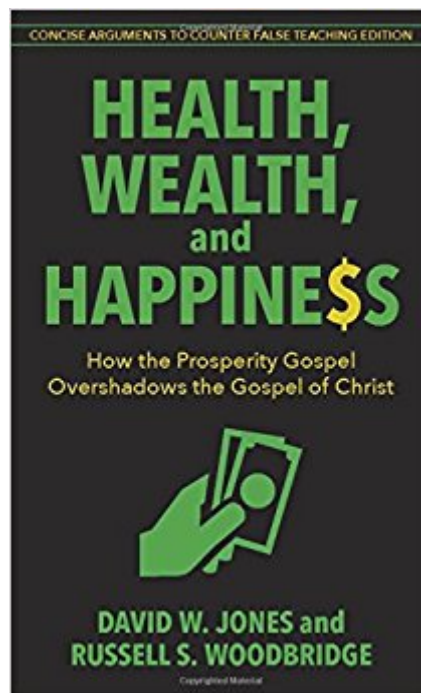




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# Health, Wealth, And Happiness: How The Prosperity Gospel Overshadows The Gospel Of Christ



## Synopsis

Be faithful in your giving and God will reward you financially. It's not always stated that blatantly but the promises of the Prosperity Gospel--or the name-it-and-claim-it gospel, the health-and-wealth gospel, the word of faith movement, or positive confession theology--are false. Yet its message permeates the preaching of well-known Christian leaders: Joyce Meyer, T. D. Jakes, Joel Osteen, Creflo Dollar, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, and many more. The appeal of this teaching crosses racial, gender, denominational, and international boundaries. Why are otherwise faithful Christians so easily led astray? Because the Prosperity Gospel contains a grain of biblical truth, greatly distorted. For anyone who knows that Prosperity Gospel theology is wrong but has trouble articulating and refuting the finer points, this concise edition contains all the robust arguments of the hard-hitting original edition in a shorter, more accessible form.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The prosperity gospel is a false gospel, and prosperity preachers are false prophets.Â This book is as clear as that--and persuasive--but it is even more. Jones and Woodbridge have written a simple, careful account of the new religion that is sweeping Asia, Africa, and the Americas.Â And they've provided a fair, biblical and searching critique.Â I'm sad to say that this book is desperately needed; I'm thankful that it's now available."- Mark Dever, Senior Pastor, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, D.C."The prosperity gospel is neither prosperous nor is it the gospel as defined by

Scripture. Simply put, it is a false teaching and a dangerous heresy. This book written by two dear friends and superb biblical scholars carefully and accurately investigates, critiques, and exposes the biblical and theological errors that pervade this movement. This is an important and valuable work. I pray for its wide distribution and reading." - Daniel L. Akin, President, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC

"This book takes a balanced approach that is both biblically rigorous and in touch with current issues. This is an invaluable resource for those wishing to deal with the prosperity gospel with accuracy and clarity. This is a very Gospel-centered book." - J. D. Greear, Lead Pastor of The Summit Church, Durham, NC.

"I praise God for the release of this book. It is a reliable resource for all who want to understand the destructive nature of the prosperity gospel movement. Jones and Woodbridge carefully point out its major biblical errors and call attention to the presence of erroneous concepts found in prosperity theology. By exposing these errors, as well as interacting with some of the leading proponents of the prosperity movement, Jones and Woodbridge have provided a wonderful resource to hand to those who've bought into a counterfeit gospel, and for pastors who desire to protect their flock from wolves. May God use this book to direct people to the only true Gospel, and to the Savior, who is Himself our inheritance and our treasure." - Tony Merida, Teaching Pastor at Temple Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, MS

"In this book Jones and Woodbridge have given us the truth about the prosperity gospel. This brief survey is remarkably clear and concise, providing both the historical background and biblical critique of this movement. Their treatment is fair and balanced, penetrating to the heart, and it reveals the danger of the prosperity gospel. I highly recommend this well written book." - Benjamin L. Merkle, Associate Professor of New Testament at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC

"This book is long overdue. The authors rightly warn us that the prosperity gospel has eclipsed the true message of the cross in many pulpits. Sadly, much of evangelicalism has been duped by a message that sounds biblical, but on closer examination is seen to be heretical. I pray that this book will help correct this error." - Erwin W. Lutzer, Senior Pastor, The Moody Church, Chicago, IL

"In a work that is long overdue, Drs. Jones and Woodbridge deal the prosperity gospel a fatal blow through their thorough research and irrefutable documentation. The authors, blending biblical theology with persuasive wit, create a rare blend that will appeal to both the layperson and theologian. Churches wrestling with the destructive doctrine of the prosperity gospel now have a staunch advocate and ready defense that clearly delineates God's will on such matters." - Emir Caner, best-selling author, President, Truett-McConnell College, Cleveland, GA

--This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

46% of self-identifying Christians believe God will make them rich if they have enough faith. Every day on radio or TV there's a new gospel being proclaimed--the gospel of prosperity. This gospel teaches that God wants to fulfill our every desire for health, wealth, and happiness, and all it takes is enough faith. The preachers of prosperity tout their own opulent lifestyles as proof of their message: God wants his children to have it all. Is this the gospel? Or is it just a feel-good, self-centered appeal to our materialistic impulses that omits the message of Jesus and the cross? The Bible does have a lot to say about wealth and possessions, but those teachings are routinely twisted out of context or carelessly misinterpreted. Authors David W. Jones and Russell S. Woodbridge go back to the Scriptures to set forth a truly biblical understanding of wealth, poverty, suffering, and giving. They identify five crucial areas of error related to the prosperity gospel movement and challenge readers to rediscover the true gospel of Jesus. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Heresy (false teaching) often arises when one aspect of the truth is emphasized so much "or tweaked in such a way" that other counter-balancing truths disappear. When it comes to the so-called prosperity Gospel, that truth is simple: God cares for you. Jesus certainly teaches this in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). We are of more value to God than the lilies of the field or the birds of the air. Yet while Jesus talks about basic provision, preachers of the prosperity message go beyond needs to desires. In so doing, they shift the center away from God, putting humans and our wants and wishes for success and wealth at the center. In the end, it is no longer Gospel "good news" but for those disillusioned by its unfulfilled promises, it is bad news, a modified strain of Christian faith that leaves little room for sin, repentance, the Cross, or the place of hardship and suffering in the Christian life. This is the most important take-away from David Jones and Russell Woodbridge's *Health, Wealth & Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?* (Kregel, 2011; Kindle edition). The authors identify their subject: "This gospel has been given many names, such as the "name it and claim it" gospel, the "blab it and grab it" gospel, the "health and wealth" gospel, the "word of faith" movement, the "gospel of success," "positive confession theology," and, as this book will refer to it, the "prosperity gospel." No matter what name is used, the teaching is the same. This egocentric gospel teaches that God wants believers to be materially prosperous in the here-and-now" (location 118, italics added). Particularly enlightening was Chapter 1. There, Jones and Woodbridge summarize the teachings of the New Thought Movement. New Thought gained some popularity in U.S. in the late 19th century and first half of the 20th century. Its proponents included Emanuel Phineas Quimby, Ralph Waldo Trine and

Norman Vincent Peale (among others). Explaining what the authors call the "five pillars" of New Thought "a distorted view of God, elevation of mind over matter, exalted view of humankind, focus on health/wealth, and a unorthodox view of salvation" the authors make a convincing case that today's prosperity preachers have recycled many of New Thought's dubious ideas, including the importance of speaking words to make things come to be. This seems dangerously close to the use of magical incantations. Though the authors are unafraid to critique the teaching of prosperity preachers "Joel Osteen receives special scrutiny" I appreciated that the book did more than just point out what is wrong with the prosperity message. In the second half of the book, they construct a positive and biblical alternative, including an excellent chapter on the biblical theology of giving. There are ways in which the book left me unsatisfied. While Jones and Woodbridge rightly debunk the misinterpretation of the "by his wounds you have been healed" slogan (Isaiah 53:5, 1 Peter 2:24 "see location 720), this overlooks that there is a legitimate doctrine of divine healing in Scripture expounded in passages like James 5. Since the word "health" appears in the title of their book, the reader is justified in expecting at least a few more pages to present a more balanced and comprehensive biblical view of the issue. Unfortunately, what they did well when it comes to giving they fail to attempt on the question of health. A second unquestioned assumption is that all pastors are male. An example of this gender bias appears at location 1708: "An elder or pastor can reasonably expect support from the church that he serves." Since the authors are from a Baptist background, at one level, their word choice is unsurprising since many Baptists reject the ordination of women. However, a little effort could have avoided this distraction by choosing general neutral wording, i.e. "A elder or pastor can reasonable expect congregational support." Since the authors are sensitive to the use of gender-inclusive language elsewhere in the book, including the use of the word "humankind" instead of "man" (locations 178, 187, 306), one wishes they had been consistent. The prosperity message is not just a North American phenomenon but has gained traction elsewhere in the world, including across Africa, introducing an incomplete and shallow version of Christian faith. As diseases like Ebola have ravaged parts of West Africa, one church leader on the ground observed that prosperity teachers have been notably silent. Is this because their message cannot stand up under the sobering realities of pain and suffering? *Health, Wealth and Happiness* is a well-written book that will open the eyes of many around the world who have bought into a skewed and superficial prosperity message that "though alluring" offers little comfort in the crucible of life.

I am glad to highly recommend this book. It helped me to understand the Biblical teaching on suffering, health, and giving as opposed to the false teaching of the prosperity gospel. For me, the most helpful chapter in the book was chapter 6, "The Biblical Teaching on Giving." Very informative. A great read for all who are wondering about how the prosperity gospel does not line up with the teaching of the Bible.

If you care to bypass the deafening noise of prosperity preachers on TV, Radio, the web and every other medium of communication, then Jones and Woodbridge represent a still, small voice of reason and truth. They trace the prosperity 'gospel' back to its earliest roots and show how it took root in our society. Then they take on the primary voices of prosperity theology by name, although they do it in the right spirit. They even say several times that they can't judge the sincerity or motives of these well known personalities, but they can analyze and critique their writings and direct quotations taken from their sermons. The book finishes with a theological discussion about suffering and how God uses all things for His glory, not just health and wealth. Therefore, if you are one who is suspicious of prosperity preaching but doesn't really understand the genesis or the substance of this movement, you will really enjoy this book. And even if you are one who subscribes to prosperity theology, what you will find here is a charitable and civil discussion of your theological system without any name calling or mean spirited ministry bashing. It is a great investment. I will pass my copy on to one of the guys I mentor.

I've known for years that the "God wants you rich!" school of thought was screwy. But didn't know that it is not based on a twisted Christianity, but on twisted pagan roots, from Hindu, Greek philosophy and New Thought ideas. It doesn't just build on selfishness and greed, but on a false conception of God, elevation of mind over matter, an exalted view of humans as semi-gods and a warped view of salvation. (God must obey you if you have the magic of faith to force Him! Phooey on rewards in Heaven, grab it all now! Forget asking God to use your suffering to grow, get out of it fast! Sin? What's that?) Even 'soft-core' proponents like Joel Osteen, Joyce Myers, T.D. Jakes and Creflo Dollar only tack on the real Gospel as an afterthought. "Send me that money so God can make you as rich as me!" is the real message. The authors not only trace the causes, but how to correct such warped thinking and lousy Bible interpretation.

Health, Wealth & Happiness is a book that seeks to warn the church of the Lord Jesus about the dangers of the prosperity gospel, which is presently being propagated by either ignorant or

deceptive people under the banner of Christianity. Jones and Woodbridge endeavor to answer the question, "does God want all His children to be perpetually healthy, happy and wealthy?" Is this the biblical and historical gospel preached by Jesus, the apostles, the early church fathers and is the one God intended to be proclaimed by the whole church, to the whole world, throughout the successive centuries until the return of King Jesus? Or is this a man-centered, self-gratifying, exploitation of the gospel, which is completely unidentifiable in the pages of Holy Scriptures. This is a MUST read for pastors, so that, they can guard their sheep from ravenous wolves.

Health, Wealth & Happiness is not only an informative book, but it is thorough book. While there are many books on the Prosperity Gospel (many of them have the same information), David Jones and Russell Woodbridge did their research on this topic. Many people are unaware of the ties the Prosperity Gospel has to the New Thought and Christian Science movements. Although this book came out in 2009, this book is still resourceful to this day.

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