

Prosperity Doctrine Is Contrary To Scripture

'A widow who was poverty-stricken came and put in two copper mites (about ½ a cent). Jesus called His disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this widow who is poverty-stricken has put in more than all those contributing to the treasury, for they all gave out of their abundance but she gave out of her poverty and has given everything she had to live on"' (Mark 12:42 to 44).

'We brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world. If we have food and clothing we should be content, but those who crave to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish, (or godless) harmful desires that plunge people into destruction. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people have been led astray and have wandered from the faith and have brought on themselves many sorrows' (1 Timothy 6:7 to 10). It is the love of money that is the root of all kinds of evil. Money is not the problem but the love of it.

There is an unfortunate teaching in some modern Christian churches telling us every Christian should be prosperous and wealthy and if we are not, then there must be something wrong in our life or something wrong with our walk with God. That doctrine is contrary to scripture and is called Prosperity Teaching or the Jezebel Doctrine. We read in the opening verse about the elderly woman who was poverty-stricken. She put two mites into the treasury. It was all the money she had to live on. Did the fact she put her money into the treasury make her wealthy as the modern-day preachers would have you believe? No it did not. The woman remained poverty-stricken, but the Lord noticed what she gave and her treasures would have been stored up in heaven. There was nothing wrong with her walk with God. Lazarus, the man who sat at the rich man's gate (Luke 16:19 to 31) was very ill, hungry, homeless and obviously poverty-stricken but he ended up beside Abraham in heaven. That proves he was dedicated to God and there was nothing wrong with his spiritual walk but he never had enough money to feed, clothe or house himself. Many Christians in our modern society have vast amounts of wealth and would rather pamper themselves than give to the poor and needy. In at least 170 different places in the Bible we are told to help the poor. If we do, chances are other religious people (mainly church leadership) will scoff at us like they scoffed at Jesus. "No servant can serve two masters. He will hate one and love the other. You cannot serve God and money." The Pharisees who were covetous and lovers of money heard all these things and they scoffed at Him' (Luke 16:13 & 14). Who were the Pharisees? The religious leaders of Jesus' day, the equivalent of priests, pastors and ministers in our modern-day churches – our own covetous lovers of money. Sadly, there are many church leaders who thrive on taking from the poor instead of giving to them. Some churches take two or three offerings in each service. That is not scriptural. One offering dropped into the treasury container is what the Bible describes.

One great deception in the modern church is the way God's Word is being twisted and misused to approve of covetousness, greed and materialism. That same thing happened in the days when Ahab was king and his evil wife Jezebel was able to get her own way by murdering those who stood in her path of greed and destruction. She misused the Word of God and His laws to get what she wanted, hence it is called, 'the Jezebel Doctrine'. The Old Testament laws forbade people from selling inherited land. When Jezebel wanted land and the owner Naboth would not sell it according to the Law, Jezebel had him murdered ...

'Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, abutting the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. Ahab asked Naboth, "Give me your vineyard so I may have it for a garden of herbs because it is near to my house and I will give you for it a better vineyard than it is, or if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money."

Naboth replied to Ahab, "God forbids me to give the inheritance of my forefathers to you."

Ahab came into his house sulking and angry because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him, "I will not give you the inheritance of my forefathers." He laid down on his bed, turned away his face and would not eat. Jezebel his wife came to him and asked, "Why is your spirit so sad so you eat no bread?"

Ahab answered, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money or else if it please you, I will give you another vineyard for it'. He answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'"

Jezebel his wife said to him, "Do you not govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise and eat bread. Let your heart be merry. I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

She wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal and sent the letters to the elders and to the nobles who were in his city and who lived with Naboth. She wrote in the letters, "Proclaim a fast and set Naboth on high among the people. Set two men, base fellows before him and let them testify against him saying, 'You did curse God and the king'. Then carry him out and stone him to death."

The men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who lived in his city did as Jezebel had told them, according to what was written in the letters she had sent to them. They proclaimed a fast and set Naboth on high among the people. The two men, the base fellows came in and sat before him and the base fellows bore witness against Naboth in the presence of the people saying, "Naboth did curse God and the king."

Then they carried him forth out of the city and stoned him to death with stones. They sent to Jezebel saying, "Naboth is stoned and is dead."

When Jezebel heard Naboth was stoned and was dead she said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive but dead."

When Ahab heard Naboth was dead he rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it' (1Kings 1 to 16).

On the surface the ploy worked. Jezebel used the Word of God to call a fast and to have Naboth unjustly convicted of the crimes of blasphemy and treason which he did not commit. By committing those crimes, the guilty man was to be stoned and all his possessions were to be handed over to the king – that was the law at that time. Ahab was the king over Israel and he got what he wanted. What Jezebel told Ahab is what Christians are being taught in our time. "Do not be sad, God will give you whatever you want." That is a false doctrine and was the twisting of the truth of God's Word by Jezebel, just like the Bible is misused by many today. It is hard to understand how wealthy Christians can enjoy their playthings and acquisitions and not share what they have with the poor – especially other Christians who are struggling financially. Wealthy people cannot see it but they have sold themselves out for the sake greed and often there is sin behind their gain. Jesus said it is very hard for a wealthy person to enter the Kingdom of God (Matthew 19:24). Ahab could not enjoy his new possession because the Lord called he and Jezebel to account for their sin ...

'The Word of God came to Elijah the Tishbite saying, "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel who lives in Samaria. He is in the vineyard of Naboth where he is gone down to take possession of it. Speak to Ahab saying, "Thus says the Lord, Have you killed and also taken possession? ... In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth will dogs lick your blood."

Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, my enemy?"

Elijah answered, "I have found you because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of God. Behold, I (God) will bring evil on you and will utterly sweep you away ... I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah for the provocation you have provoked Me to anger and have made Israel to sin ... The dogs will eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel. Those who die of Ahab in the city, the dogs will eat and those who die in the field will the birds of the sky will eat." There was none as evil as Ahab who sold himself out to do what was evil in the sight of God, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up' (1 Kings 17 to 25). Just as Ahab and Jezebel were made to account for their sin of greed, so the greedy in our time will be called by God to account for their sin whether they are Christians or not. Ahab believed in God and repented of his sin but he still had to pay the price for his sin. When we sin God calls us to account so we need to live in a constant attitude of repentance but even then, sometimes we are called to suffer the consequences of our sin just as Ahab did.

Jesus said we are to guard ourselves from greed and trust Him for our needs because He will supply them, and we are not to hoard or amass. Hoarding is sin because hoarders love what they have accumulated. Hoarders or 'collectors' find it very hard to give away what they have amassed because their heart is in their possessions. To store up really means to accumulate, amass or to hoard. We must not hoard nor have material things just for the purpose of having them, or possessing 'things'. People hoard for no other reason than just to have them, whether they want to use them or not. Look at so-called 'collectors'. That is nothing but greed. We must not cling to things we do not need and we must not hoard or stockpile. We should not keep things we do not use but give them to someone who can use them. It is better to give to the poor what we do not need so we will be storing up our treasures in heaven. If you are a hoarder or a 'collector', God calls you a fool. Hoarding can stop us from being 'rich' in our relationship with God. Jesus said, "Guard yourselves and stay free from all covetousness (the desire for wealth, the greedy longing to have more), for a man's life does not consist of having abundant possessions."

Notice the man's greed and selfishness in the following parable ... The man said, "I will do this ... I will pull down my storehouses and build bigger ones and there I will store all my grain and my goods. I will say to my soul, 'Soul you have many good things laid up, enough for many years. Take ease, eat, drink and be merry'". But God said to him, "You fool! This very night God will demand your soul and all the things you have accumulated, whose will they be?" So it is with the one who hoards possessions for himself and is not rich in his relationship to God. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will wear, for life is more important than food and the body more important than clothes ... Do not seek what you will eat nor be anxious, for the pagan world seeks these things and your Father knows you need them. Seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be given to you ... Sell what you own and give gifts to the poor. Provide yourselves with possessions that do not grow old. Store up your treasure in heaven ... for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:15 to 34). 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal but gather up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth nor rust can destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also ... No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and money. I tell you, do not being anxious about your life ... Do not worry about what you will

eat, drink or wear ... Your heavenly Father knows you need them but seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you' (Matthew 6:19 to 33).

It is quite clear by reading these scriptures, financial prosperity – to the point of greed – is wrong and so is hoarding or 'collecting'. 'Sell what you have and give to the poor', the scriptures say. Wealth can actually stop people entering the Kingdom of God. 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God' (Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25). For the Lord to record this three times, He must mean what He says, but this Bible study is not about those who need to be saved, it is about Christians who are being wrongly taught 'prosperity' or in other words greed and materialism are okay. They are not okay and can cause people to lose their salvation. 'Those who crave to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish (or godless) desires that plunge people into destruction' (1 Timothy 6:9). Destruction in the Bible means eternal damnation.

Many modern-day preachers concentrate far too much on money and prosperity rather than on holiness, obedience and total submission to God in every circumstance. One example of leadership greed is a church that focuses on their fancy church building program far more than on saving souls or helping the needy. They state they do not want people to attend their church unless they make the building program a priority. If someone new walks into their church, unless they look well off they are ignored. Wealthy preachers are saying everything is all right, God will bless and prosper you, He wants you to be happy and He will give you anything you ask for. We can see many people who live under the prosperity teaching are often selfish, lazy, unfruitful Christians who have 'leanness of soul' rather than the fullness of God. We all need to understand prosperity is not what many people believe it is. It is not the latest car or the biggest house in the suburb with a swimming pool.

In the Old Testament, God gave the people what they craved but sent them 'leanness of soul'. 'God gave them their request but sent them leanness of soul, disease and death' (Psalm 106:15). Do Christians ever consider, sometimes disease, sickness and death may possibly be caused by their greed? In the New Testament we see how Judas became angry when Mary anointed Jesus' feet with expensive perfume because he perceived it to be a waste of money, then in pure spite, sold Jesus out for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15; John 12:3 to 6). The scripture that says, 'Beloved, I pray you prosper in every way, and you may be healthy even as your soul prospers' (3 John 1:2), does not mean material wealth. There are other ways of prospering 'in every way'. John said he wanted them to be in good health, and he wanted their souls to prosper. A prosperous soul is one that is successfully serving the Lord, not a greedy person. Prosperity is not having everything we want. Prosperity and success is accomplishing the will of God. 'The man stood gazing at her in silence, waiting to know if the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not' (Genesis 24:21 to 67). 'The man' was Abraham's servant Eliezer of Damascus and he was waiting to see if Rebekah would agree to become Isaac's wife. Isaac and Rebekah married because the Lord made Eliezer's trip prosperous, but there was no finance involved apart from the wedding gifts Rebekah's parents gave her.

Joseph prospered while living as a slave in prison, but it was not possible for him to be wealthy at that time. 'The Lord was with him and made whatever he did to prosper' (Genesis 39:23). It was thirteen years later, before Joseph was made Pharaoh's deputy, and then he became financially successful. Prosperity in this context did not mean wealthy, but meant Joseph did well in all that he did while in prison. King David wanted to know how the people fared and how the war prospered (2 Samuel 11:7). Obviously the war was not about money, but David wanted to know how it was going. God told Joshua if he would do what God told him, he would have good success and make his way prosperous, and God would be with Joshua everywhere he went. What did Joshua get? War, sleeping in the open desert, he was continually engaged in conflict during that time in history (Joshua 1:8 to 5:1), but Joshua was prosperous because they won the war. Paul prayed the Lord might prosper his way to visit the saints in Rome (Romans 1:10) yet we see what happened to Paul. He was a prisoner in chains, he was in a terrifying storm that lasted two weeks, he was shipwrecked on an island and he was bitten by a snake. How many of us would call that a prosperous journey? But it was, because the will of God was accomplished. We have to adjust our way of thinking to what God's real prosperity is. It is not having an easy life with plenty of money and no difficulties. Prosperity is successfully accomplishing the purposes of God in the face of intense opposition.

We cannot prosper if we harden our hearts. 'God is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has ever hardened himself against God and prospered?' (Job 9:4). There are hundreds of extremely wealthy people in the world who do not love the Lord and who have hardened their hearts towards Him, and they have obviously prospered financially, yet in this scripture we can see the Lord says they have not prospered. In God's eyes they are spiritually poor and will be destroyed when they suddenly go down to hell. 'In prosperity the destroyer will come on him' (Job 15:21). 'Because he knew no quietness (peace), he will not keep anything in which he delights. There was nothing left ... therefore his prosperity will not endure' (Job 20:20 & 21). 'They spend their days in prosperity and go down to hell in a moment' (Job 21:13). 'The rich man died

and was buried and in hell, being in torment ... he cried out ... "I am in anguish". Abraham said to him, "Remember in your lifetime you received comforts and delights" (Luke 16:19 to 31). What does God really think of the wealthy, greedy people on earth? They 'are appointed for hell. Death will be their shepherd ... Their beauty will be consumed in hell ... They will carry nothing away ... They will go to the generation of their fathers and will never see the light' (Psalm 49:14 to 19). This is not exactly the teaching of the modern-day preachers! How erroneous they are to say there is something wrong with Christians who are not wealthy! Poor Christians are usually far more committed to God and are usually more spiritually mature.

'Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food I need lest I be full and deny You and say, Who is the Lord?' (Proverbs 30:8 & 9). This scripture indicates to us, God knows wealth can make us deny Him, and if we deny Him, we are lost. It is right to give some money to the 'treasury' or to the church, and it is right to tithe plus to give offerings (Deuteronomy 12:17), but the church has taken that concept and turned it into greed. The Bible has strong words for greedy Christians. 'For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money ... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God having a form of Godliness but denying His power' (2 Timothy 3:2 to 5). This passage was written to Christians – not to the unsaved. They had a form of Godliness but denied His power. We must let our character be free from the love of money, including greed, avarice, lust and craving for earthly possessions and we are to be satisfied with what we have. God said He would never leave us without support (Hebrews 13:5). We need to trust our heavenly Father to meet our needs. Ananias and Sapphira loved their possessions a little too much and they both fell down dead when they lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1 to 10). There is nothing wrong with being financially well off if the Lord chooses to allow it, but we must not be filled with greed and we must give credit to God for our finances, for it is God Who gives us the power to gain wealth and we must earnestly remember it is from Him (Deuteronomy 8:17 & 18).

Malachi 3:10 says to bring all the tithes into the storehouse (synagogue) and God will pour out a blessing. Taken in its complete context – that is the whole chapter – that particular scripture was speaking to the ancient Jews and does not apply to Christians today. It is a chapter of rebuke along with verses to encourage. To take a piece of that chapter and apply it to Christians, then you would have to also apply verse 9, which says, 'you are cursed with a curse'. Since we are no longer under the curse – we are under grace – it does not apply to this day and age. The preachers of the prosperity teaching use pieces of that chapter to 'prove' their point, leaving verse 9 and other harsh verses out. Verses like 'you have turned aside from My ordinances' and 'now we consider the proud and arrogant to be happy'. The verse 'then will the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in ancient years' tells us clearly, that whole chapter is speaking to ancient Jews. The last verse says, "Then will you return...etc.' We know it is only the Jews who will return to the Lord. If you are a Christian, then you have already turned to the Lord so there is no need for you to return. Again, that shows the chapter does not apply to us, therefore we cannot take bits of it out of the whole context to suit ourselves. The modern-day church leadership are the ministers, priests, pastors and some evangelists who continually ask for money and insist our money be put into their church. They are the covetous, lovers of money as were the Pharisees of Jesus' day. Almost all Christian churches in the modern world revolve around money instead of obeying the scriptures. Many churches have a 'mini-sermon' about money every Sunday and make the congregation feel dreadful if they do not give, give, give. That is pure wickedness that can bring judgement down on a church. In ancient times, the Lord poured out His indignation and wrath on people for this very reason (Ezekiel 22:21 to 31). The leaders had covered up their sin. The general guilt of that generation was the pursuit of selfish gains or greed and that brought down the judgement of God on the people. We cannot use bits of this passage of scripture, modernise it and squeeze it into our sermons to suit the modern-day teaching. That is a misuse of scripture to profit the greedy.

Jesus said to give our abundance to the poor and needy – He did not say to give it to the church. However, He did not say we are not to give to the church either. The Lord uses tithes and offerings to increase His Kingdom and scripturally, tithes and offerings are the only source of church income, however we also need to help the poor. Some Messianic believers send their tithes to Israel – which is in reality our true 'storehouse' because Israel is where the scriptures, our spiritual food was written and given to the whole world. In the story of the woman and the two mites, Jesus said the people were contributing to the treasury (of the synagogue), but He did not say they were tithing – they were only contributing. But ... Jesus said many more times to give to the poor. Church leadership will tell us, we must only tithe into the church we attend, and we must trust them to distribute our money. They say that is God's way. The leadership use (or misuse) Malachi 3:10 'bring your tithes into the storehouse etc', meaning we must give our tithes to them. They will tell you they know best where to spend our money! Where we give our own money is between our Lord and us.

In the western world, success is measured by what we have in the way of material possessions, but if we travel to a poor nation we would get a very different perspective on things. Those people survive without refrigeration, televisions and mobile telephones. In some cases they barely have sufficient food or water.

We, in the western nations are extremely wealthy in comparison. The teaching of the Bible is for everyone worldwide, so why is the 'Prosperity Teaching' only for wealthy nations? Why does it not apply to developing or poorer nations? The Bible is for them too. The wealthy of this world should go to a very poor nation and try teaching the impoverished people this erroneous theory and see how far they get. They might find the deep commitment people in poorer nations have towards the Lord God would put the selfish wealthy people to shame. The financial prosperity teaching is completely wrong. There is more to prosperity than finance and sadly, this new prosperity teaching only fuels the love of money in the hearts of Christians. They are being taught to give only to receive.

If we are young and healthy enough to work, save, increase and manage our income, and it is God's will for us to be wealthy, then we will be – whether we tithe or not. If it is not God's will for us to be wealthy then we will not be, whether we tithe or not but the Lord has promised to meet our needs. We need not worry about what we will eat or wear because He will always provide. The church leadership will tell us, if we give them our money, we will have abundant life, implying we will have a financially cash-strapped life if we do not put our money into their church. That teaching is so wrong. An abundant life – as written in John 10:10 – does not mean wealthy. Jesus was talking about being our Shepherd and if we follow Him, we will have a full and overflowing life. He was not in any way speaking of money. If we are poor – perhaps on a pension and know that will be our fixed income for life – we must not come under the disheartening prosperity teaching delusion. It is a trap. We will be told God will not bless us unless we tithe. That is wrong too. There are many Christians who do not tithe and who are well off financially, simply because they are able to work and earn more than they need. If we love the Lord and are serving Him faithfully, then we are prospering (fulfilling our calling) and our soul is prospering (we are very close to the Lord). Tithing is scriptural and we should tithe if we can, but we should never come under condemnation if our budget does not stretch that far.

Let us see some logic here: If we are on a pension, we will probably never be wealthy and no amount of tithing will change that unless our circumstances change dramatically. There is nothing wrong with our walk with the Lord if we are poor. There is no shame in being poor. The prosperity teaching has brought many, many Christians to the point of despair and condemnation because they are told they are at fault. The churches continue to have mini-sermons every week to ask for more money from their flock. The leadership trust more in the people to give, than in the Lord's provision even though Jesus strongly said to seek the Kingdom of God first and then all these things will be given to us. If we are having trouble making ends meet, praise the Lord for our salvation and trust Him for our needs. Being poor could be a time of learning and perhaps the Lord is trying to teach us something, like to trust Him for His provision, or to increase our faith. Maybe we do need to learn to be wiser with our finances, or maybe there is just not enough income. Whatever the reason, there is nothing shameful about being poor. There is however, something very wrong with wealthy Christians who do not do all they can to help the poor – and most do not. Once they become wealthy they forget the poor, or they hand out meagre amounts solely to appease their consciences. 'As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be proud and arrogant – nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches but on the living God Who richly provides us with everything. Charge them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be ready to give, to lay up for themselves a good foundation for the future so they may grasp eternal life' (1 Timothy 6:17 to 19). 'Blessed is he who is kind to the poor' (Proverbs 14:21).

One of the best churches we have ever attended almost never take an offering. They do as the Bible describes. They have a locked box at the back of the church for people to place their offerings and only the Lord sees how much and how often people give. No one else knows. It is a church of about 200 people, yet that church is one of the wealthiest and most stable churches in their area. They own so much land, they have built a community for those believers who desire to live close by. The church is very active in financially supporting international missions and they help the poor. If they rarely take up offerings, why are they so wealthy? Because they trust in the Lord to provide their needs and do not continually beg for money. They are literally seeking God first, then trusting Him to provide. To repeatedly ask the flock for money, is not trusting God to provide. Jesus said we would always have the poor amongst us, which is also opposite to the prosperity teaching. He said we are to give all we have to the poor and we would have treasures in heaven. If you are poor, God bless you because you will know His provision for you. If you are wealthy, we hope you are giving more of your abundance to the poor and not merely pampering yourself. If you have enough money to tithe, by all means do so. We all need to help the poor in any way we can and most churches do give some to the poor – after they have paid their own wages.

Abraham gave the first recorded tithe to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20), and later Jacob offered a tithe to God in return for giving him peace, enough food and clothing (Genesis 28:20 to 22). Both times it was a choice made by the giver and not instigated by God. Tithing was later accepted into the Law of Moses, but it was stressed, only those who could afford to would tithe. If they could not afford to tithe, they were allowed to give any offering they could. It was never meant to be a law to bind people. It is the prosperity teachers who are the ones putting people under bondage to tithe, not the Lord. Jesus said it is right to tithe, as long as we

do not leave other things undone (Matthew 23:23). He was using the concept of tithing to show an important message; we will not be blessed no matter how much we give if there is sin in our life like hypocrisy. That was the only time Jesus mentioned tithing and it was only to rebuke the scribes and Pharisees! The passage of scripture (Matthew 17:24 to 27) where Jesus paid a denarius was not for a tithe but to pay temple tax for Caesar's government. Since Jesus said so little about the subject of money, why do modern pastors talk about money so much and have a mini-sermon on the subject every week? Because they are greedy. It is up to the individual how much and how often they give – not up to the church leadership.

Tithes and offerings should be a gift from the heart, a desire to give something back to God for His provision. It should not be given out of a sense of duty or to gain. There are people who are struggling financially, who feel duty bound to give tithes yet their children go without. That type of giving is wrong. Scripturally, we only need to tithe what we can, when we can and if we can. It is better to buy good food and clothes for our children and not give to the church, if we do not have a lot of money to go round. We can be assured, the church leadership will never go without! There are always people who have enough to give to them. The Lord is full of wisdom and He would rather we feed our children than give tithes. God will not go without. He owns all the money in the world. The Lord is too gracious and too wonderful to be bought off anyway. He said He would rather we listen and obey Him than give a sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22). The Hebrews only tithed once every three years (Deuteronomy 14:28). We can see from scripture, the modern prosperity teaching is wrong, so do not be bound by it, do not come under condemnation or feelings of guilt if you cannot afford to tithe. Your relationship with the Lord is far more important to Him than any amount of money. On the other hand, if you have money to spare, give all you can to the needy and do not be selfish with it; share it with others. The modern-day church leadership should not be the sole receivers of your money – especially if they ask for money every week because they are driven by greed – not need, or they are not trusting in God to provide. They need to learn to trust in the Lord just like we all do. Television evangelists are the worst. They live in mansions, fly around the world, drive very expensive cars and still beg for more money. They will tell you they need it to spread the Gospel. It is more likely they want it so they can continue to go on television asking for ever more money. The Gospel is a free gift and it should be given freely. Giving to TV evangelists is not a wise place to send your cash.

There are many and varied ways to give your money to the poor and needy. The early church supported the evangelists and the poor. The well-travelled Apostle Paul was sometimes a beneficiary of giving, other times he worked. If people want some ideas how to help the poor, here are a few: Support missionaries; pay for clothes, food, rent, electricity or medical expenses for a poor widow or a sole parent; pay for a much needed operation for someone who cannot afford health insurance; give a job to a fellow Christian who is unemployed; help support Israel; support a local Christian charity; invite lonely people for meals; buy some shoes for a poor family; sponsor a family so they can send their children to a Christian school; take in the homeless and help them get back on their feet or send money to a disaster relief fund. Earthquake victims, flood victims, bushfire victims all need help. Some people may have family members who are struggling and who could do with some help. We must not forsake our own family. 'Deal your bread to the hungry. Bring the poor who are homeless into your house. Clothe the naked. Do not hide yourself from your own family' (Isaiah 58:7). There are endless needs all around us so why give solely to the church just because the pastor demands it? He does not need your extra cash but a poor family down the street might. We should give to people who are unable to repay us. 'When you make a feast ask the poor, the maimed, the lame or the blind and you will be blessed because they do not have the resources to repay you. You will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous' (Luke 14:13 & 14).

If we love the Lord with all our heart we will be blessed and He will meet all our needs, no matter how much or how little we give to the church. It is the concept of giving the Lord loves – not just giving to a church. Jesus said, "Give and gifts will be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will they be given to you. With the measure you give, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38). Jesus did not say, if you give to your church you will be blessed, He just said give. Being blessed is not always financial. Sitting in the powerful, awe-inspiring presence of God the Father, drinking in the Holy Spirit, while adoring the Son Jesus, is far more satisfying than any amount of money. Money cannot buy the love and the beautiful, sweet presence of God. If you have extra, give happily and cheerfully. 'He who gives, let him give liberally' (Romans 12:8). Whoever we help out, God wants us to give liberally and with a cheerful heart, genuinely and not out of a sense of duty or begrudgingly or to gain from our giving. 'The Lord loves a cheerful giver' (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Amen and God bless you.

www.bibleabookoftruth.com