



Hope
for the
Heart

Prosperity Gospel

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

An Excerpt from the *KEYS FOR LIVING*

What Is “Prosperity Theology”?

- **Prosperity Theology** teaches that every Christian should always be healthy and wealthy and never be in a state of need. Any “children of the King” who are in need haven’t properly asked the King for what they want ... or they have sin in their lives.
- **Prosperity Theology** is also referred to as the Health and Wealth Gospel, the Word of Faith Movement, and Name It and Claim It Theology, along with other similar labels.
- **Prosperity Theology** is based on the premise that Christians are able to “name and claim” whatever they desire because of their faith. Proponents believe they can create a binding transaction with God in which He is absolutely obligated to bless and provide what is asked of Him.

In contrast to Prosperity Theology, the book of wisdom (Proverbs) in the Bible says ...

*“Give me neither poverty nor riches,
but give me only my daily bread.”*
(Proverbs 30:8)

Ask and Receive

- **Prosperity Teaching:** Jesus tells us that whatever we ask in faith, we will receive. *“I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours”* (Mark 11:24).
Biblical Truth: At face value, this verse appears to back up the belief that God will give us whatever we ask for—as long as we believe it, we will receive it. Yet, the apostle John gives us clarification when he says ... *“If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And ... we know that we have what we asked of him”* (1 John 5:14–15).
If your desire conforms to God’s will, He will look on your request with favor and allow it to come to pass. Christians are not to dictate to God, but to petition (make requests of) Him.

6 Primary Positions of Prosperity Theology

1. **Prosperity Position:** “Sickness is always the result of sin.”
Biblical Position: This false belief was directly refuted when the disciples asked Jesus about a man blind from birth. (John 9:2–3)
2. **Prosperity Position:** “Poverty is always the result of sin.”
Biblical Position: This false belief was directly refuted by Jesus when He said about Himself, *“... the Son of Man has no place to lay his head”* (Matthew 8:20).
3. **Prosperity Position:** “Sickness is a curse.”
Biblical Position: This false belief was directly refuted by the illness of Job, who was not cursed but was allowed by God to be physically afflicted by Satan. (Job 2:3)
4. **Prosperity Position:** “Poverty is always a curse.”
Biblical Position: This false belief was directly refuted by the fact that Jesus honored a poor widow for her meager offering to God, something He would not have done had He considered her cursed. It should also be remembered that wealth does not solve every problem and may even contribute to certain difficulties. (Luke 21:2–3)
5. **Prosperity Position:** “Sickness is of the devil.”
Biblical Position: This false belief was directly refuted by Jesus when He responded to the illness of his good friend Lazarus. (John 11:4)
6. **Prosperity Position:** “If you have enough faith, you will be healed.”
Biblical Position: This false belief was directly refuted by the experience and testimony of the apostle Paul. (2 Corinthians 12:7–10)

What Are the Causes of Sickness and Suffering?

- **Sin can cause sickness.** Sometimes illness is the normal consequence of sin. God does not cause sickness as a punishment, but He may allow it as a natural consequence. (1 Corinthians 11:27–30)
- **Satan can cause sickness.** God can allow Satan limited power to cause affliction. (2 Corinthians 12:7)
- **Spiritual growth can be God’s plan for sickness.** God’s purpose for suffering is the strengthening of faith. (Psalm 119:71, 92)
- **Spiritual glory can be God’s plan for sickness.** The result of suffering can bring great glory to God. As a Christian, your right response to illness will bring honor to God. (Luke 18:38–43)

What Is the Root Cause of Confusion about Prosperity?

- **Wrong Belief:** “As a child of God, I have the right to ask God for whatever I want and, in faith, expect to receive whatever I request. Since God intends for His children to be healthy, wealthy, and prosperous, I will exercise my faith in what I want, and I know that I will receive it.”

Right Belief: “As a child of God, I know I can trust Him to meet my deepest inner needs and fulfill His plan for my life. Since I am no longer ‘my own,’ but I belong to Christ, my deepest desire is to be conformed to the character of Christ ... to love with His love and to care with His care.”

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”
(1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

Afflictions: A Blessing or a Curse?

- **Afflictions** soften your heart toward obeying God’s Word. (Psalm 119:67)
- **Afflictions** open your heart to make you more teachable. (Psalm 119:75)
- **Afflictions** humble your heart to keep you from being conceited. (2 Corinthians 12:7)
- **Afflictions** uncover your heart’s weakness so that you may appropriate Christ as your strength. (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- **Affliction** gives your heart a desire for eternal values. (Romans 8:18)

Is Divine Healing Guaranteed for Everyone Who Has Faith?

1. **The apostle Paul was not miraculously healed.** Paul records that he had a “*thorn in my flesh*,” and, “*Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.*” However, the Lord’s answer was *no*. Instead, Jesus said, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness*” (2 Corinthians 12:7–9).
2. **Timothy was not miraculously healed.** Paul told Timothy, his son in the faith, “*Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses*” (1 Timothy 5:23).
3. **Epaphroditus was not miraculously healed.** Paul told the people in the Philippian church, “*Epaphroditus ... is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him ... he almost died for the work of Christ*” (Philippians 2:25–30).
4. **Trophimus was not miraculously healed.** Paul traveled on his last missionary journey with his companion Trophimus. But then Paul wrote to Timothy ... “*I left Trophimus sick in Miletus*” (2 Timothy 4:20).

How to Participate in God’s Plan

Thank God for what He has given to you. (Ephesians 5:19–20)

Rest in God as your Provider. (1 Timothy 6:17)

Uphold God’s perspective on possessions. (Luke 12:15)

Seek God’s provision in each and every circumstance. (Isaiah 43:20)

Trust in God, not in what you possess. (Psalm 20:7)

Honor God with what He gives to you. (Acts 4:32; 2:45)

Invest in heavenly treasures, not in earthly things. (Hebrews 10:34)

Manage well what God entrusts to your care. (Luke 16:10)

Key Verse to Memorize

“Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.”
(Proverbs 30:8)

Key Passage to Read

1 Timothy 6:3–19

How to Have the Right Focus on Faith

- Our faith is to be placed in the Lord as we yield our will to His will.
- Our faith is not to be in our faith!
- Our prayer should be ... *“Not what I will, but what you will”* (Mark 14:36).

Questions and Answers

“Is it okay to pray for miraculous healing?”

Yes, absolutely. It is biblical to present your request to God for full restoration. It is also biblical to pray as Jesus prayed, *“Father ... not my will, but yours be done”* (Luke 22:42). If it is God’s will, you will receive what you asked.

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.”
(1 John 5:14–15)

“Why would a loving God want me to suffer?”

God does not delight in your suffering, but He allows suffering in order to refine your faith, to develop Christ’s character in you, and to bring glory to Himself.

“In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”
(1 Peter 1:6–7)

“If I truly follow Christ and pray with total faith, doesn’t the Bible say that I will be blessed with health, wealth, and problem-free living?”

No. The Bible clearly reveals that Jesus, along with the Apostles (who truly gave their lives to Christ), did not experience health, wealth, and problem-free living. But Scripture does state that when you “share in the sufferings of Christ,” you are blessed by God.

“Rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”
(1 Peter 4:13–14)

HOPE FOR THE HEART’s *Biblical Counseling Library* contains our *Biblical Counseling Keys*, providing *God’s Truth for Today’s Problems* on 100+ topics.

The *Quick Reference Guides* contain excerpts from our *Biblical Counseling Keys* and offer immediate, concise answers with *biblical hope and practical help*. For more comprehensive help and additional resources, refer to our *Biblical Counseling Keys on Prosperity Gospel*.

If you would like more information, biblical counsel, or prayer support, contact:
1-800-488-HOPE (4673)
www.HopeForTheHeart.org

The information in this resource is intended as guidelines for healthy living. Please consult qualified medical, legal, pastoral, and psychological professionals regarding individual concerns.

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™
Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Related Topics ...

- Cults
- Financial Freedom
- Purpose in Life
- Self-Worth
- Spiritual Abuse
- Success through Failure
- Workaholism



*Together ... Changing Minds.
Changing Hearts. Changing Lives.*

P.O. Box 7, Dallas, TX 75221