1:3-7 \_\_\_\_\_

