

Templates of Truth with Rick Smith
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Proponents of the modern “prosperity theology” insist on seed-faith giving to invoke the divine favor of wealth and riches, but the only ones appearing to become wealthy are the television evangelists who preach it. We take a closer look at Biblical prosperity in today’s Templates of Truth.

The writer of Psalm 112 declares, *How blessed is the man who fears the Lord... wealth and riches are in his house* (112:1,3). When it comes to modern Biblical teaching about wealth and riches, we find two extremes. One insists that when you sacrificially invest in a ministry (usual the ministry of the preacher teaching this extreme), God’s Word promises and guarantees a certain compound return from the windows of heaven. In this view, Scripture is often ridiculously sensationalized: “Psalm 112:3 teaches that wealth and riches will come to your house, so God told me to tell you that if you will sow \$112.30 today into our telethon, He will fill your bank account to overflowing by the third hour of the 112th day following the investment of your seed-faith gift!” Unfortunately, many naïve believers fall for such mockery. Opponents to this extreme view react by countering with an opposite extreme. They insist that words in Scripture such as prosperity, success, wealth and riches refer not to material or financial resources, but to spiritual and emotional prosperity. That extreme is just as Biblically out of balance as the other. Neither reflects an accurate view of the true teaching of Scripture.

By every measure of ancient standard, men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, Joseph and Job (just to name a few) were extremely wealthy. Their measure was not just that of emotional & spiritual wealth, even though they were rich in those blessings; the Bible mentions their real estate, livestock, and crops, as well as their gold and silver. You can cut the Hebrew apart every way you wish, and when you put it all back together, these references undeniably affirm that the wealth of these men included material possessions. Many of the Israelites were wealthy, which is why Moses had to remind them not to let their wealth cause them to forget their God and think it was their own abilities that resulted in their riches: *But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth* (Deuteronomy 8:18). The spiritual wealth of believers can never be robbed or depleted. Material wealth and riches certainly can be, which is why the Bible compels us not to trust in them. To insist that these words include no reference to material abundance is simply not being true to the text.

Does that mean, then, that God makes all His people financially wealthy? No. Does it mean that God guarantees a certain monetary return when we tithe and invest in Kingdom work? Again, no. I believe Scripture supports two insights about wealth. One is that God blesses each believer with a monetary amount necessary to support and equip him to fulfill God’s specific will, plan and purpose for his life. What has God called you to do? How much is it going to cost you to accomplish that call on your life? Accordingly, God’s call on one person’s life may require \$30,000 a year; whereas, God’s call on another person’s life may require \$70,000 a year. Since his calling on each of our lives is different, our needs are different. But God promised to never call us to do anything that He hasn’t already supplied every need, including financial needs, in order for us to faithfully and obediently accomplish it.

A second insight has to do with whatever abundance God might bless us with over and above that which we need to do the work He has called us to do. We are not to hoard it for selfish or useless purposes (Ecclesiastes 5:13). With that abundance, Scripture clearly dictates what it serves to support - to provide for our domestic needs (Proverbs 13:22, 19:14, II Corinthians 12:14 and I Timothy 5:8), to finance the work of ministry outside our own personal mission (II Corinthians 8:1-4), and to use it to bless those around us less fortunate than we are. This Psalm emphasizes that last directive twice: *it is well with the man who is gracious and lends...he has given freely to the poor* (112:5,9). Jesus mentioned this same command often during His earthly ministry, and it was also emphasized by his brother James in his epistle.

Paul warned Timothy about false teachers who were getting rich from distorting Biblical truth. In the closing words of his first letter to young Timothy, Paul wrote: *Tell those rich in this world's wealth to quit being so full of themselves and so obsessed with money, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Tell them to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever manage – to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous. If they do that, they'll build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life* (I Timothy 6:17-19 The Message). That was good advice for Timothy, and it's good advice for you and me as well.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.