

**COMMERCIALIZED GOSPEL:  
A MISSIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF PROSPERITY GOSPEL**

BY

ERIC ZAKPA MCCARIC GBOTOE

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OF

PROF. S.T. KGATLA

AUGUST 2013

## DECLARATION:

I the undersigned Eric Zakpa Mccaric Gbotoe, declare that the thesis, **Commercialized Gospel**: a missiological assessment of Prosperity Gospel which I hereby submit for the degree of Masters of Arts at the University of Pretoria is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at any other institution.

It encompasses views, ideas and citations of individuals and writers whose assistance was solicited and acknowledged accordingly.

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**Eric Zakpa Mccaric Gbotoe**

11293846

*(Student)*

**AUGUST 2013**

## **DEDICATION:**

I dedicate this dissertation to the almighty God for His guidance and protection. To my dearest wife Mrs Laura T .J Gbotoe for her encouragement and matrimonial support, my late mother Alice Gbotoe whose death is the inspirational factor to the study, my brothers and sisters especially Patience B. Gbotoe, for their on-going support. And to my children Ophelia and Eric Jr, especially Ophelia whose actions were sometimes seemed distracting but were encouraging in continuing the work. Finally, To Bishop Dr. W. W. Weber of Lutheran Theological Seminary, who solicited resources for my studies

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## Abstract

The question this paper attempts to answer is: ***“Does God base his blessings to church members solely on giving”***. The research investigated prosperity gospel from a missiological perspective, a gospel that promises material wealth, health and happiness to faithful Christians who sow “faithful seed to the ministers”.

A Collection of literatures relating to the subject matter coupled with citations from interviewees was reviewed and analysed, in making judgment in answering the research question.

To accomplish the objective of the study the biblical foundation of giving and prosperity were examined, the background, history and synonymous features to prosperity gospel were evaluated, coupled with the views of respondents. A comparison was made, and a conclusion was reached, based on the findings.

Thus, grounded on the result obtained from the research the researcher attempts to establish that though God blesses humanity for obeying his command to give, it does not mean that giving is his prerequisite of blessing humankind. The claim that God wants everyone to be rich contradicts the Bible. For no one can instruct God on who to bless and curse, therefore the claim that man of Rhema can decree blessing on humankind per our giving power is unbiblical.

**Declaration.....i**

**Dedication.....ii**

**Acknowledgement.....iii**

**Abstract.....iii**

**CHAPTER ONE**

**Table of Contents.....1**

**1.0 Introduction.....8**

**1.1 Research Title.....8**

**1.2 Background.....8**

**1.3 Research Objectives.....11**

**1.4 Problem Statement.....14**

**1.5 The Significance of the Research.....16**

**1.6 Methodology of the Study.....16**

**1.7 Research Design.....17**

**1.7-1 Library Base.....17**

**1.7-2 Field Base.....17**

**1.7-3 Data collection:.....17**

**1.7-4 Interview Questions & Questionnaires.....18**

**1.8 Theoretical Framework .....18**

**1.9 Literature Review.....19**

**1.9-1 Coleman 2004:.....19**

**1.9-2 Platt 2010.....20**

<b>1.9-3 Lausanne Article 2009-10, Edition.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>1.9-4 Jenkins 2006.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>1.9-5 Kolb 2010.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>1.9-6 Stevens &amp; Loudon 1992.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>1.9-7 Muller 1989.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>1.9-8 Horton 1990.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>1.9-9 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>1.9-10 Chapter Divisions.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>1.9-11 Chapter 3.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>1.9-12 Chapter 4.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>1.9-13 Chapter 5.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>1.9-14 Chapter 6.....</b>	<b>25</b>

## **CHAPTER TWO**

<b>2.0 Biblical Foundation for Giving and Prosperity .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>2.1 The Concept of Giving in the Old Testament.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>2.1-1 Old Testament view on Giving and prosperity.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>2.1-2 The Old Testament Rationale of Giving .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>2.1-3 Tzedakah and Diaconia.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2.1-4 Giving to the Needy in the Old Testament.....</b>	<b>31</b>

<b>2.1-5 Old Testament Concept of Prosperity.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.2 Giving Under the Dispensation of Grace.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>2.2-1 The Widow Mite (Mark 12.41-44).....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>2.2-2 The Second Letter to the Corinthians (8).....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>2.2-3 Charitable Giving and Hard Work - Acts 20.32.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>2.2-4 Heavenly Riches – Matthew.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>2.2-5 Worldly Prosperity.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>2.3 Missiological Base of Giving.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>2.3-1 Justification and the ‘Paradigm Shift of the Message of the Church.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>2.3-2 Justification.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>2.3-3 Missiological Challenges of the Church.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>2.4 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>46</b>
 <b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	
<b>3.0 History of Prosperity Gospel.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>3.1 Prominent Figures of the Movement.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>3.1-1 William Seymour &amp; Charles for Parham .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>3.1-2 Oral Roberts.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>3.1-3 Kenneth Haggin .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>3.1-4 A A Allen .....</b>	<b>52</b>

<b>3.1-5 T L Osborn .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>3.6 Early Pentecostalism in Africa .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>3.7 Pentecostal Theology .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>3.8 Contextualization and Syncretism.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>3.8-1 Proliferation of Prosperity Gospel within the African Context.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>3.8.1-1 Utilitarianism.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>3.8.1-2 Materialism and the Bible.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>3.8.1-3 Reciprocity.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>3.8.1-4 Poverty.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>3.8.1-5 Globalization.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>3.8.1-6 Consumerism.....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>3.9 Characteristics of Prosperity Gospel:.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>3.9-1 Spirituality.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>3.9-2 Miraculous Healing.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>3.9-3 Prophecy, Revelation and Vision.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>3.9-4 Testimony – (Success Story).....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>3.9-5 Pastoral Calling.....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>3.9-6 The Lifestyle of Prosperity Gospel preachers.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>3.10 Misinterpreted passages of Prosperity Gospel.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>3.10-1 Prosperity in All Things -3 John 2.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>3.10-2 Abrahamic Covenant- Galatians 3.6-8.....</b>	<b>72</b>

**3.10-3 Abundant Blessing - John 10.10.....73**

**3.10-4 God Will Open the Windows of Heaven -Malachi (4:1-2).....73**

**3.10-5 2Corinthians 9.....74**

**3.11 Faith and the Prosperity.....74**

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**4.0 Qualitative Findings.....76**

**4.1 Procedures.....76**

**4.2 Pre-interview Section.....78**

**4.3 Population of the study.....81**

**Table 4.3-1 Respondents.....82**

**Table 4.3-2 Respondents' Age .....82**

**Table 4.3-3 Respondents' Qualification.....82**

**Table 4.3-4 Respondents' Denominational Background.....83**

**Table 4.3-5 Respondents' Experience and Responsibility.....83**

**4.4 Correlations of Respondents' Response and Perception.....84**

**4.4-1 Respondents Understanding of Prosperity Gospel.....84**

**4.5 Respondents' Perception of God Regarding Giving and Prosperity.....85**

**4.5-1 Pie Chart Representing Respondents' Views.....86**

**4.6 Respondents' Perception of Giving and Prosperity.....86**

**4.7 Respondents' membership.....87**

**4.8 Respondents' Perception of Tithes and Offering.....88**

<b>4.9 Respondents' Perception of Using Holy Substances in Healing.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>4.10 Respondents' Perception of Sowing Faithful Seeds.....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>4.11 Respondents' Perception of Rating Preachers .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>4.12 Respondents' Understanding of Prayer.....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>4.13 Respondents' View or Definition of Rhema.....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>4.14 Spiritual Gifts and Factors that Influence Denomitional Migration .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>4.15 Respondents' Perception of Miracles.....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>4.16 Perception as to Whether God Wants Humanity to be Rich.....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>4.17 Human Suffering, Depression, Diseases, and Disaster .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>4.18 Respondents' Perception and Understanding of Prophecy.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>4.19 Respondents' Perceptions of Laying on of Hands.....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>4.20 Respondents' Perception of Dreams and Visions.....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>4.21 Respondents' Perception of Demons and Witches.....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>4.22 Positive Effect of Television Ministries on the continent.....</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>4.23 Respondents' Perception Average.....</b>	<b>103</b>

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

<b>5.0 Analysis and Discussion of the research Findings.....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>5.1 The Communication of the Message – “Go and tell the Word.....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>5.2 Prosperity Christology and God of Abundance.....</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>5.3 The Man of Rhema.....</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>5.4 Wealth and Poverty.....</b>	<b>113</b>

<b>5.5 God of Magic and Divination.....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>5.6 Demonic Warfare and Battle through Prayer.....</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>5.7 Synergistic Belief.....</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>5.8 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>CHAPTER SIX</b>	
<b>6.0 Contextualization and Decontextualization.....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>6.1 Suggestion: Reflection.....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>6.1-1 Two Treasures.....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>6.2 Man centered gospel.....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>6.3 Human Greed.....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>6.4 Pastoral Office in Perspective.....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>6.5 Implication or Conundrum of Economic Gospel.....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>6.6 Recommendation.....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>6.7 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>6.8 Limitation of the Study:.....</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>6.9 Area for Further Study:.....</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>6.10 Works Consulted.....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>6.10-1 Appendix A Daily Invitation of Prosperity Gospel Flyers.....</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>6.10-2 Appendix B Research Questions.....</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>6.10-3 Appendix C Definition of Terminology.....</b>	<b>141</b>

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Research Title**

The title of this research is “Commercialized Gospel”: A Missiological Assessment of Prosperity Gospel. It is the gospel which Horton views as being marketed to consumers, rather than preaching the pure gospel of Christ (Horton 1990:28). The title comes from the gospel that promised financial reward for believers who donate to the church. According to Alcorn (1984:117) the assertion of economic prosperity is identical to the act of commerce because givers or donors are promised perceived value of material or financial success in exchange to their donation or offering and tithes. “Be faithful in your giving and God will reward you financially” (Jones, Russell 2011:13).

Thus, the title of this research is deduced from the observation of Prosperity Gospel preachers who believe that the yardstick of earning God’s blessing is through giving. In their observation Jones and Russell (2011:8) term the practice as a “Give and get into a transaction.”

#### **1.2 Background**

Childhood is considered as a universal stage or period of life that is characterized by protection and freedom from responsibilities. Conversely, growing up in a third-world country like Liberia in West Africa that was engulfed by social and economic problems like civil war and unemployment, childhood then becomes an entity confronted by numerous challenges.

As I reflect on my aim of conducting this research, I am reminded of the greatness of God, which has kept me until this very moment of my life. He has shown that despite tremendous challenges, He will take us through our tough times. In the heat of our civil crises in 1996, I lost my father, which left me with ‘natural impulse’ obligations to

cater for my widow mother and the rest of my younger siblings as we fought for a better life in the face of hopelessness.

In my struggle to give a better life to my mother and younger siblings, she got sick in Ghana where we fled for refuge. Considering my low-income status as a refugee, I could not afford the high fees charged with the well-equipped hospital to diagnose the actual cause of the sickness and its cure. We turned to alternative sources for healing, which included African traditional herbs and prayers. We were then informed about numerous prophets, pastors and great men of God who have supernatural powers to heal incurable diseases and break evil curses. In our predicament, we found nothing more intriguing than the constant demand for the purchase of holy water, holy oil, holy bathe, holy towel and a “faithful seed” by these Men of God from whom we sought help.

They claimed that the “faithful seed” would be to serve as a contact point between my mother and God and thus earn her healing. However, despite the faithful seeds donated, coupled with the purchase of the holy items my mother’s illness was never healed, and God eventually decided her fate. Two intriguing questions that come to mind are; why was my mother not healed? Is it because our donations were not enough to earn her God’s healing?

This theology is of continental concern, so my attention was drawn to Jason Moyo’s article. In his article “Preaching the Gospel of Bling”, his narrative and experience in Zimbabwe show clear similarities to my encounter in Ghana as narrated above. In his description, he pointed out that giving was considered a prerequisite in receiving God’s blessing from the prophet.

“They queue before the prophet, waiting for that word to spring them from misfortune. It goes like this: you are poor because of evil spirits. What follows is a microwave exorcism: a quick rap on the forehead, sometimes a whack from the prophet’s jacket. For ardent membership,

giving is a priority, which seals the deal. So on that elusive job, the husband, the business, is yours.”<sup>1</sup>

On numerous occasions, the ‘Prophet’ received revelation and visions that my mother was going to be healed in a couple of days but that did not happen. Therefore, relating these beliefs and ideologies to my personal experiences, and values, I am of the conviction that the study of this movement holds the key to a wealth of knowledge and learning.

Another dimension of this movement that struck me during my mother’s prayer session was the cleansing allegation that her illness was caused by witchcraft and evil forces. In trying to understand the beliefs and ideal about this movement I concord with Westerlund’s argument (2009:1-6) that affluence gospels on the continent have a tendency of incorporating Christian values, African customs or traditions to sensitize its audiences. It is a tradition that links every phenomenon on the continent to spirituality.

It is from this backdrop that I am inspired to conduct a research that investigates the threat this theology may pose on the Christians faith in Africa. There are many Christians in Africa who are made to believe that their offerings can earn them healing or God’s blessing. I found nothing more inspirational in our time than to study the beliefs and culture of this Christian movement that claimed to have solutions for all human problems as pointed out by Moyo in his article<sup>2</sup>, Coleman (2000), Horton (1990), Platt (2010), and Jenkins (2006).

I am now inspired to fight on having achieved a dream of conducting a variable research, and as well contributed in finding answers to this phenomenon of our age.

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<sup>1</sup><http://mg.co.za/article/2012-04-04-preaching-the-gospel-of-bling> by Jason Mojo Accessed: 2012-04-05

<sup>2</sup><http://mg.co.za/article/2012-04-04-preaching-the-gospel-of-bling> by Jason Mojo Accessed: 2012-04-05

### 1.3 Research Objectives

This research examined, and evaluated from a scriptural perspective the impact of the "give and be blessed gospel" that is presently being propagated around Africa and the globe, and which Platt (Radical, 2010:3-10) believes, takes its root from the American Dream. He stated that the culture of defining scriptural success based on our desires, and need is purely unbiblical. This is what he says in this regard:

"I am convinced that we as Christ followers in American churches have embraced the values and ideas that are not only unbiblical but that actually contradict the gospel we claim to believe."<sup>3</sup>

"Praise be to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1.3-4). The theological argument deduced from the passage is that humankind is called to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable. Therefore, with the Prosperity Gospel claiming that one can earn God's favor based on giving is questionable because it contradicts the above passage, which says that humankind is saved purely by the mercy of God and not by silver or gold. Hence, there is a need to carry out a research that would examine the pros and cons of the said gospel.

Similarly, I am eager to learn from a biblical standpoint, whether God with all the attributes as kind, loving, caring, compassionate, gracious and merciful father would or does bless us as per what we give, in the face of abject poverty. "But you, O Lord, is a merciful and gracious God; slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Psalm 85.15).

Furthermore, the research examined, and analyzed the preaching or the writings of other authors on the subject "Prosperity Gospel" and as well made suggestions from

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<sup>3</sup>(Platt 2011:30-33)

a biblical standpoint. It critically observed and described the origin of Prosperity Gospel and explains its pros and cons within the Christian context.

Finally, the research raised issues that are theoretically important, practically relevant and potentially doable.

According to Tasker (1979:273-277, CF Matthew 28.16-20) the church is commissioned by Christ to preach the good news of justification and redemption to the world. Interpreting the passage in a Missiological perspective it can be inferred that the effective and efficient proclamation of the gospel is regarded as the paramount responsibility, aim, and objective of the Church. "Go ye into the entire world and preach the gospel to every creature". Explaining the passage of Mark 16.15-18, Wicke (1992:238-239) asserts that the church is charged with the duty of proclaiming the good news of salvation to the world. "But you are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2.9).

From the biblical passages above, coupled with Hodges' (1978:8-16) view that the church's primary aim is to bear witness to Christ. It can be argued that the church is called to teach and build up the corporate body of individual believers in Christ. Hodges who quoted (Scherer, 1972) stated that the church's mission is to bear the Christological witness to the world. Framing the function of the church in a Missiological standpoint proclamation requires using the word of God in redeeming humanity from darkness to light in Christ. That is preaching about the person and work of Christ.

In other words, preaching the "gospel and the provision of human" needs are equally authentic and essential parts of the church's responsibility" Ott et al (2010:144). It further entails explaining the Christology of Jesus based on the work he did for humankind. That is expounding that he atoned the sin of the world through his death and resurrection. And of such, he is the prophet (John 14.9) who revealed God to

humankind. Similarly, that he is the messiah sent to redeem humanity from bondage of sin.

Believers thus go to church for spiritual edification, the sustenance of their inner being, acquisition of biblical knowledge and wisdom, and live a life of good moral pleasing to the Supreme God as professed by Christ that his disciples must be the salt of the world. The Lutheran defines the Church as “The gathering of saints among whom the gospel is purely preached, and the means of grace are rightly administered” (Engelbrecht 2005:171).

The church has encountered many challenges in meaningfully disseminating the good news to the world. In the medieval times, the church combated the teaching of the Gnostics and the Heretics (Oetting 1970:56-58). Similarly in contemporary time many preachers have also surfaced within the church who root “The sowing of seed” as a means of earning God’s favor or blessing (Stott 1984:212).

It is of this introduction that this research focused on the “Commercialized Gospel”; the missiological assessment of the Prosperity Gospel that has emerged within the church in Africa over the past decades. This contemporary theology holds the view that by giving, or “sowing of seed” to the church, believers can earn prosperity or receive abundance of blessing from God. Christian audiences around the continent are made to believe that their offerings, and tithes would earn them material wealth and good health as signs of God’s blessing (Olivier 2003:56-58, 82).

This form of proclamation makes humankind to expect an immediate return on our tithes and offerings to the church, and as such it illustrates that we can trade with God. It creates a scenario in which an individual is expected to receive a perceived value of blessing from God for having been a genuine giver to the church. The main philosophy behind this form of theology is that believers can become conquerors, victors, and defeat all negativities and failures in life by “sowing seed” to the church.

The theology depicts the blessings of God as a mega profit or a jackpot that one can earn as a return on investments (Alcorn 1984:117).

#### **1.4 Problem Statement**

According to Coleman (2000:27-33) 'Prosperity Gospel' is a propagated theology that 'possession' of wealth and health are signs of divine blessing from God. Indicatively, Coleman cited Farah (1978) that this movement claimed to have solutions for all human spiritual, financial, and socioeconomic problems. In Coleman's (2000:32) opinion, the 'faithful' is described as the children of God who actively participate in the progress of the ministry and well-being of the pastor through monetary and material donation. Similarly, the Lausanne group also noted that this theology propounds that through the sowing of faithful seed, God would heal all diseases and provide solutions to alleviate misfortune and evil and bring about joy, happiness and prosperity in an individual's life.

In providing an overview for the movement in the African perspective Coleman (2000:27-34, 237-238) points out that this movement portrays Christ as the greatest and most unique healer that heals the sickness and misery of the world by the seed sowed. In contextualization of the concept of Prosperity Gospel to the African societies, Stott (1984:212-226) explains that it is preached that the faithful would see and experience the supremacy of Christ over the dark forces of the evil world through giving.

The message of Prosperity Gospel according to Platt is rooted in the "American dream" that is "dominated by self-advancement, self-esteem, and self-sufficiency, individualism, materialism and Universalism" (Platt 2010:19). Stott (1984:212) on his part maintains that the movement's practice of equating or pinning the blessing of God on giving contradicts the purpose and personalities of Jesus.

In emphasizing this problem Stott (1984:225-227) argues that it narrows the manifestation of God's blessing on giving as a precondition of earning his favor.

"The Sow Seed and be blessed gospel" (Alcorn 1984:116) is a global phenomenon well-known to many African Christians today that conditioned God's blessing on monetary donation, and salvation on excessive giving in support of a preacher or minister of the gospel. These preachers profess that a seed sowed to the church can make a believers triumph over the power of failure, diseases and death.

This human interpretation of the Bible rooted in secularization and globalization in the modern history of humankind presents a significant challenge to the teaching, and the position of the church. According to Coleman (2000:97) human desires of wanting quick solutions to our social –economic problems help this theology to “gain ground” in Africa. In the face of unemployment, hardship and immerse suffering everyone tends to look for survival, and good life. Therefore, making the masses vulnerable to any form of exploitation (Jenkins 2006:90-97).

From my experience coupled with Moyo's (2012 April) articles above it was noted that these theologians mainly target the lower class of the populace on the continent who are desperate for survival, making them to believe that upon donation of their hard-earned income to the church or preachers, God would manifest his blessing upon them. The driving force behind this theology is the preacher's ability to convince the masses that God would answer their prayers for success in their endeavors in accordance to their giving power.

Indeed, there are passages (Leviticus 22.18-23; Numbers 15.3; Acts 2.44-45; 4.32-37; etc.) in the Bible that talks about giving to the needy, and the work of God. But the question is should we expect God's blessing in the form of riches, good health and wisdom for 'Sowing seed' to Him?

As I piece together the scope of this research the theological questions which I wish to answer are: Does God actually narrow his blessing on giving?

Are we actually saved by sowing seed to God or not? Can we really purchase God's favor for material success? If one manages to pay some substantial amount of

money for God's favor, what about those who cannot afford to do so? Will they be blessed also, or condemned? Should we say that many are poor in the world because they are not giving enough to their God through their pastors? If not, what is the effect this modern theology has on the masses, the basic principle of the church, and its teaching?

### **1.5 The Significance of the Research**

This research is necessary because it attempts to define the role of the Scriptures in enlightening the masses against false teaching and distorting messages of self-proclaimed prophets. Furthermore, it is necessary because it introduces a debate where academics can discuss ill-teaching of some contemporary theologians on the continent.

The study is important because it's aimed at evaluating and disclosing how misinterpretation and manipulation of the word of God is used to exploit the people in Africa as observed by the Lausanne theology working group below.

"... we are distressed that much use of the Bible is seriously distorted, selective and manipulative. We call for a more careful exegesis of texts and a more holistic biblical hermeneutics, and we denounce the way that many texts are twisted out of context and used in ways that contradict some very plain Bible teaching. ... we deplore the fact that in many churches where the prosperity teaching is dominant, the bible is rarely preached in any careful or explanatory way, and the way of salvation, including repentance from sin and saving faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, and the hope of eternal life is misrepresented and substituted by material wellbeing".<sup>4</sup>

### **1.6 Methodology of the Study**

This study employed qualitative method using both empirical and desk research. In terms of the latter, extensive, interviews were conducted to acquire relevant information. In the case of the former series of books and other relevant literature

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<sup>4</sup>Lausanne Theology Working group statement on the Gospel prosperity – ERT (2010) 34:2, 99 -102

(Textbooks, journals, websites, newsletters and recordings) were reviewed from which I promulgated an academic argument and give relevant suggestions for academic debate. The reason for choosing these two methodologies is that they aided me in seeking facts, and information that gave me a better understanding of the movement.

## **1.7 Research Design**

As stated above the research design for the project is two folds: Library Based and Field Based

### **1.7-1 Library Based**

The Library Based research includes the analysis of literature, content analysis of Tape and Film listening and archives.

### **1.7-2 Field Based**

The Field-Based Research includes a personal interview; using open and closed questions, and the use of questionnaires.

### **1.7-3 Data collection:**

The method of data collection is by reviewing and critical analysis of literature. And as well conduct interviews among leaders and members of some “Faith gospel” and missional churches. The purpose of conducting the research in this manner is to answer the questions, Can our donation, offerings or tithes earn us God’s blessing or favor? Can the wealth of the world be used to interpret God’s blessing on humankind? Does God only bless mankind based on our giving power to the church? And also attempted to establish how misinterpreted or manipulated of the gospel is used as a tools or means of exploiting the Christian audience in Africa.

## 1.7-4 Interview questions & Questionnaires

To successfully achieve the objectives and goal of this research, I have carefully designed questionnaire that would aid me gather the needed information and facts.

## 1.8 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research is the theory of justification by faith from Luther's perspective. Using Biblical context and text, Luther propounded the theory of justification by faith to argue against the practice of indulgence. In this theory, Luther (Lutheran Concordia 2005:96-98) promulgated or argued that no one can merit or earn the blessing, saving grace and favor of God simply by doing good works. Justification according to Luther (Lutheran Concordia 2005:56-59) is the saving grace bestowed upon humanity through the birth, life, suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. Luther strongly argued that we cannot earn God's favor through our obedience or doing works that are considered just in the sight of man. The perspective of the Lutheran Church on Justification is based on the argument of Luther as given below:

“Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. By his death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for the righteous in His sight,"<sup>5</sup> (Romans 3:21-26; 4:5).

I deemed it relevant to root my argument in the concept of justification because the Prosperity Gospel that appeals to its audiences to “sow a faithful seed” to earn God's favor or blessing is much like the 15th century priests who sold indulgences in the church. Indulgences according to the Lutheran Concordia (2005:63) are the buying of God's forgiveness by paying money to avert his punishment against our wrong doing. Justification was thus developed to educate the church of its

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<sup>5</sup>Lutheran Concordia 2005, Formula of Concordia, Solid declaration, V,17

contemporary settings as it proclaimed the “just and immutable will of God.” In this research, I wish to argue that the church must be critical of her contemporary setting because Prosperity Gospel is parallel to indulgences. Both are conditions that base God’s blessing of giving to the church or the buying of a specific blessing, to earn wealth or avert the wrath of God.

## **1.9 Literature Review**

This section is a literary analysis and criticism of books that are relevant to this research by considering their content, style, and merit. The primary opinion of this research is the contributions or writings of Coleman 2000. Based on his and others’ contribution to Prosperity Gospel I wish to investigate whether God with all his attributes as gracious, merciful and kind can only bless humanity based on our giving power to his work.

### **1.9-1 Coleman 2000**

Coleman (2000) wrote about Prosperity Gospel in his book *Globalization of Charismatic Christianity –spreading the Prosperity Gospel* and analyses the renewal of fascinating protestant Christianity as a model of globalization.

His book not only examines globalization as a social process, but also as an embodied practice involving forms of language and ritualized movement. In addressing the issue of Prosperity Gospel Coleman falls short of mentioning the effect this form of gospel tends to have on its audience. Though Coleman mentions that the media plays an important role in the expansion of the movement he holds back from describing the lifestyle of the pastor or ministers who tend to live a flashy life among their poverty-stricken audience in Africa. As it was described in Moyo’s (April 2012) article<sup>6</sup> mentioned above.

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<sup>6</sup><http://mg.co.za/article/2012-04-04-preaching-the-gospel-of-bling> by Jason Mojo Accessed: 2012-04-05

He spells out the three main elements; confession, giving and healing that serve as the core of the theology but restrains from commenting whether the claimed healing and confession are actually genuine. The writer's literature is purely a narrative that gives clear insight into the movement's proclamation but does not consider its pros and cons.

Therefore, this research seeks to explore and make meaningful contribution to these gaps observed in Coleman's writing.

### **1.9-2 Platt 2010**

Additionally, the project also reviewed the book of Platt (Radical, 2010) in which he expresses that Prosperity Gospel is a sharp contradiction to the personality of Jesus and his purpose as the Savior of the world. He challenges Christians to consider with an open mind and heart how mankind has manipulated the gospel to fit our cultural preferences and needs. That is, humankind tends to narrow the interpretation of scripture to suit a given situation and desires.

He further indicates that over the past centuries, humanity has manipulated the gospel to suit our own understanding and the condition of our time. To show that Prosperity Gospel preachers clearly contradict the Bible Platt (Radical, 2010) explains how Jesus wants his disciples to live. Using biblical passages in which Jesus urges his disciples to leave every material wealth and family behind and follow him.

Platt defines biblical giving as caring for the spiritually lost and physically impoverished of the globe. He stresses that Americans have become more interested in pursuing the American dream of wanting to become rich and have influenced the truth of the gospel regarding giving. According to him, Prosperity Gospel preachers often twist the word of God to mean what they desire it to mean.

Despite his criticism of the Prosperity Gospel preachers, Platt (Radical, 2010) falls short of discussing the issue from the African perspective, where pastors or prosperity preachers are accorded enormous status and even regarded as Prophets sent from God.

He does not discuss whether human wealth always depicts the sign of God's blessing on mankind. Similarly, whether sicknesses and failure indicate curse from God? In this regard, the research explored the gap which Platt could not cover or address.

### **1.9-3 Lausanne Article 2009-10, Edition**

Similarly, the research also examined the literature of the "Lausanne Theological Working Group's statement on Prosperity Gospel." The group extensively examines the pros and cons of the movement that are necessary for academic debate. The group did not mention the biblical foundation of their argument which this research tends to explore by offering a critical analysis of faith gospel of our time.

### **1.9-4 Jenkins 2006**

Jenkins examines the lifestyle of Prosperity Gospel preachers and as well gives a critical analysis of the movement on the continent. He describes the glamorous lifestyle of faith gospel preachers. In his narrative, he describes the biblical passages used by Prosperity Gospel preachers as justification for their claims. However, he failed to state whether the passages are rightly interpreted as professed by the preachers of the faith movement.

### **1.9-5 Kolb 2010**

Kolb gives a general overview of how humanity regards God in relation to their needs and desires. His argument is that modernization plays a major role in how we relate to God. The limitation of his argument in relation to this study is that it mainly focuses on the American society. In relation to his argument, this study, on the other

hand, extensively considers how modernization affects the Africans' relationship with God.

### **1.9-6 Stevens & Loudon 1992**

In discussing the economic dimension that Prosperity Gospel is a "Commercialized Gospel" Stevens and Loudon's explanation of a marketer is employed. In their concept, a marketer is a person who identifies the needs of the people and devises means to offer a solution with the perception of receiving in exchange. This literature helps to explain how the concept of exchange is employed and how humankind tends to trade with God in Prosperity Gospel.

### **1.9-7 Muller 1989**

Muller's concept of calling is used in drawing comparisons between the calling of mainstream pastors and faith preachers. Apart from this definition, the main content of the book is of no major relevance to this study. Calling in this sense is used to illustrate how faith preachers boast of having direct contact with God.

### **1.9-8 Horton 1990**

In the book "Agony of Deceit," Horton and his contributors distinguish between a truth gospel and the human fabricated gospel. He cautioned the Christian society against false teachings and deceitful messages from faith preachers, who use the media as their channel of luring people. Horton uses Paul's warning letter to the Ephesus to expose the teachings of certain television evangelists, who use the media to deceive their audience. Horton along with other contributors expressed alarm at what they considered false prophecy being propagated over the air waves, leading millions of believers to a gross misunderstanding of the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. "The Agony of Deceit" links the influence of Prosperity Gospel with the detrimental impact of indulgences in the medieval church which preceded the

Reformation led by Martin Luther, and, which left millions of souls striving to appease the wrath of God through “good work or just deeds.”

In this regard, Horton and his contributors throw out a challenge to the “Mainstream Churches” to get involved in television ministry to counter the message of prosperity gospel.

Horton and his contributors, therefore, argued that Prosperity Gospel is the manifestation of Paul’s warning to the Ephesus that “Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard.” Accordingly, “The Agony of Deceit” was written to open the eyes of many against those who equate God’s blessings with giving.

Though Horton and his contributors point out some major challenges facing the Christian society in regard to Prosperity Gospel, their arguments were mostly western-oriented. They fell short to address how poverty-stricken societies in Africa are exploited by these faith preachers. Secondly, they did not address how the people of Africa are made to look up to God from a need perspective. Therefore, this research investigated the African perspective.

### **1.9-9 Conclusion**

This research, therefore, explored the gap from the African perspective of the writers mentioned above. It attempts to answer from the African perspective the question that was not addressed by the writers above whether wealth and health are signs of God’s blessing to those who give to the church. The research explored the gap and evaluated the lifestyle of the preachers of prosperity gospel on the continent. Similarly, it examined the gaps stated above that were not addressed by writers stated herein.

## **1.9-10 Chapter Divisions**

Chapter 2 of the study looked at the biblical foundation of giving and prosperity as a premise of the argument. The chapter also looked at giving and prosperity from the perspective of the old and new testaments. It discussed the biblical history and significance of giving and prosperity in relation to the study. It examined the shift of the gospel of our time from preaching or bearing Christological witness of Jesus to the 'gospel of bling', (Moyo April 2012). It also examined the challenges that the church faced in the past due to the distorting gospel as a point of caution against Prosperity Gospel.

## **1.9-11 Chapter 3**

Chapter 3 of the study discussed the history, characteristics that are central to understanding of Prosperity Gospel and the factors that contribute to the growth of the movement on the continent with some emphasis on a global perspective. Since the study is an audience analysis, it investigated the audiences of Prosperity Gospel preachers to determine how the people view God in light of the message that has been disseminated to them. The chapter briefly discussed the traditional concept of Mission of Mainstream Churches. The chapter also attempted to discuss how faith gospel preachers contextualize their messages to the African society.

## **1.9-12 Chapter 4**

Chapter 4 critically analyzed and interpreted the findings of the study highlighting the theoretical framework of the study.

It also contains the qualitative findings of the study, in relation to the research questions regarding whether our donation, offerings or tithes earns us God's blessing and favor? Can the wealth of the world be used to interpret God's blessing on humankind or whether financial donation can earn us God's blessing?

### **1.9-13 Chapter 5**

Chapter 5 summarized the findings of the study, makes a suggestion from the findings, draw conclusions from the findings, and makes recommendations for further study.

### **1.9-14 Chapter 6**

Chapter 6 reflects the views and suggestions of the researcher based on the findings.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR GIVING AND PROSPERITY

There is a maxim in the Krahn tradition<sup>7</sup> of Liberia in West Africa that says, "To better evaluate a given situation as a standard of life one needs a premise," upon which the odd is evaluated. In other words, to meaningfully argue for or against a given situation, one needs to lay a premise upon which a study can be conducted. By using the concept of the maxim the researcher finds it easier to systematically evaluate Prosperity Gospel from a missiological perspective within the framework of justification.

Justification (Anderson, et al 1985:16) from the Lutheran perspective is the belief that Christians are saved by the gracious will of God without merit. In other words, God bestows his saving grace upon humanity without them paying a price. The above writers profess that our salvation comes purely from God for Christ's sake. Bosch (2005:216) in his view argues that because of sin, humankind does not have the power and will to save, but is saved by the salvation of God.

Missiology (as a theological subject) in this study (Ott al 2010: xx) investigates the presuppositions, motives, structures, methods, patterns of cooperation and leadership which the churches bring to their mandate. Hence, they (Ott et al) infer that the theology of mission tends to provide the theological foundation and guidelines for missiology. The understanding the mission of the church helps every theological argument. Bosch<sup>8</sup> (1991:187-189) argues that missiology investigates the mandate, message and mission of the church.

It is of this backdrop that the researcher wishes to call to question in this study the message of "Commercialized gospel" that has been disseminated to the masses of Africa, by briefly looking at the scriptural overview and historical background of

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<sup>7</sup>The Krahn of Liberia believes in evaluating a situation base on the existing platform as a premise.

<sup>8</sup>Bosch<sup>8</sup> (1991:187-189)

giving, prosperity, the message, and Mission of the church. It is necessary to collectively study these concepts because they are interrelated and interchangeably used in most scriptural concepts. The essence of preaching the message comes from the mandate Jesus gives the disciple to go on a mission and make more disciples (Matthew 20.28). Having received the authority from heaven Jesus mandated his disciples to make more disciples.

Ott et al (2010:35) observe that after the redemption through his death and resurrection, Jesus gives his disciples an explicit mandate to bring the gospel to the nations. Ott al et (2010:96) explain that the gospel is a message of God's grace and freedom that proclaims what God has done and continues to do for humanity. Thus, any form of preaching that contradicts the mandate and original message of the gospel needs urgent attention. The researcher does not wish to prejudge Prosperity Gospel as contradictory but wishes to bring to light that its message differs from the concept of Justification and Ott's explanation of the gospel.

## **2.1 The Concept of Giving in the Old Testament**

A biblical study in view of this subject discovered that there are indeed some passages in the bible that teach on giving and prosperity. However, the primary aim of studying these passages is to discover the text that supports the claim that we can earn "God's blessing based on our giving power to the church, our pastor and the needy."

In so doing, the biblical concept of giving and prosperity in the context of the study is presented in two folds; the first dimension presents a careful study of Old Testament books on the subject while the latter looks at the books of the New Testament that contribute to the subject matter under discussion.

## **2.1-1 Old Testament View on Giving and Prosperity**

According to Davison (1993:51) the biblical concept of giving comes to light in the narrative of Cain and Abel in the book of Genesis Chapter 4 when the two brothers offered unto God the first fruits of their earnings as a sign of Thanksgiving and appreciation for their prosperity in terms of their livelihood as farmers.

Other lessons on giving in this Testament in regard to this study are expressed in Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Joshua and Jeremiah.

## **2.1-2 The Old Testament Rationale of Giving**

In discussing the concept of giving the questions that come to mind are what and why do we give unto God? In answering this question Olford (2000:50) argues that giving is meant to express one's gratitude and appreciation to God for what he has done or continues to do. Cain and Abel brought unto God the first fruit of their earnings as a sign of appreciation and Thanksgiving. Westermann (1984:295) expresses that these farmers ascribed the success of their hard labor to the gracious will of God, and of such, they reciprocated his love with appreciation.

In the narrative, God only finds favor with Abel's offering. In answering the essential question why God finds favor with Abel's offering? Westermann (1984:296) argues that the pleasant description of Abel's gift as "fat and firstborn" of his livestock is indicative that he highly reveres the Lord in his manner of giving.

Though much was not said about Cain's gift Davidson (1993:52) implies that the rejection of his gift stemmed from the way he offered it to God. It signifies that God looks at the motive and the way the offering is offered unto him. "And Abel also brought an offering –fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock," (Genesis 4.4). The passage can be explained that Abel's giving was carefully planned and done with a sincere heart and honesty.

In this regard, Olford (2000:40) observes that we are called to give generously, with joy, as a fruit of the Spirit's within us. Abel gives to God with joyous heart without any form of grumbling.

The passage draws out the biblical principles of giving which Christians can apply to their situations. It draws an attention that Christians should desire to give from the depth of their heart in accordance with their means and earnings. Christians must have the desire and willingness to give in proportion to what the giver has earned, and of such the gift will be acceptable to God.

Other forms of giving that follow the narrative of Cain and Abel in the Old Testament were classified into two categories, free will and mandated offering. According to Dozeman (2009:607) in free will offering the Israelites were taught to give willingly from their hearts without a specific amount. An individual is encouraged to give according to their heart.

“The LORD said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give,”<sup>9</sup>

“Some of the heads of families, when they came to the house of the Lord, who is in Jerusalem, made freewill offerings for the house of God, to erect it on its site,”<sup>10</sup>

In the free will offering, the proportion of giving is purely discretionary to the giver. The giver is not compelled or mandated to give should he not find it necessary to do so at, any given point.

On the other hand, Harrison (1980:238) argues that under the mandated giving or offering the Israelites were required by Mosaic Law to give or bring tithe or offerings to the Lord. According to him, these legislations or laws were meant to outline the conditions under which persons and property could be devoted to the service of the most high “A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit

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<sup>9</sup>Exodus 25.1-2)

<sup>10</sup>(Ezra 2.68)

from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD," (Leviticus 27.30). The laws were meant to guide the people to reverse God and acknowledge him at all times

"You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year. And before the Lord your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always. And if the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, when the Lord your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which the Lord, your God chooses, to set his name there, then you shall turn it into money and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the Lord your God chooses and spends the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before the Lord your God and rejoice you and your household. ... "<sup>11</sup>

## **2.1-3Tzedakah and Diaconia**

Biblical narrative shows that Christianity takes its root from the Jewish culture (Kruger et al 2009:226). The Old Testament was primarily addressed to the Jewish audience. The culture of the Jews and Christians were inseparable, as the Israelites (Jews) were considered the people of God for whom the message was mainly written at the time. This cultural background still influences some Christian practices like the obligation to give to charity, which is termed Tzedakah in the Jewish language (Jacob et al 2006:19-20). It is construed that the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Therefore, the Greek term diaconia is used as a reflection of the Jews practice, which means the work of mercy or an obligation to help the needy.

Charitable giving is summed up in Jesus' teaching that Christians should love another. Christians should consider each other as 'brethren' by showing mercy, kindness and compassion like the good Samaritan in Luke (10:30-37), (Alcorn 1984:249). Like Tzedakah, the Work of mercy is a large part of the work of the

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<sup>11</sup>(Deuteronomy 14.22-29).

church's mandate in the New Testament. Mercy in the Scriptures is always oriented toward an action of serving God and the needy.

In both testaments, charitable services are described in context with the covenant and faithfulness of the Lord. The work of mercy first begins with the narrative of the Exodus when God had mercy on his people. The Lord rescued his people from slavery in Egypt. He also gave water, quail and manna as food (Ex. 16:4-5, 12-13) during their time in the wilderness, their clothing and shoes did not wear out (Deuteronomy 29:5) and they were brought to the land of Canaan that was promised in the covenant to Abraham, even though they sinned many times.

Jesus also teaches us about mercy. Jesus said, "Be compassionate, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). Jesus is speaking to believers, because no one can call God "Father" apart from faith. As believers, we have already received mercy from the Father, and these words were spoken in the context of a rich history of the Lord's mercy and faithfulness to His people throughout the Old Testament (Alcorn 1984:251). The command to "be merciful" describes an action connected with attitude, and not merely emotional. "Be humane" is a summary of all that Jesus said in Luke 6:27-35.

### **2.1-4 Giving to the Needy in the Old Testament**

Another form of giving that is promoted or stressed in the Old Testament is charitable giving. It is the form of giving in which Christians are encouraged to share with people who are in dire need. The Bible teaches (proverb 11.25, 13.7) that, 'he who water shall be watered. The passage means that if Christians share with the needy, the Lord will also reward them at the time of their needs. Similarly, the Old Testament (Isaiah 58.10, 11) explains that there is blessing in giving especially when it is done to meet the needs of the poor. Knight (1985:28) argues that as a philanthropist 'if we pour ourselves out for the hungry, then 'one election within the covenant of God is justified'. He further noted that there is more to earning God's

covenant or blessing than just being a philanthropist. "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry the Lord shall satisfy thy soul in the time of the drought".

Another supportive argument here is that (Proverb 28.27) whoever sacrifices for the poor will not lack. In short, the Bible teaches believers to give as it is commanded by God, and that must be done cheerfully, with a pure heart, right motive, humble heart, sincerity, honesty and to the glory of the father (Alcorn 1984:230-238).

Hamlin (1995:101-102) noted in this light that (Deuteronomy 15.7, 8) the Lord commanded Christians not to 'harden their heart nor shut hands,' to the needy but rather open our hands to our fellow 'brethren who are in need. For it is taught that Christians should not withhold good from them to whom it is due' (Proverb 3.27).

### **2.1-5 Old Testament Concept of Prosperity.**

The definition of prosperity according to Oxford dictionary (2010) is the state of being successful, especially in the accumulation of wealth. The definition of prosperity in light of this study is the "accumulation of wealth and good health based on one's good work or giving power to the church," (Coleman 2010).

This section focuses on the Old Testament view of prosperity. For undoubtedly there are passages in the bible that talk about prosperity. For instance, God's covenant with humankind that the righteous will prosper (Psalm 128.1-2, Proverb 10.22, and 11.24-28) and inherit the earth is an indication that indeed there is a teaching on prosperity in the bible.

However, the research question is does God limit this covenant of prosperity on just earthly riches? How can we reconcile this teaching that God wants everyone to be rich, to the observation of Bonk (1991:89) who noted that earthly prosperity is 'inherently dangerous' to our spirituality. Bonk's argument is meant to make a clear distinction between our human desire and God's purpose and will. In further

explaining Bonk's argument, the purpose of God is that as a gracious and merciful father, he would provide our needs.

From the time of creation up to the time of the prophets the Lord promises his people prosperity. It is taught that biblical prosperity started with the birth of creation when God gives humankind (Genesis 2.14-20) dominion over the entire creation. The argument here is that humanity has everything at their disposal, and of such their needs were met in abundance.

The covenant of prosperity that was made to Adam at the time creation of was reiterated to Noah (Genesis 1-5), Abraham (12.1-6) the prophets and the apostles. The Lord told Abraham that "I will make you prosperous and make your name great, and all nations will be blessed through you." The book of Genesis later recounted Abraham's wealth as a prosperous and successful servant of God. In following the narrative it is observed that the success of Abraham was attributed to his obedience and his quest to do the will of God. The message of Joshua (Joshua 1.8) to the Israelites also echoes that human prosperity is rooted in doing the will of God and that which is pleasing to God. According to Hamlin (1983:6-7) the prosperity professed by Joshua refers to the success of the humble servant who abides in the Lord. It can be argued that if Christians remind in the Lord in spite of their earthly hardship, they will surely succeed in overcoming pediments in their lives.

"Do not let the book of the Lord depart from your mouth mediate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."<sup>12</sup>

The passages teach that biblical prosperity comes from submission and during the will of God. Allen (1983:184-185) asserts that if Christians fulfill the condition of living an upright life before God, they will prosper in their affairs. He believes that the nature of 'good fortune' or prosperity is contingent upon a religiously motivated life

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<sup>12</sup>(Joshua 1.8).

elaborated as an achievement. In short, he professes that God uses prosperity as an incentive to earn Christians' obedience.

Likewise, the message of Joshua in the passage above makes it clear that the success of the Israelites depends on how they reverse God in their day to day affairs. Hence it can be deduced from Hamlin's (1983:6-7) argument that Joshua told the Israelites that your success as children of God depends on how you apply the principles of God in your lives and live by them. In the same way, the success of Abraham was due to his obedience and doing the will of God.

The same message of Joshua that Christians' prosperity is contingent on their willingness to live according to his purpose was re-echoed by the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 29.11-13). In Nicholson's (1975:46) view the exhortation of Jeremiah is meant to teach the people to wait patiently on the divine purpose of God. His point is that despite their current situation, God would deliver them and give them a better future. According to Nicholson, the prophet Jeremiah stipulated in the passage that God has a plan for his chosen people. He exhorted them that the prerequisite to becoming successful is doing the will of God and waiting for his time patiently.

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares ...the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with your heart."<sup>13</sup>

## **2.2 Giving under the Dispensation of Grace – New Testament.**

Under the dispensation of grace, all forms of giving originate from God himself. Christian give to acknowledge God as their creator, gracious, merciful father and redeemer who first gave to us his begotten son (John 3.16-17) so that through him, the world can be saved.

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<sup>13</sup>(Jeremiah 29.11-13).

According to Lincoln (2005:154) the gift of God to humanity is an eternal one intended to rescue the perishing world. God the Creator loved his creation so much that he averted its destruction by sending the 'divine gift', "His only-begotten son," so that the world can be saved through him. The underlining argument here is giving. It portrays that all forms of giving started from God himself who divine gift has saved the world.

It is the "Divine gift" that set the stage for the justification of humanity. God demonstrated his love toward humankind while we were still sinners (Roman 6:23). In explaining the passage Melanchthon (1992:151) affirms that the righteousness of humankind is 'imputed' on account of Christ. This is the demonstration of divine love. In reflecting on the passage from Melanchthon's view, it shows that humanity did not contribute to their own salvation, how then can we proclaim that our gifts and offerings can earn us God's blessing?

### **2.2-1 The Widow Mite (Mark 12.41-44)**

Wicke (1992:177) on his part professes that giving is the means of expressing our humility, trust, confidence and faith in our creator. Another biblical passage which is imperative to this study is the narrative of the widow's mite.

"Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."<sup>14</sup>

In addressing this passage and its significance Wicke (1992:178) states that the central idea is more than just giving. According to him, the passage is not just about giving, but the way the offering is offered. The widow gave her offering in humble spirit, which expresses her faith and humility to God. It portrays that despite her

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<sup>14</sup>(Mark 12.41-44).

poverty, she is trusting in God for survival regardless of what she might get in return. The widow's manner of giving contrasts that of the rich who boastfully express their wealth through an offering. Once again, Jesus draws our attention to the fact that he does not look at the value of the gift but the heart and motive of the giver. Like Cain, the offering of the Rich did not find favor in the eyes of the Lord rather the poor widow.

## **2.2-2 The Second Letter to the Corinthians (8)**

Paul in some of his letters encourages the Christians of the early church to give generously from their hearts to charity and in support of the ministry. Valleskey (1992:129) points out that the key word is "giving generously". This form of giving is absent from any precondition before God. Paul urges the Christians of his time to give without any condition and string attached but with humility and sincerity.

Relating this argument back to the scenario of the Widow Wicke (1992:177) professes that our gifts are only acceptable to God if they come from hearts filled with love and trust. So the act of giving 'generously' portrays and highlights the attitude of the giver and not the gift itself. Our giving should be free of self-serving motive. In another word, we should not set any condition for giving but do so for his consolation, protection, help, strength and infinite mercy. Our gifts and offering should illustrate our thankfulness and appreciation for his glorious gift.

Paul's letter describes the grace that God gave the Macedonian churches that despite their poverty give willingly to support the ministry. Paul attributed the generosity of the Macedonians back to the reconciliatory action of God, that is, his grace. He explains that God gave them the willingness to give the little they had in support of the ministry with joy and happiness, and without pride motive or expecting any reward. Looking at the fact that the early church built its foundation on the platform by giving willingly and without expecting reward how then did some the theologians of our time equate God 's blessing on monetary giving?

“And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely, on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.”<sup>15</sup>

The question that comes to mind is that why the Macedonians live so generously when, in fact, they themselves were poor? In this regard, Valleskey (1992:135) argues that the Macedonians’ action is an inborn tendency. Which Paul attributed to the grace Christ bestowed upon them, which includes a willingness to use all that they had to further his work. As they submit themselves to Christ, they wanted to participate in this offering. Paul intended to use the example of the Macedonians to encourage the Corinthians to follow suit. The Macedonians showed that spiritual maturity leads to material generosity. As the bible is the ultimate of all Christian’s doctrines, we are to follow suit and note the central message of Paul and contextualize it to our situation that giving is the fruit of faith.

"So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning. To bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. Just as you excel in everything - in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us - see that you also excel in this grace of giving" (8:6-7). "I am not commanding you, "but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others." <sup>16</sup>

From the above passage, Valleskey (1992:136) deduces that Paul taught the Corinthians to be sincere, loving and generous and demonstrate their faith; by the way, they live. To back up his point in the text Paul stated that he was not commanding them but urges them to give voluntarily without mentioning how much to give, but should do so in proportion to their means. How then can we reconcile Paul teaching on voluntary giving to the message of some theologians of our time who proportion God’s blessings on the value of our gift and offering?

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<sup>15</sup> (2 Corinthians 8.1-4).

<sup>16</sup> (2 Corinthians 8.6-8).

In the text, Paul uses the example of Jesus, who gave his life for humanity as the bedrock of all giving, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes, he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (8:9). Paul explains that though Jesus is God, he willingly gave up his heavenly throne to save us (Philemon 2:5-8). He became a curse for us so that we might escape the curse and be blessed instead (Galatians 3:13). Because of the willingness of Christ to give his life, we share in his heavenly riches. With God paying the ultimate sacrifice in giving up his life, for our justification, we too are expected to do the same by supplanting our earthly riches for the things of God.

### **2.3-3 Charitable Giving and Hard Work - Acts 20.32**

In Paul's farewell speech to the Ephesians, he addresses another important issue on giving. He endorses diligences among them and charitable giving.

"Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs, and he needs of my companions. In everything I did; I showed you that by this kind of hard world, we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: It is more blessed to give than to receive."<sup>17</sup>

In the same way Morris (2004:106) observed in the book of Luke (3.11) that Christians are taught the virtues of loving each other by sharing with those who do not have.

Another passage that is parallel to Paul's letter on giving to the needy is Luke (6.38).

"Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> ( Acts 20.32-35)

<sup>18</sup>(Luke 6.38)

Explaining the passage above (Morris 2004:144) argues that Jesus encourages 'open heartedness' and great reward for those who help the needy. According to him, Jesus commands his followers not to forsake the act of giving. That is, if they do so, they will receive a reward in a good measure. According to Leaney (1977:138) the subject of the verb 'give' in the passage refers to God who will reward humankind for his goodness. The passage fell short to explicitly pin God blessing solely on giving to the needy. But rather promulgated that Christians should practice the biblical doctrine of loving one another.

### **2.2-4 Heavenly Riches – Matthew**

Another biblical affirmation of prosperity is found in Jesus' teaching to his disciples that humanity should first pay tribute to the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all other things will be added (Matthew 6.33). The assertion from Jesus' teaching is that humanity would enjoy the fruit of their effort if they put God first in their affairs. Tasker (1979:78) explains that prosperity from God is based on our relationship with him as a father and not condition on our human performance or good work. In this regard, Bonk (1991:98) argues that "possession and wealth are of positive value only when they promote" the will of God. A prosperity that comes from above should be used for the expansion of God's will among humanity.

### **2.2-5 Worldly Prosperity**

The encounter between Jesus and Satan (Matthew 4.10) signifies another form of prosperity that comes from Satan. In the passage, Satan asked Jesus to worship him, and he would in return give him the riches and 'splendors' of the world. One may infer from the encounter in the passage that Satan's claim of having the authority to give the "splendors or Riches" of the world to Jesus illustrates that there are indeed other forms of riches and prosperity of this world that are inherited from Satan. The author's inference from this observation is noted from Jesus' teaching that his kingdom is not of his world.

In Bonk's (1991:98) view worldly prosperity is usually associated with the mistreatment of the poor, preoccupation of self and spiritual impotence. The example of such personal affluence is the case of Zacchaeus who accumulated his wealth from cheating the poor. Similarly, Jesus explains to his disciples that it will be difficult for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. It does not mean that there is no rich man in the kingdom of God, but our worldly accumulation of wealth contradicts God purpose and will and further they cannot buy us favor from God.

In further addressing the issue of a worldly prosperity Bonk (1991: 100 -1 01) outline some features and attributes that are synonymous with the subject. Bonk argued that worldly wealth "deadens a person's own spiritual need and tends to produce a preoccupation with this world, and alienation from God." The above mentioned writer also believes that prosperity of this world tends to produce spiritual fruitlessness, which breeds covetousness and greed. Bonk paints a picture that the love of wealth usually leads humanity to betray Jesus as was in the case of Judas, who sold Jesus for the love of money. In short, prosperity defined in a human context is a repelling force to Christian's spirituality. It usually contradicts prosperity defined in biblical term, where Jesus teaches his disciples to seek heavenly or eternal riches.

### **2.3 Missiological Base of Giving**

The inclusion of mission in this study is vital because the responsibility of preaching the message comes from the mission Christ gave his disciples. The mission of the church according to Ott al (2010:3-33) is the reconciling work of God toward humanity who fell short of his glory due to transgression. According to Bowen (1998) the bedrock for spreading the message comes from Jesus' instruction to the disciples 'so I send you'. It implies that Jesus sends the disciples on a mission to spread the gospel to the world. The disciples are to preach the message of how God demonstrated (Roman 5.8) his love toward humankind while we were yet sinners.

Likewise, Ott argues that mission started in the book of Genesis when God called on Noah (Genesis. 6.12-5) to take his reconciling message to the people and ask them to build the ark. The call and sending of Noah to the people follow by the sending of numerous prophets, and eventually the coming of the Messiah signifies God's saving power in mission. According to Bosch (2005:369) the church is viewed as the 'true bearer' of mission because it has the fundamental responsibility of taking the gospel to the masses. For it has to preach the gospel about the saving grace of God.

It is thus deduced that mission in light of this study refers to the proclamation of the gospel in making more disciples for the heavenly Kingdom. Therefore, the manner in which the message is disseminated to the masses needs an attention at all time. The way Prosperity Gospel tends to proclaim the message portrays a different picture from the original message. Theologians of Prosperity Gospel preach that God would bless and give Christians wealth and good health through giving.

### **2.3-1 Justification and the 'Paradigm shift of the Message of the Church'.**

In relation to the message of the church Pfeiffer ( 1908:54) argues that it should focus on the gospel that salvation is free, and that redemption from sin is accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ. That is the main focus of the message should be within the context of Jesus' instructions. A shift from preaching the truth message led Luther to argue against the practice of indulgences, which concurred with the statement of Pfeiffer that the gospel is meant to proclaim the redemptive work of Christ to the world and not to be sold.

Pfeiffer (1908:67-78) notes that the heart and soul of all forms of Christians preaching must aim at proclaiming the gospel about the gracious, merciful and the reconciliation work of God. Moreover, he asserts that the primary aim of the gospel is not to improve the temporal, Social, political and economic conditions of humanity but to transform humanity to virtues and good deeds that are profitable for all things,

having the promise of his life that is now and of that which is to come (Pfeifer 1908: 68).

This view brings us to light about how the 'Paradigm' of the message has shifted from being Christos-centric to the paradigm of having the solution to all human problems through giving (Alcorn 1984:116-117). One wishes to argue that if Pfeifer argument is indeed the fundamental teaching of the gospel, why then did the message of our time take a drastic shift from proclaiming the good will, goodness and grace of Christ to portraying him as the one who trade with humankind. The point of argument here is that Prosperity Gospel preachers in Africa tend to claim that through giving the temporal, social, political and economic conditions of humankind would be solved. Was the gospel meant to preach prosperity to the masses, or does God want everyone to be rich?

### **2.3-2 Justification**

The concept of justification which is the theoretical framework of this study strengthens the argument of Pfeiffer (1908) that salvation, blessings, kindness and mercy are the gracious way of God. Iwand (2008:14-15) summarized Luther's argument in justification that answered the question on faith and work, law and gospel, sin and grace. It is the concept upon which the existence of the church depends. Justification is the act of God by which he declares the world innocent, free and just for the sake of the birth, suffering, death and resurrection of Christ (Lucker 1954:543).

One fascinating period in the history of the church that is relevant to this study is the 15th century, the time in which it was engaged in selling of indulgences and releasing people from purgatory. During this period (Lucker 1954: 504-507) the issue of expressing one's sorrow or sin to avert God's wrath was replaced by the sale of indulgences. Indulgences were intended to remove God's temporal punishment which confession and absolution would not remove (Lund 2002: 3-5).

Indulgences involve the sale of a piece of a document which is believed to have authority to remove or forgive an individual of a sin committed which absolution and confession cannot remove. This practice led Luther to write his 95 theses in which he argues against the practices that human good works cannot earn us God's grace and forgiveness (Dude 2002:11-13). According to Kinder (1954: 507) Luther's argument against the indulgences was about defending truth gospel that was tainted by human practices.

It can be explained from Luther's view that humankind through his natural condition, thoughts, words and deeds is a transgressor of the law of God; subject to the divine wrath and condemnation and eternal death. But instead of condemning humanity for our sinful actions God appeased His own wrath through justification by sacrificing Christ as His lamb (John 1:29).

Luther's argument that the justification or righteousness of God is given to humanity through the Gospel strengthens Iwand (2000:14-15) perception that justification is the biblical doctrine upon which the church can stand or fall. This means that the church will continue to stand if it continues to preach the true gospel without misinterpretation or manipulation to suit human understanding.

One could argue that (Lucker 1954: 548) justification is entirely the gracious will of God without human merit, thus any Gospel that point or equate God's blessing to human deeds or action is questionable. If God put humanity right with Himself through the "divine gift and transforming power" (McGrath 1988:27), why should he as a gracious God bless them today as per what we give as portrayed by faith preachers<sup>19</sup>?

### **2.3-3 Missiological Challenges of the Church**

The 'paradigm shift' of preaching a gospel that differs from the core teaching of the church present a challenge that has the propensity of distorting its beliefs and entire

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<sup>19</sup>Other name of prosperity gospel preacher.

messages. At this juncture, it is prudent to examine some of the challenges the church has encountered in relation to its message and their implications. These implications will guide Christians against any false doctrine and teaching. If the issue of Prosperity Gospel is not examining into carefully it has a predisposition of ruining its message.

As the church spreads from Jerusalem where believers first gathered after the ascension of Christ to other parts of the world, different forms of gospel started to emerge within its fold. This emergence poses a serious threat to its fundamental teaching. To curtail and combat these misleading teachings John writes:

“I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue with the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them. Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work.”<sup>20</sup>

John’s aim in this regard is to establish that Christian should be ethical of their surroundings, especially the nature of the message they listen to, because it has the tendency of destroying their faith and their history. This earlier alarm bell by John is meant to bring into question the contrast, the style and manner in which the gospel is propagated globally.

Relating John’s warning to this study, Luther’s theory of justification is then the resounding bell and exposition that all forms of preaching must be Christos-centric (Christ centered). The medieval church described the preachers of such unacceptable gospel as heretics. Whose teaching and gospel the church view as diverting, that is preaching a theological message which is not in conformity with the divine mystery revealed in Christ (Pillar, Hofmeyr 1991:19).

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<sup>20</sup>(2 John 7.11).

Some of these well-known movements that threaten the integrity and the teaching of the church according to Pillay and Hofmeyr were the Gnostic, Mercian and Motanism. In response to the teaching and preaching of these movements, the church took an apostolic and confessional approach; an approach where a writer, like Tertullian (Pillay, Hofmeyr 1991:54-55) wrote to defend the true gospel that is grounded in Christ. In the same way, the church of today has to take a unifying stand against heresy of our time.

In the confessional approach, Christians were taught to recite the apostle's creed and prayers. Examples, of these are the apostolic and Athanasius creeds. The author is not making an assertion that the only reason for which these documents were written was solely due to heresy. But he wishes to articulate that heresy was one of the contributing factors.

Another significant period that's worth studying in regard to human interpretation in the gospel is the 3rd century, in which the church was engulfed in divisions based on theological differences. Frend (1984:616-63) puts it that the church was divided into two major blocks, the Eastern block and the Western block due to the theological explanation of the deity of Christ. The author wishes to use this story to show how misinterpretation of the gospel can mislead and create division within the church of God.

The essence of mapping the Missiological challenges of the church in relation to its message is that the author wishes to argue that despite the church vigilant approach to combat heresy and other false gospel ruminants of the Gnostic still exist today.

The author wishes to draw the attention that the emergence of Prosperity Gospel is another challenging period for the church. The point here is that over time, human interpretation of the scripture created controversy in the church and threatens its message, and created division (Eastern and Western body between them). Hence in our time what is the threat of this give and be blessed gospel tend to pose to the general doctrine of the scripture?

## 2.4 Conclusion

This chapter attempts to establish the biblical foundation of giving and prosperity. It is discovered that giving evolved from the “Divine gift”, Lincoln (2000:154) of God. It can be said that due to the grace conferred on humankind and the saving works of Jesus, God gave Christians the ability to give as an appreciation to his gracious will and love. According to Valleskey (1992: 135) Paul affirmed that all forms of giving originate from God, because of his grace the Macedonians Christians could give.

In the foregoing discussion and arguments, it emerged that indeed there passages in the bible that legitimately describe or talk about God’s blessing on humanity for giving but the point of contention in this study is that does God solely base his blessing on giving as perceived or proclaim by some theologians of our time? Is giving the only yardstick of earning God’s favor? In addressing the issue of giving Jesus taught his disciples that giving must be done with some form of secrecy and humble spirit, (Matthew 6:4). Tasker (1979:70-72) interprets the passage that God can reward giver whose giving is done to the glorification of the father and of himself. According to him, God sees the inner ‘recesses’ of our heart and of such, we need not to show off in our giving but with some form of secrecy. When our giving is done in secret, ‘our father who sees in secret shall reward thee openly’. The passage also explains that if Christians give to please humanity, then their reward will not be eternal. It points to the fact that Christian giving should seek heavenly or eternal reward than temporal.

The messages of charitable giving in the two testaments do not differ. Both testaments teach that whoever shares with the needy or poor would have a reward in heaven. Wicke (1992:144) explains that the reward refers to the grace God has given humanity. Thus, one’s treasure for living out the faith is in heaven.

In analyzing these passages one could not uncover the claim that we can earn God’s blessings in the form of material riches merely on giving. However, it rather

discovered the golden principle of life "that do unto others what you want them to do unto you."

In view of this study, it is inferred that Christian giving constitutes the following:

- Christians give to appreciate and glorified God. In giving they acknowledge God as the provider of all their needs (Westermann 1984:296).
- Giving is an expression of Christian's faithfulness to God. Through giving Christians express their loyalty to God as their creator and father (Olford 2000:50).
- Giving is voluntary and done with a willing, sincere and generous heart. Christians should give willingly from their hearts without being mandated to do so. Giving is discretionary to the giver (Exodus 25.1-2).
- The most important gift is for Christians to offer themselves to God and live an upright life before him.
- God teaches Christians to be sensitive to the needs of the needy and the weak (Hamlin 1995:101-102).

Prosperity, on the other hand, is the fruit of living according to the purpose and the will of God. It is also established that people who want to get rich often fall into temptation (Platt 2010:124-125) and the trap of the devil. Hence we must first seek heavenly things, for godliness and contentment is a great gain." The author is not making the judgment that riches are bad, but human definition and the pursuit of wealth above the will of God makes it ungodly (Bonk 1991:90-100). In short for our earthly riches or wealth to have meaning in the sight of God, we ought to live according to his purpose and will, like Abraham and other men of God. Wealth according to Ellul (1984:36-43) is the result of our righteousness and living upright life with God. He further argues that our riches as Christians are not limited to only material things but also of things unseen.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. HISTORY OF PROSPERITY GOSPEL

“We define a Prosperity Gospel as the teaching that believers have the right to the blessings of health and wealth, and that they can obtain these blessings through positive confessions of faith and the ‘sowing of seeds’ through financial or material gifts.”<sup>21</sup>

Horton on his part (1990:28) argues that a prosperity gospel is the modern gospel that is ‘marketed to ‘consumers’ and not proclaim to penitent sinners. Concurrent to Horton’s argument is Stott’s (1984:226-227) observation that the movement preaches that God has empowered them to help believers get out of liability and meet their financial needs. It is proclaimed that it’s the will of God that people should prosper so they can give abundantly in spreading the gospel.

They use scriptures to teach that believers can have whatever material goods they want, such as a luxury home, cars and live a wealthy life. They preach that all will be well with believers, as long as they fulfill God’s purpose in giving; God will open the ‘floodgate of abundance’ into their lives, as long you believe that your seed will grow into multiple blessing from God (Prosper 2012:8-10) .

They interpret the support of God ministry in a way that in order for the Great Commission to be accomplished, Christians must take over all the wealth of the world, because God wants everyone to prosper so that his word can spread to every corner of the world (Stott 1984:226). These preachers teach believers that the living God is not poor, for he owns the entire universe and all the splendour in it. Therefore, it is his wish that all his children enjoy the luxury of this world and inherit it (Prosper 2012:7-12).

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<sup>21</sup> (Lausanne Movement <http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/home/prosperity-gospel> Accessed 2012- 08- 02).

### **3.1 Prominent Figures of the Movement**

To better understand Prosperity gospel and its ideology, the study of its history and origin is unavoidable. In this case many writers have different versions of prosperity gospel.

In assessing the origin of the movement theologians like Coleman, Horn, Asamoah, Ceaser, Hollenweger and others traced the root of the movement to Pentecostals such as Charles Parham, William Seymour, and Oral Roberts. The brief history below explains the birth of the movement.

#### **3.1-1 William Seymour & Charles Fox Parham**

According to Ceser al et (2000:6) the movement started on 312 Azusa Street by Seymour and Parham in 1901 and 1906 respectively. It was after Seymour was excommunicated from the Church of Nazarene for claiming that God has a third blessing for humanity, 'the baptism of the holy spirit'. Ceser al et further argue that the movement started due to the doctrinal differences that existed between the two pastors at the time due to their racial background. According to Seymour (Hollenweger al et 1999:46-7) God empowered him to bridge the racial gap and integrate Christians of different races, white and black as one.

#### **3.1-2 Oral Roberts**

In citing Harrell<sup>22</sup>, Horn (1989:6-7) believes that Oral Roberts is undoubtedly the Pentecostalist, who laid the foundation for the faith movement. In his healing ministry, Roberts urges his followers to 'release' their faith in order to receive God's healing. In Horn's perception, Roberts is the first faith preacher who formularized the teaching of the movement by writing a book called "God's formula for healing." Horn writes:

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<sup>22</sup><sub>23</sub> (Harerrell 1985:450-58, 1975:83-88)

“Granville Oral Roberts (January 24, 1918 – December 15, 2009) was an American Pentecostal televangelist and a Christian charismatic. He founded the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and Oral Roberts University. As one of the most well-known and controversial religious leaders of the 20th century, Roberts' ministries reached millions of followers worldwide spanning a period of over six decades. His healing ministry and bringing American Pentecostalism into the mainstream had the most impact, but he also pioneered TV evangelism and laid the foundations of the Prosperity gospel and abundant life teachings. Oral Roberts began teaching prosperity theology in 1947. In the 1950s; Roberts began a fundraiser for his ministry, which promised that donors would receive the money that they donated to him back from an unexpected source. He offered to return any donation that did not lead to an equivalent blessing of the donor.”<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, Coleman (2000: 40-47) concurred with Horn's argument and recounted the account of Barron, who stated that Oral Roberts discovered 3 John 2 'with its message that you will prosper and be in good health as your soul prospers' (Barron 1987:62-3). Coleman further explains that Oral Roberts created “blessing path” whereby he promised subscribers an incredible financial breakthrough within a year. Oral's “seed faith concept,” claims that God replaced tithing with “the give and be blessed” phenomenon. Coleman (2000:41-44) also argues that Oral Roberts professes that if “one sow it,” then “God will grow it.” The movement preaches economic success as a blessing from God for being proactive in giving generously to the ministry.

Jones and Woodbridge (2011:27) on their part argue that the movement originates from the “New thought movement,” in 1855. This movement professes that confession, and positive thought can lead an individual to the realization of his thought and dream. They coined that the movement's main philosophy is that through right thinking one's believe may be brought into actualization (2011:27) or reality. The writers' argument is that if Christians have positive thought about their lives and become optimistic about situations around them; it can easily motivate them in bringing their dream into reality.

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<sup>23</sup> (Harerrell 1985:450)

In relating this argument to the study one can discern the recurring elements of Prosperity gospel that speaking the right words, invoking a universal law of success with words and having faith, can lead to prosperity. According to Horton (1990:128) Oral Robert claimed that God gave Christians the authority to decree or declare whatever they want.

Oral Robert (Horton 1990:126-128) taught that the prerequisite of bringing this authority into reality requires payment of a certain amount to a particular ministry. In quoting Robert, Horton writes, "God has given us the authority over sickness, disease, storms, finances and successes. But to exercise this authority, 'you give me a check, and I will in turn agree with you what decree that is appropriate."

Hence it can be said that if Christians give and believe in their offerings, it can serve as a seed that God can germinate on their behalf. It is argued from Horton's standpoint that proponents of this movement have a heavy influence on prosperity preachers of today.

In another version, Westlund (2009:1-2) believes that for one to better understand the history of Prosperity gospel, it is significant or important to briefly look at the background of Pentecostalism. To buttress his argument, he noted that prosperity gospel is another form of Pentecostalism.

Asamoah (2005:12) on his part defines the movement as " a Christian group that emphasizes salvation in Christ as a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit in which pneumatic phenomena, including speaking in tongues, prophecies, visions, healings, and miracle in general, are perceived as standing in historical continuity with the experience of the early church as found especially in the Acts of the Apostles, are sought, accepted values and encourage members as signifying the presence of God and experience of his Spirit" (2005: 11-12).

Concurrent with Asamoah's definition is the view of Westlund (2009:1) that the movement is primarily concerned with the working of the Holy Spirit and the practice

of spiritual gifts. This means that the movement claimed to portray the traditional mode of worship and practice as exhibited by the early Christians.

### **3.1-3 Kenneth Haggin**

According to Coleman (2000:29) Haggin is another figure that contributed to the foundation and expansion of the movement. Haggin dedicated his life to Jesus for healing him after a long illness during childhood. Haggin claimed (2000:29) that he received the divine visitation of God ‘telling him that not only faith can move mountains but also prayer’ (CF Mark 11.23-4) ‘could help attain his desires.’ Coleman stresses that it is Haggin, who changed the old Pentecostal style of worship to a ‘legalistic, separatist’s expression of faith. Coleman noted that the main legacy of Haggin to the movement is the establishment of training institutions the serves as a education ‘ground’ for many preachers who rapidly spread the teaching of the movement globally.

### **3.1-4 A A Allen**

Another person who turns the healing ministry into a fundraising mechanism is A A Allen (Horns 1989:34-35, (Harrell 1975: 74f)) at a revival. Horns argues that Allen viewed prosperity not as part of God blessing to all believers, but as a charismatic gift given to him to bestow upon his followers. In citing Harrell<sup>24</sup>, Horns (1989:34) explains that Allen announced that he received ‘a new anointing and a new power to lay hands on the believers who gave \$100 toward the support of his outreach and bestow upon each of them the power to get wealth’. This history is significant because it traced how the fundraising practice in faith churches is an ongoing process from the past. Horns further pointed out that Allen taught believers that not all Christians have the gift to bestow ‘the power to get wealth’; he predicted that God will use other ‘powerful’ Christians to bestow riches on believers.

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<sup>24</sup> (Harrell 1975:200)

### **3.1-5 T L Osborn**

Another character who is of much interest is T L Osborn whose theology does not defer from his predecessors but is placed in another class in terms of lifestyle. According to Horns (1989:40) Osborn's lifestyle greatly contrasts his predecessors who lived a humble and simple life, whilst he (Osborn) has a taste for luxury and flamboyancy. He was often criticized for his wasteful lifestyle. Jimmy Swaggart is another faith preacher who continues the television evangelism of Pat Robertson and changed the dimension of how the gospel is being disseminated globally to millions around the world today.

### **3.6 Early Pentecostalism in Africa**

Westerlund (2009:5) traced early Pentecostalism in Africa to its formation period in 1906. After the Azusa revival, missionaries were sent around the globe; noticeably, Brazil, Africa and other places. The first Pentecostal missionaries on the continent were sent to Liberia and later to South Africa in the same year. According to Westerlund, it is the effort of African preachers that spread the denomination on the continent.

According to Jones et al (1975: 20-22) Harris Wade was instrumental in spreading Pentecostalism in the Sub-Sahara region of Africa. The denomination rapidly developed due to the inculturation of its theology in Africa. Westerlund (2009:5) argues that due to the spiritual gifts, mainly the spiritual and prophetic healing many preachers took the pragmatic approach in interpreting and integrating features of the religion as continuations of African beliefs and practices.

The indigenization of this type of Christianity was facilitated by its cultural adaptability and ability to become localized and part with the western theology that was deemed not suitable for the continent and its people. The resentment was fuelled by the slave trade, colonial rule, and other forms of suppression of the black race at that time. Harris Wade spread the theology mainly along the coastal lines of

Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Ghana, using the gift of the Holy Spirit in casting out demons, healing the sick, casting away witchcrafts and liberating believers from the bondage of evil forces. Thus, linking the formation of Pentecostalism to Seymour and the rapid spread of the theology on the continent in the twenty-first century is not new to the people of Africa.

### **3.7 Pentecostal Theology**

Pentecostalism according to Westerlund (2009:1) is a renewal movement within Christianity that places special emphasis on a direct personal experience with God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The term Pentecostal is derived from Pentecost, the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks that is related to the Passover of the Jews. For Christians, this event celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the followers of Jesus Christ, as described in the second chapter of the Book of Acts (Coleman 2000:20-21).

In describing the theology of Pentecostalism Jenkins (2006:12) argues that the movement mostly emphasizes on a prophetic, inspired and mystical teaching, and often applied a prophetic exegesis to a scriptural text. In every scripture, the movement tends to attach prophetic meaning and interpretation. In this case, it is believed that to every phenomenon, there are a spiritual meaning and interpretation.

Prosperity gospel (Jenkins 2006:90-97) which is a segment of Pentecostalism has a presupposition that financial blessing is the will of God for all Christians, which can be earned through faith, positive thought and confession, and donations to Christian ministries will always increase one's material wealth.

According to Jenkins (2006:90-93) this doctrine is grounded in the interpretation of biblical text like Malachi, 2 John, Psalm 91, Galatians, Mark, and many others. The movement views the Bible as a contract between God and humankind and that God would only deliver on his promises if humanity has faith in him.

Confessing these promises to be true is perceived as an act of faith, which God will honor. As a contract God promises to give prosperity to believers who live by pouring out their faith.

### **3.8 Contextualization and Syncretism**

In order to gain the heart and minds of the African society the movement tends to proclaim its message in the African setting. It tends to contextualize its message to suit the African audiences and in so doing, it integrates some elements of the African traditional religion. According to Pretorius et al (1996:141) contextualization is the application of the gospel in a specific context in order to make relevant for that context.

Prior to the coming of Christianity to the continent, there was an African Traditional Religion (Pretorius 1996: 115-123). In this religion, Africans mostly pay homage to their ancestors through the priest, diviner, healer and many others. Misfortune, disasters and all negativities in life are attributed to 'magical forces,' (Pretorius 1996: 115-122). The religion is used as the tool for divination replacing the arsenal of traditional oracles (Jenkins2006:37).

In the African traditional religion to appease the wrath of the Supreme Being or cleanse a person from evil attack an offering is required. These practices are rampant today among the faith movements in which the bible is regarded as a sacred object with inherent power that can defeat evil power and spirit. Jenkins (2006:35-37) further points out that the movement draws evaluation between a biblical text and passages that talk about evil spirits and principalities of dark forces that are sources of constant fear in the African societies.

Prosperity gospel preachers claim to have the ammunitions and spiritual tools that can intervene to protect and deliver believers from these attacks (Jenkins 2006:37, 104-106).

According to Jenkins (2006:105) these Preachers often claim that ‘the spirit and anointing of the Lord is upon them to preach the gospel to the poor, heal the broken hearted, restore the sight of the blind and set the captive free’. He further argues that the claimed deliverance is often linked to ‘political and social liberation’ (2006:13).

The claim of having a solution to the social and economic problem tends to claim the attention of the people. Moreover, Jenkins (2006:106) noted that prayer in Prosperity gospel is neither a ‘meditation nor a cultivation of character, but often seen as a warfare with demons, enemies and witchcraft. In short in order to gain relevancy in the eyes of the people the movement has devised means of conveying its message in the African context.

### **3.8.1 Proliferation of Prosperity Gospel within the African context**

There are many contexts and factors that contribute to the proliferation or rapid growth of prosperity gospel in Africa. Nevertheless, for the scope of the research, the study closely examined Poverty, Reciprocity, Consumerism, Utilitarianism and Globalization. The factors were analyzed in the African context as cultural and social elements. The cultural factors constitute practices or the way of life of the African people that ‘give way’ to the rapid growth or expansion of the movement on the continent. While as the social factors in this study refer to the facts and experience of the African people that influenced the acceptance of prosperity gospel on the large scale.

#### **3.8.1-1 Utilitarianism**

According to Naaeke (2010:17) African Traditional Religion usually associates every phenomenon in the life of an individual to holiness that is something only happens as the outcome of a particular choice or action. The religion holds the view that actions are right in as much, they tend to promote happiness, and consider wrong if their consequences bring about pain for erroneous doing (1989:140-141). For

instant the ancestors of African usually punished members of the society for wrong doing but reward them for their good deeds (Gehman 1989:152-54).

That is, if an individual or community pleases the Supreme Being, wealth, happiness, health, and the progress of the society is sure. Vice versa, there are dire consequences if religious man or community goes against the will of the supernatural. This argument buttressed Guma and Milton's (1997:65-67) observation that the blessing and happiness in human lives are not instantaneous but are the outcome from choices and decision.

The religion professes that every phenomenon tends to produce a given result as either good or bad. It teaches that the success of an individual or community depends on human relationship with the supernatural powers (Mbiti 1975:54). This religious idea of African has always taken its orientation in the figure of their ancestors. The Ancestors kindle and direct the affairs of the people. It can be argued that this historical religion of the African people has helped to shape their perception about God.

This practice brings to focus the theory of Utilitarianism, according to which happiness and pains are evoked by choice or action taken by human beings. Utilitarianism is a normative ethical theory that places the locus of right and wrong solely on the outcomes (consequences) of choosing one action or policy over other actions or policies (Black 2006:1). Against the background of this argument, it is easy to mark out the similarities between the practice of African traditional religion and prosperity gospel.

These religious practices pinned the blessing on humankind from the Supreme Being in the performance of religious rites and choices. Humanity can only be blessed base on the merit of his actions or choices. An open invitation is extended daily to Africans to bring their fear and anxieties about witches, sorcerers, bad luck, poverty, illness and all kinds of misfortunes to the Supreme Being (Mbiti 1975:55-

56). These problems can only solve if the believer performs the prescribed rite of either 'sowing seed' or offering sacrifice to the ancestors.

In prosperity gospel Christians who take the decision to give are sure of God's blessings or happiness. Giving is depicted as a means of enjoying happiness. The merging or reconciliatory effect between these religions 'gives ground' to the rapid growth of prosperity gospel within the African context.

### **3.8.1-2 Materialism and the Bible**

The practice of interpreting or replacing biblical values with our human understanding and culture is rooted in our desire and aspiration to meet our material needs. Pretorius et al (1996:68) point out that the human belief in which the pursuit of happiness, joy, comfort and meaning of life are attributed to material things is called materialism. This approach regards the material world as the world of reality.

In its central message Prosperity, gospel preaches that Christians are entitled to well-being and because physical and spiritual realities are seen as inseparable reality, wealth is interpreted as a blessing from God, obtained through spirituality. In this scenario, it is believed that all material wealth comes from God as a fulfillment of his promise to humankind (Coleman 2000:32).The relationship with the Supreme Being is based on the platform of 'give and take'. Outward conformity to these principles is required from God's people. Christian giving is regarded as the medium through which God will open the floodgate and make humanity, especially faithful believers who live in accordance with these principles, wealthy.

This concept of defining the presence of the Supreme Being in terms of human desire in the material world is parallel to Eliade's concept of Hierophany. In this concept Eliade (1987:11) explains that over time, humanity has defined or associated the presence of the 'Sacred' with physical objects.

Hence in his view Hierophany is the physical manifestation of the Sacred among humanity. In the materialistic world as it is in the case of Prosperity gospel the 'physical manifestation' of God is associated with tremendous wealth and influential life. In order for humankind to experience the presence of God, the movement holds the view that one must give persistently without ceasing.

### **3.8.1-3 Reciprocity**

The African accustomed religion underpins the way of life of the African people prior to the coming of Christianity on the continent (Kruger et al 2009:34-35). In the African Traditional Religion, the practice of reciprocity offering or giving was predominant among the people. The people mostly give or offered sacrifices to their Ancestors with the intention of receiving their blessing, protection, and guidance in return (Mbiti 1975:57).

The African society is replete with accounts of various forms of reciprocity giving to their ancestors. Communities or individual families could offer sacrifices for plentiful harvest (wealth), abundant rainfall, for children, good health and many more. It is believed that individual or communal blessings from the ancestors are subject to the sacrifices made to the living-dead (Gehman 1989: 143).

Historians account that the life of African in African traditional religion is characterized by giving to the living dead as obligations (Mbiti 1975:51-57). The ancestors are regarded as elders of the family, who are shown respect and hospitality as a matter of course for customary household rite. These rites include; giving a pinch of snuff, a swallow of beer, a whiff of pipe smoke, portion spittle, a taste of food, and libation and many more (Parrinder 1969:72-74).

Since the living-dead complains easily when ignored, their present is continually acknowledged in every part of daily life. Periodic offering in remembrance of the living-dead occurs at significant points in the cycle of African, especially at child birth marriage, sickness, and death. The living doing these occasions water is sometimes

blown out of the mouth, accompany by requests to the ancestral spirit. Beer is poured on the ground as a libation or offering in a private family gathering as a Thanksgiving or sacrifice for a blessing from the living-dead.

Like prosperity gospel, the examples mentioned show clear similarities that both ideologies equate blessing on human effort that is rooted in giving or offering of sacrifices. Pastors often attribute success to the grace of God received through giving. Prosperity gospel churches in Africa are overwhelmed by the preaching of material comfort which preachers believed can be earned through giving and sowing of seed.

These preachers hold the views that believers can receive economic empowerment through divine intervention. Thus, prosperity gospel is growing fast on the continent due to the similarities of its message to some of the cultural practices mentioned herein.

### **3.8.1-4 Poverty**

In this study poverty refers to the social hardship typified by the absence of social services and poor standard of living (O'Connor 1991:1). In some cases, poverty can be attributed to exclusion, deprivation, oppression, domination and alienation of certain individuals or group (O'Connor 1991:6). In Africa, where a majority of the population lives on one dollar a day, churches promoting the practical benefits of religion are filled (Jenkins 2006:91,95) .

In some instances, the ineffectiveness of the state to provide basic services, prosperity theology is then seen as a true liberation. The congregants and believers in these areas look up to their spiritual leaders and the church as a 'billow of hope', (Coleman 2000:36).

World Bank reports indicated that more than 2/3 of the population in Sub-Sahara Africa lived below two dollars a day and thus lives in impoverished communities. The

majority of the inhabitants in these areas are trapped in absolute poverty: condition of life characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality and low life expectancy.

Thus, prosperity gospel's claims of having a solution to these human problems stimulate both the reason and emotion of believers who look up to them as 'divine supplier' of jobs, houses, and successes in life (Coleman 2000: 27). This affirmation is many times repeated in Christian gatherings, where preachers portray themselves as the champion of the poor. They make believers to believe that through their preaching and prophecy, the Lord would descend the heavens and brings to an end the misery of faithful Christians.

The poor communities, while struggling to survive in the mist of numerous challenges they are 'showered' with messages exhorting them to plant a seed of faith which God would germinate and help them reap an unimaginable harvest of abundant wealth (Folarin 2007:83; Robison 2003; Sarles 1986:333). In worldview every individual wants to be wealthy and live a dream life.

As a result of the "gospel of wealth" extending a tremendous promise to an economically deprived person, it has pierced "the heart of Africa's dynamic, growing church" (Phiri & Maxwell 2007). This 'health and wealth' gospel is therefore expanding due to its seductive and delusive message of promising wealth and health Christians. These unrealistic claims catch the attention of many Africans whose dream is to live a better life like any other normal human being in other parts of the world.

### **3.8.1-5 Globalization**

Globalization in this study refers to the transnational religious movement (Coleman 2000:50); sometimes called Neo Pentecostalism whose elements of belief and practice transformed the religious practices in Africa. In Citing Marsden (1991:78) Coleman (Coleman 2000:22) argues that David Du Plessis of South Africa played an

influential role in diffusing the charismatic faith and style of worship to Africa and other part of the world.

Moreover, to interact and integrate its belief among the people the contemporary media are used as a mode of communication. The Christian Broadcasting Network by Pat Robertson (Coleman 2000:29), Tele-evangelical Healing by Oral Roberts, and Television Ministry by Jim Swaggart and Tammy Baker led the transnational network of Christians, comprising of congregations, networks, fellowships, and mega churches across the globe, including Africa (Coleman 2000: 23).

This global denominational affiliation has influenced the African Christians way of worship and perception (Coleman 2000:13). For instant, some of the charismatic churches in Africa hold membership of the International Communion of Charismatic churches, the Charismatic Bible Ministries and the International Convention of faith ministry, making it easier for the African preachers to adopt the mode of worship from other parts of the world. Prosperity gospel is an evident to these interconnections.

This argument is substantiated from Platt's observation that prosperity gospel has its root in the American dream. A dream that pursues materialism as a fundamental source of happiness. Furthermore, the media theology also helps to disseminate its messages to the people across the globe. The media theology broadcast its preaching that God wants all Christians to be rich and lives a wonderful and trouble-free life (Coleman 2000:56).

The global affiliation also helps to boost the morale of local African preachers who enjoy the visibility of their presence in the media to enhance their prestige and authority by legitimizing their claims and status as prophets sent by God to bestow blessings upon his people (Coleman 2000:58).

In the global context, they are portrayed or introduced to congregants as 'Men of God', who traveled extensively to other parts of the world to preach, heal and

perform miracles. "The spiritual import here is that each of the pastors lay claim to the command in mission conferred by Christ during their calling into the ministry." These arguments underscore the reasons why prosperity gospel is undoubtedly embraced on the continent. African Charismatic Christians believe their religious practices are in conformity with other denominations around the globe (Coleman 2000:35).

### **3.8.1-6 Consumerism**

This section highlights the concept of consumerism as relate to the study. Consumerism in the broader sense refers to the preoccupation and an inclination toward the buying of consumer goods and services, not as a necessity but for their 'fashion'. The term is a multi-meaning word but the study only focuses on the theological implication of the concept. From the theological perspective, it is regarded as an "excessive, even pathological preoccupation with consumption," that is buyers are so obsessed with acquiring consumer goods at an unsatisfactory pace (Kolb 2010:21). In other words, consumers' taste of consumption is very high. They have the taste of wanting every fashionable and luxury now.

In this regard, Kolb argues that in the modern world the human culture of consumerism has affected, the way humanity understands and sees God. According to him (Kolb 2010:19) consumerism is the 'material manifestation of trying to satisfy our innate desire for satisfaction by desiring created things rather than the author. In his opinion Christians in the 'consumer world' seek to own and possess things of the world rather than 'first seeking the kingdom of God' as commanded by Jesus as the means of having a healthy relationship with God and inheriting the goodness of the kingdom.

The obsession with created or material things causes an imbalance between the way humanity relates or understands God from the biblical standpoint to the human way of life. According to Alcorn (1984:65) scriptures allude to the pathologies that

people who pursue wealth at the expense of Christian norms and teaching often fall into temptation and a trap that ruins their spiritual life. He (Alcorn 1984:54-55) further argues that wealth pervades scripture. He buttressed this argument by citing the following biblical examples. Achan's lust for wealth brought death to him, his family and his men at war (CF Joshua 7), Delilah's betrayal of Samson to the Philistines for wealth, (Judges 16), Solomon's mass accumulation of wealth led to social vices (Deut. 17.16-17).

Believers are made to believe the advertising tricks that the goodies of this world will satisfy their soul. Consumerism is an impatient spirit that is never content with any particular material thing.

This taste of wanting more lures more people to the charismatic theology that promises abundant wealth to faithful believers.

### **3.9 Characteristics of Prosperity Gospel:**

The going arguments bring to focus some general signs and features that are common to the movement. These characteristics are recognizable signs of the movement which one can easily recognize in almost all the Prosperity gospel movements around the globe. Hence these characteristics include spirituality, healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues, prayers and personal commitment to God, material prosperity and good health (Coleman 2000:28).

#### **3.9-1 Spirituality**

In discussing prosperity gospel or Pentecostalism in the global arena an attempt is made to construct an interpretation of what the movement believes to be spiritual or holy. The term spirituality in Prosperity gospel according to Land (2003:13) is an integration of beliefs and practices in the affections which are themselves evoked and expressed by those beliefs and practices.

It can thus be construed from Land's argument that spirituality in Prosperity gospel involves expressing one's faith and belief practically. The point here is that an individual or the corporate body of the church is required to outwardly show or demonstrate the working of the Holy Spirit daily. This outward demonstration involves the development of one's gift through the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Land (2003:23) further explains that spirituality in Pentecostalism refers to righteousness, holiness, and the power of God. To be regarded as a spiritual person one must live a life that is supernatural or extraordinary. The spiritual person in this case is a person who lives a life beyond reproach and seen as a righteous and upright individual in the community.

According to him (Land 2003:183) spirituality is 'Christ-centric' because Christ saves, sanctifies, heals and baptizes with the Holy Spirit. The fundamental argument is that the movement believes that "God continues to work through the supernatural means in the church."<sup>25</sup>

The marks of spirituality according to Prosperity gospel preachers involve fasting, speaking in tongues, rising of hands during worship services as an expression of emotional attitude as either joy, sorrow, and with the confidence of being comforted by the Holy Spirit. This argument is also observed in Asamoah's (2005:7) view that spirituality in Pentecostalism entails the way indigenous Pentecostals express or live out their faith.

### **3.9-2 Miraculous Healing**

Miraculous healing (Coleman2000:23-68) also forms an integral part of Prosperity gospel. It is believed that through the working of the Holy Spirit God would reward the faithful with spiritual and physical healing. This form of healing encompasses all miraculous healing from physical illness, spiritual attack, social and political

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<sup>25</sup> ([www.aps.edu.ae/images](http://www.aps.edu.ae/images), accessed 2012.06.28)

problems and economic empowerment through a spiritual provision of jobs (Jenkins 2006:13,113-124).

Asamoah (2005:13) asserts that most often members of this movement recount their healing experience in gathering to portray Christ as a Savior that listens to the plight of the faithful.

Another term that is interchangeably used with healing in Prosperity gospel churches is deliverance. In this case, unforeseen circumstances that tend to hinder one's progress in life are linked to evil forces that lead to deliverance or healing. Explaining the concept of good and evil, Jenkins's (2006.08) explains that in the African society, believers are made to believe that God would deliver them from all terror and heal them of all diseases.

Spiritual healing and deliverance according to him (2006:104) are grounded in the interpretation of the letter to the Ephesians; "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (CF Ephesians 6.12). He further stated that owing to this passage, and many other passages in the Bible believers are made to leave medical facilities in the event where there is a need for medical care with the fear that they will be portrayed as lack of faith.

It is also noted that the claimed healing process is not verified and tested to ascertain its reliability, and it is noticeably done on a selective basis. This opinion is shared by Dlodla (2013, Sunday Times March; Miracles will Shower Down) who recently observed that among the thousands of disable, sick and blind who entered the Orlando Pirate stadium to be healed by Pastor Chris only a few was selected and usher to the pulpit to be healed. As a flashback, it is worth mentioning that my mother suffered a similar fate when her faith of being healed never actualizes despite having the hope and faith that God would heal her through the prophet.

In summary, healing process (Coleman 2000:23-65) involves an exchange whereby believers who donate to God can be healed of all spiritual and physical problems.

### **3.9-3 Prophecy, Revelation and Vision**

Other synonymous features of Prosperity gospel according to Asamoah (2005:10-12) are prophecy, revelation and vision. Faith preachers during church services or Christian gatherings habitually claim of receiving a special visitation, visions and supernatural revelation from God.

They claimed that doing the divine visitation God commands them to foretell the future of their audiences. Referring once again to Moyo's article he narrated that the prophet in Zimbabwe prophesies to his audience, "the Lord will break all the boundaries of failures, sicknesses and all evil spirit. He will give you Job, Joy and happiness, and husbands and wives," the prophet stated. Mojo (April 2012) further explains that the prophet sometime addressed some of his audiences directly that God would bring their suffering to an end, and reward their faithfulness with wealth, health and happiness.

I also recalled that doing my mother's prayer sections we also received numerous prophecy that she was going to get heal within a couple of days, and God has revealed that her illness was due to evil forces and witch crafts in our society.

The major element of these prophecies is the claim that if the audiences give to God, their prayer will be answered and their financial problems in the world of growing human needs will be solved. These prophecies tend to stimulate the minds of their hearers to give their hard-earned income to the prophet with the intention of being rewarded by God for their faithfulness like the character mentioned by Jones et al (2011:13) who gave with the intention of being rewarded financially by God for her contribution. The character than became dilution, angry and bitter when her prayer for financial breakthrough did not happen.

In the days of the prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Elijah and many others their proclamations were mainly foretelling the future and interpreting God's will to the people. But today most of these so-called prophecies tend to centralize on material gain and well-being than proclaiming the salvation of Christ. Therefore, the question posed by Jones, and Woodbridge (2011) is that "Has the Prosperity gospel overshadowed the gospel of Christ?"

### **3.9-4 Testimony – (Success Story)**

Testimony is another feature in which believers testify to the manifestation of God's power. Doing church services or in theological books like the story of Roche narrated by Muller (2000:2-6) believers relate their stories of how God answered their prayers in various forms, through their encounter with the Holy Spirit. Some testified of being healed, of getting a husband, of getting a better job, new houses, and so on. These blessings are attributed to the fact that the prophets prophesy during previous services or for living a spiritual life. And for complying with the prophet's call to sow a faithful seed (Moyo April 2012). For instant Parkman (2009:115) narrated a story about how his prayer earns a financial blessing for someone he prayed for.

These testimonies are meant to sensitize other congregants not to take the prophecy of the prophet lightly as he or she is the true representation of God. For God speaks directly through his prophet who has the power and authority from him to pronounce life and death and at the same time perform miracles among his children.

These testimonies are in the form of success stories. The congregants are given the platform to explain and compare their past-life experience to present. They portray that giving (Moyo April 2012) as instructed by the prophet or a man of God has made them to progress and become successful. Some may even say that, I am no

more barren, have a husband now, got a good job, bought a house all because when I gave and the Lord answered my prayers in return, (Moyo April 2012).

Similar to public confession is the speaking in tongues as a sign of being baptized by with the Holy Spirit. Congregants or faithful children of God speak in tongues during church services. The act of speaking in tongues usually occurs during a prayer section of worship services. It is interpreted to mean that a faithful believer is receiving a vision and revelation from God. Biblical history in the Acts of the apostle has it that when the Holy Spirit descended on the believers, they spoke in tongues. People who speak in tongues are seen as the faithful children of God to whom he speaks (Hogue 2010:75-78).

### **3.9-5 Pastoral Calling**

The study took a closer look at the mode of calling of the preacher to "the public ministry." It is believed that most prosperity preachers are called by the Holy Spirit. Calling from the perspective of Muller (1990:20-24) is "God's calling of humanity to the office of a public ministry only through the immediacy of the church." This mode of calling as described by Muller is predominant in the mainstream churches like Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Anglican and others. Muller is herein mentioned as a yardstick in drawing comparisons between the mode calling of the mainstream churches and the spiritual churches.

In buttressing this argument the calling of Peter an American pastor is used as an example in explaining the concept. Peter claims that he was empowered by Jesus in a vision to heal the sick. Similarly, he mentioned that he was called by the Holy Spirit to take the gospel to West Africa (Parson 1986:90-95). Opera (2002:15-20) who emphasizes on the personal encounter with the Holy Spirit put it this way:

"...life changing dream begins with pouring of the Holy Spirit .... The Holy Spirit changes your creative faculty, unceasing powerful forces that take you beyond the present ..... when the Holy Spirit is of the Lord of a host is on you every mountain of life becomes a plane.

Impossibilities become possible. .... the truth is that you need the holy poured on you for the classification of your dreams, ideas or vision."<sup>26</sup>

According to the passage above faith preachers often claim of directly encountering the Holy Spirit that instructs them to take the gospel to the people as it was in the case of Peter in Parson's narrative. They hold the view that the Holy Spirit can speak to a person directly and instruct them on what to do. This phenomenon of quoting the Holy Spirit is wide spread in the faith churches.

### **3.9-6 The Lifestyle of Prosperity Gospel Preachers**

Another aspect of this study that caught the attention of the researcher is the glamorous lifestyle of faith preachers. On his part, Jenkins (2006:93-97) describes the lifestyle of these Prosperity gospel preachers as corrupt and lavish. He explicitly "Coined" that these men of God amass riches at the expense of the masses.

To back his argument, he narrated a scenario in which a renowned prosperity gospel preacher Matthew Ashimolowo was accused of financial mismanagement and corruption. Internal investigation in Ashimolowo's church accused him of lavishly spending £120,000 for his birthday party and luxurious Mercedes car.

In relating the story to the African setting Jenkins mentions that these preachers live a luxurious life among the people whose "world in which survival seems impossible due to poverty." Jenkins' story is an illustration that many Ashimolowos traverse the continent today with the claim of having the ability and spiritual "ways" to make the faithful rich. Another opinion that correlates Jenkins's views is the article (2009:99-103, September Edition) of the "Lausanne theology working group on Prosperity gospel".

Azuman et al describe the lifestyle of these preachers as flamboyant and extravagant. They believed that the lifestyles of these pastors are inconsistent with

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<sup>26</sup>(Parson 1986:90-95).

what they preach. The group also noted that these preachers often emphasize on funding rising rather than preaching the actual gospel in its entirety.

In citing Forbes's magazine Dlodla (March 2013) stated that Pastor Oyedepo and Chris had amassed \$150 million and \$30 million respectively. These rich pastors are extremely richer than their surroundings. They own properties at home and abroad that worth millions of dollars, whilst some of their congregants barely make ends meet.

### **3.10 Misinterpreted Passages of Prosperity Gospel.**

The study attempts to establish that prosperity gospel is rooted in the faulty interpretation of several biblical passages. Jenkins (2006:91) believes that the Prosperity gospel portrays wealth and riches as a “Covenant” and the “fulfillment of the divine promise” of God to his people. Jenkins stresses that the biblical narrative and the success of Abraham, Joseph, David, and others play a significant role in the theology under study.

Jenkins holds the view that the upliftment of these characters is used as a motivational factor to encourage people that God can change any situation for the betterment of his “faithful.” It is depicted that if God can raise Joseph from ‘prison to the palace’ and David from Shepherd boy to King, then God can do likewise, for his faithful who sow a seed to his ministry.

#### **3.10-1 Prosperity in All Things -3 John 2**

The greeting of John in 3 John 1-2 is construed by faith preachers to mean that God will shower his blessings of wealth and good health upon his children, especially those who heed the call of their preachers by being a faithful servant. The verse is interpreted to mean that God (Jenkins 2006:90-91) wants all Christians to ‘prosper in all things.’ In this sense, the phrase ‘prosper in all things,’ means that a Christian,

who abides in the principle of giving and obeys the call or prophecies of the preacher will earn God's reward in the form of material possessions.

In citing Barron (1987:62-63) Coleman explains (2000:41-44) that in 1947, Oral Roberts interpreted the passage of 3 John 2 in the form of a 'Blessing-Pact', which he portrays as a source of multiplying believer's wealth. Oral Roberts promised subscriber enormous riches as a result of buying the 'Blessing-Pact'. With surety Roberts painted a picture that a contributor who did not receive a financial reward from God should request a refund. Additionally, Coleman (2000:42) cited Brouwer et al (1996:24) that Roberts illustrated that in order to 'prosper in all things or receive a financial reward; Christians were required to 'sow a seed' and 'God will grow it'.

### **3.10-2 Abrahamic Covenant- Galatians 3.6-8**

In Paul's letter to the Galatians he talks about God's covenant of blessing Abraham due to his 'faithfulness', that "I will make a great nation out of you," says the Lord (CF Genesis 12). This particular promise according to Jenkins (2000:92) is interpreted by faith gospel preachers to literally mean material wealth and success. It is accorded that those who have faith are regarded as the children of Abraham to whom God will apportion his blessings of greatness and success.

He explains that whoever lives according to the doctrines proclaimed by the men of God is destined to experience the manifestation of God's promise to Abraham in their lives. It can be inferred from Jenkins' explanation that giving is an expenditure to God that is intended to bring fulfillment of his covenant in the lives of faithful Christians. In interpreting these passage faith preachers believed that the fulfillment or the reaping of God's temporal reward is intertwined with Christian performing a set of prescribed duties.

### **3.10-3 Abundant Blessing - John 10.10**

Another passage that is literally translated to mean what it says without considering the context, application and its exegetical meaning is John 10.10. In this passage, Jesus said, "I have come so that they will have life and have it in abundance." According to Jenkins (2006:92) Prosperity gospel, preachers often interpret the passage to mean literal prosperity.

According to him, based on this passage from the gospel of John many African faith gospel preachers depict Jesus as a life giver, comforter, and source of wealth. As a follower of Christ, we are expected to live a life of tremendous riches that is interpreted as the 'blessing hand of God'. A life that is free of trouble and poverty.

### **3.10-4 God will open the Windows of Heaven -Malachi (4:1-2)**

Malachi is rightly seen as a bridge 'whereupon' Christians cross from the faith of the Old Testament to the new covenant. It also carries messianic passages that are reminiscent of Isaiah. Jenkins (2006:92) views it as an Old Testament book that carries special modern relevance. For it is widely used by theologians of different spectrums to give it a peculiar meaning in relation to a given situation. He argues that faith preachers have given the book an awesome status for its teaching and 'rules' on giving. The book puts an emphasis on giving to God what rightly belongs to him, "Especially in tithes and offering" (Jenkins 2006:92-93).

In addition to these passages, there is the saying that "God forbid cheating on offerings and tithes." Believers are told that God will "Open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out on you a blessing, that there shall not be a room enough to receive it," (Jenkins 2006:93). In the book of Malachi, it is preached that Christians should endeavor at all times to pay homage to God through giving, which in itself will earn them his blessing. Jenkins stresses that 'Prosperity-oriented churches, often place special importance on the reciprocal obligations presented in the text.

### **3.10-5 2 Corinthians 9**

Among faith gospel preachers, the passage in the second letter to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 9) has been interpreted to mean that God will reward riches to those who donate to the church and its ministry. According to Jenkins (2006:92) Paul's message that a generous giver would reap God's blessing abundantly is construed to mean that Christians who give are certain or assured of his blessing.

### **3.11 Faith and the Prosperity**

In Prosperity gospel, faith is portrayed as a medium or heavenly force through which a believer can bring success into reality. According to Coleman (2000:150) the movement regards faith as the supernatural force which believers can use to get whatever success they desire in their lives. It is the instrument which believers can use for self-actualization or achieving one's dream.

The movement proclaims that believers can experience the power of the Holy Spirit and the presence of the Divined through faith. Parkman (2009:114, CF Proverb 18.21) agrees with this idea that the tongue has a power over life and death. Therefore, Christians should always speak positive things about their lives. He (Parkman 2009:115) further stresses that life-and-death lies on the tongue. But with faith, Christians must always speak positive things about themselves, lives and their surroundings.

Faith in this sense is a 'positive confession', that is, confessing or saying things which one wishes to happen in one's life, and through which one can conquer the world (Coleman 2000:29,49). It is believed that there is an implicit confidence in the power of 'positive confession', which is termed faith. Through (Positive confession) faith believers can have dreams, visions, thoughts and speech that can come to actualization or reality. All negativities in life can be eradicated through the power of faith, and the fight against the dark world is certain.

The main point here is that through (positive confession) faith believers can conceive ideas in their minds have a dream, vision and even speech and bring them into existence through faith<sup>27</sup>.

The argument is that Christians are taught to believe that whatever they desire or long for in life can be achieved through faith. In propounding on the concept of faith, Hill (2007:40) writes that "faith is the head chemist of the mind, when blended with the vibrations of thought, the subconscious mind instantly picks up the vibration, translates it into its spiritual equivalent and transmits it to infinite intelligence as in the case of prayer."

Arguing further he (2007:53-54) explains that faith can remove limitations and bring thoughts and desires into reality. According to him when faith combines with positive thoughts and belief, it can lead an individual to tremendous riches.

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<sup>27</sup> (Lioy 2012, The heart of the prosperity gospel , <http://www.satsonline.org/userfiles/Lioy.pdf>: Accessed 2013.04.20)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Procedures

In this section, the researcher wishes to integrate the analysis of written theology of Prosperity gospel with that of the knowledge of the subject matter gained through qualitative field research. It is the combination of the responses acquired from interviews with the knowledge or information gained from literature written by theologians on the discipline.

The qualitative approach serves the theological analysis of the study well. It primarily focuses on the interviewees' perspective and seeks to discover what they are experiencing. It shows how they interpret the subject under review given the proliferation of the theology coupled with the past and present, the economic and political situation on the continent.

The procedure adopted here is to capture and express the perspective of the 'participants' as authentically as possible, relating their words, discerning their meanings and conveying these through extensive illustrations in answering the research question. All citations in this section are from the oral and written interviews outlined below unless specified as published sources.

- The methodical approach combines data selected from three major sources:
- Literature or text on Prosperity gospel
- Theologians or preachers
- Broad spectrum of Christians from various backgrounds

With recent proliferation of Prosperity gospel across the globe, many theological views of theologians like Coleman, Horton, Asamoah, Platt and many others warrant considerations for reflection.

The following theologians were selected as a cross-section of leading men and women from various contexts across the continent as ‘participants’ for the study. The interview is not limited to these people as others were interviewed as the need arose at a given point in time. To hide the true identity of respondents’ fictitious names were used.

- Pastor David M. Zuo – South Africa; general overseer and founder of the Life of God Evangelistic Ministry.
- Rev. Nepo Sinton South Africa - Missionary of The Answer Church of God in Christ
- Pastor Ratrick Amazu – Nigeria; Glory Christian Ministries
- Krinah M. Simakoloyi –Zambia; Evangelical Lutheran Church in Africa
- Padie Otukile –Botswana; Sefapaano KePhenyo Congregation
- Imanuel Anosa-South Sudan; Yambio Congregation
- Katiencie Blessader Gbotoe – Liberia Fire Transformation Ministries
- JAshenafi Desta- Ethiopia, Mekan Yesus Church
- Louise Jardia The Arm of Christ Ministries International.

In-depth personal interviews were conducted with interviewees, who are situated within South Africa, but in the event where participants were situated outside South Africa, the interview was conducted by web cam via SKYPE.

The majority of the interviewees are fluent in English and evidently spiritual. The researcher’s definition of spiritual herein refers to Christians who are baptized, read their bible, pray and attend Christian gatherings or church services. Aside from the interviews, the researcher also attended a broad spectrum of Christian worship services taking note of worship proceedings to enhance the discussion under review.

## 4.2 Pre-interview Section

Prior to the interview with Rev. P. Sinton of 'The Answer Church of Jesus Christ', the researcher was invited to attend a 'Miraculous' service and see the wonders of God. The Rev. was scheduled to preach on the topic 'testing God through your seed'. This topic caught the attention of the researcher as it was highly related to the subject matter under study. In this case, one may think that this was a coincidence or may otherwise argue that the preacher intentionally selected the topic as he was informed in time and was fully aware of the research and its purpose.

The service began with intense singing and immense clapping and dancing, and as it progresses, some congregants started speaking in tongues as a sign of being in the spirit. The church hall was fully packed to capacity with enthusiastic and jubilant Christians who 'pour out their heart' to praise and worship God as an expression of their faith in Him as the Supreme Being. It is a loving and impressive atmosphere to see people with different supplications putting their anxieties aside to worship God in such a joyous mood.

At some point in time, the pastor (Rev. Sinton) interrupted the singing and signal for prayer time. According to Ogilvie (1993:10-12) prayer is a conversion or an expression of our thoughts and feelings to God; it is the time when humanity brings their supplications before God and asks for His strength, guidance, protection and thank him for what he has done and continues to do. But in this case as I sit there the pastor urged his members to fight against the principalities of the dark world that were hindering their progression. The enemies who do not want them to become rich.

The entire congregation erupted into loud voices each person praying with different tune and at different magnitudes of their voices. During this section, there were members who spoke in tongues, while others sang beautiful songs. The prayer section lasted for about fifteen minutes.

It came to an end with a series of songs that followed one after the other. In an inquiry the researcher was told that those who spoke in tongues were actually receiving revelations and visions from God. Based on the researcher's little understanding of speaking in tongues it is learnt that whenever a believer speaks in tongues or experiences 'the baptism of the Holy Spirit' (Christenson 2005:18, cf Act 2.4; 10.46) there is always someone to interpret the language in which the 'heavenly' revelation was made. On this observation concerning tongues Paul writes; "Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? For this reason, the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say," (1 Corinthians 14.6-7, 13). According to Morris (1979:191-192) 'Tongues' should not be exercised in public, unless there is an interpreter to explain the revelation of God.

Based on this knowledge the researcher was curious to learn what the Holy Spirit had revealed to the congregants that spoke in tongues during the prayer section. But the hope of hearing God's revelations was to no avail as no one explained God's revelations to us. According to Christenson (2005:16) speaking in tongues is the practice of glossolalia that is praying, singing or speaking a language whose meaning is not known to the speaker but can be interpreted by some of the hearers as Paul stipulated. How come then no one was available or able to reveal to us the mystery from God?

The interesting part of service came when the Pastor announced the time for offering. This part is deemed interesting because the theme of the entire church service engulfed this section. When the pastor took the microphone he shouted, "Today is your time to shine! Test God with your seed and you will see what he can do for you! ". The entire congregation erupted into a big "Amen."

According to Ginex (2012:2) the word 'Amen' is a Hebrew word which means 'So be it'. In this context, the congregations agreed with the pastor that indeed the time has

come for their 'breakthrough'. "Today you must all wake up from your seat and test God to see whether he will not respond to your plights," he continues. He quoted a series of bible quotations to back his claim that indeed God sent him to alleviate the poverty and hardship of the people.

The intriguing part of this spectacle came when the pastor called on stage some of the members to empty their pockets and wallets so that God can bless them. "Some of you, you are a stumbling block to your own progress and riches in life. If you cannot give to God how do you expect him to pour his blessings on you," he remarked. "Empty your pockets and wallets here today and see whether God will not bless you," he commanded.

The members reluctantly followed the instruction of the pastor. But one of the members who had the child's school fees on him whispered to the pastor that, "This is my son's school fee, which is due tomorrow (Monday)". The pastor shouted and said, "Even if it is your child's school fees give it to God, he will surely reward you with millions of fees!"

Despite all this drama, the church service was a memorable one. The members were all cheerful and accommodating; they even encouraged the researcher to take another time to visit and worship with them.

### **4.3 Population of the Study**

The targeted population of the study was 25 Christian candidates selected from different denominations and diverse cultural backgrounds. Out of the targeted population, 18 persons accepted the invitation to be interviewed. Some of the interviewees were given the opportunity to respond through writing and others through oral interview. Seventy two per cent of respondents accepted the invitation and responded.

In this study the researcher did not uprightly investigate the standard of living of the interviewees as either poor or rich. However, based on the personal data and background information collected the interviewer discerned that the interviewees were neither poor non rich. They are 'working class' that lives within the impoverished communities.

Unlike other community members, they can barely afford to meet their needs due to their sources of income. The group was mainly targeted due to their intellectual ability, the ability to articulate and contribute to the study. The intrinsic argument is that they represent a group that is striving to achieve their dreams. They have a true sense of their communities and the issues of the outside world.

**Table 4.3-1 Respondents**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Presents Population	18 persons	72% turnout of the targeted population
Male Respondents	8 persons	44% of turnout
Female Respondents	10 persons	56% of turnout
Absent Respondents	7 persons	28% absentees of target population
Written Interviewees	9 persons	50% of turnout
Oral interviewees	9 persons	50% of turnout
Total Population	25 persons	

Table 4.3.1, illustrates the distribution of the targeted population for the study according to gender, of which a majority or 56% of the turnouts were female, and 44% percent male. Moreover, 50% of the turnout population was interviewed orally while another 50% responded to the questions through writing.

An effort was also made to obtain some personal information of the interviewees which have direct bearing on the survey. The study also considered the age, denominational background, qualifications and responsibilities of the respondents in their various churches.

**Table 4.3.2 Respondents' age**

<b>Respondents' age</b>		
<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
25- 35	8 persons	44%
36-45	6 persons	34%
46- ++	4 persons	22%
Total	18 persons	

**Table 4.3.3 Respondents' Qualification**

**Respondents' Qualification**

<b>Academic Award</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Certificate	4 persons	22%
Diplomas	3 persons	17%

Bachelor	2 persons	11%
Masters	0 person	0%
PHD	0 person	0%
Others	9 persons	50%
Total	18 persons	

**Table 4.3.4 Respondents' Denominational background.**

**Respondents' Denominational background**

Denomination	Frequency	Percentage
Charismatic (Pentecostalism)	8 persons	44%
Missional Churches	5 persons	28%
African Ind. Churches	3 persons	17%
Others	2persons	11%
Total	18 persons	

**Table 4.3.5 Respondents' Experience and Responsibility.**

**Respondents' Responsibility**

Responsibility	Frequency	Percentage
Youth	2 persons	11%
Women League	4 persons	22%
Men's League	3 persons	17%
Pastoral	6 persons	34%
Others	3 persons	17%
Total	18 persons	

The **Tables 4.3.2 to 4.3.5** portray the age range, qualification, denominational background, experience and responsibility of respondents. Table 4.4.2, shows that the majority of the interviewees were youth and young adults respectively. The second table 4.3 also demonstrates that at least all the interviewees had some form of education and could articulate their views well. Third table 4.4.4 explains that among the turnout for interview 44% of the respondents came from the charismatic background, while 28% came from the Missional churches. The last table 4.4.5 shows that the interviewees tend to play some role in their various churches. This information is vital to the study because the understanding and views of the respondents are fundamental in making judgments and reaching a meaningful conclusion herein.

## 4.4 Correlations of Respondents' Response and Perception

This section correlates the citation and perception of interviewees in order to reflect their views and arguments in this study. The collected information is presented in tubular, graphic and text form. It helps the reader to understand issues and arguments that have bearing on the analysis of the study.

### 4.4.1 Respondents Understanding of Prosperity Gospel

Respondents Views	Frequency	Percentage
In support of the argument some respondents described the term 'Prosperity Gospel' as propaganda against charismatic theology that teaches the practical concept of giving and prosperity as mentioned in the Bible.	10	56%
Opposite views hold it that the subject is a misinterpretation of the gospel to suit human understanding and culture for personal gain and self-advancement, and as a means of exploiting the masses.	7	39%
Some remain neutral and not sure what it means.	1	5%

#### 4.4.1.1 Bar graph

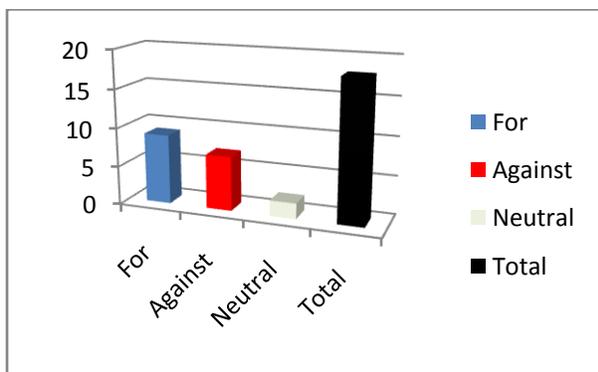


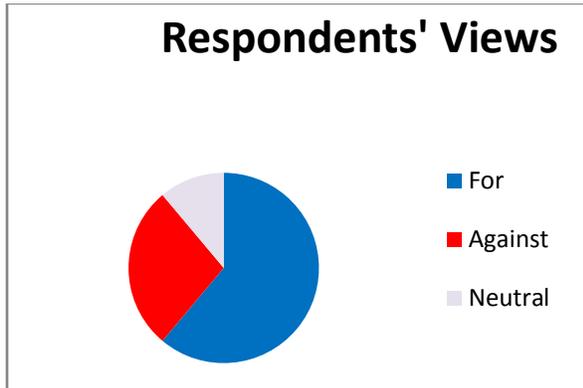
Table 4.4.1 and bar graph show that 56% of the interviewed population believed that the theology of Prosperity gospel is biblical. On the contrast 39% of the mentioned population is of the opinion that the theology is unbiblical and is designed to exploit the masses and benefit the individuals who are at the forefront of its proclamation.

#### 4.5 Respondents' Perception of God Regarding Giving and Prosperity

Respondents Views	Frequency	Percentage
In support of the motion, respondents in this category see God as the father almighty who teaches Christians to follow his example in giving. It is believed that giving is a biblical tool that stimulates the mind of God and cements the relationship between humanity and the supreme being. Paving the way for more blessings from God.	11	61%
On the contrary God is viewed as the creator, saviour and redeemer whose blessing is distant from giving. He is not a give and take God.	5	28%
Some remain neutral and not sure what it means.	2	11%

**Table 4.5** shows that 61% of the turnout sees God as the one who blesses humankind based on giving while 28% disagree and believed that God's blessing is not triggered by any human condition. While 11% remains neutral.

#### 4.5.1 Pie Chart Representing Respondents' Views



#### 4.4.6 Respondents' Perception of Giving and Prosperity

Respondents Views	Frequency	Percentage
Certainly giving is the foundation, the bedrock or fundamental act in earning God's blessing. When a Christian gives to God, He fills our giving hands, with uncountable blessings. Giving and receiving are inseparable in the sight of God. When Christians give it is like honouring their father who reciprocates their honour with automatic blessing.	13	72%
God's blessing is not scaled or equated to giving. No one can dictate to God on what basis to bless humankind. He is not moved by our human deeds. He is God whose blessing is not conditional on any situation.	4	22%
Not sure what it means	1	5%

**Table 4.6** explains that 72% of the turnout population articulates that giving is fundamental to earning God's blessing as propagated by the theology of Prosperity gospel. On the contrast 22% of the same population is of the view that God's blessing is unconditional and is not based on giving. In brief they termed the theology unbiblical. Five (5%) remains neutral and believes that God's word is not meant for debate among Christians.

## 4.7 Respondents' Membership

<b>Respondents Views</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Members in this category attribute their current membership to their encounter with the Holy Spirit. According to them they were previously members of some Missional churches that could not meet their spiritual needs. Names that are accorded to Pentecostal preachers include: Apostle and Prophet	<b>11</b>	<b>61%</b>
These respondents have been members of their prospective Missional churches since infancy. Names that are accorded to mainstream preachers include: Pastors, Bishop and Reverend.	<b>3</b>	<b>28%</b>
Not sure or want to remain neutral.	<b>2</b>	<b>11%</b>

**Table 4.7** illustrates that 61% of the studied population indicated that their encounter with the spirit Holy Spirit guided them in becoming members of their present congregations. The same population (61%) pointed out that they migrated from some of the Missional churches in their perspective homes. Twenty eight (28%) have been members from infancy, while two percent (2%) remains neutral.

#### 4.8 Respondents' Perception of Tithes and Offerings

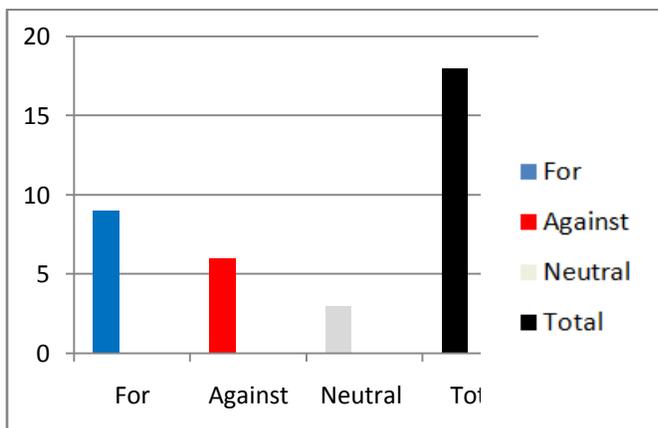
Respondents Views	Frequency	Percentage
We worship a generous God who pours out His blessings upon us in abundance. And now unto those that are able to do so exceeding abundantly above all by giving or paying shall receive abundant blessings from God. Tithes and offering are offered unto God in love, for the acquisition of his or multiplication of his blessing.	13	72%
Tithing and offering are the act of worship. Christians give glory to God through tithe and offering, acknowledging him as the powerful yet peace giving God, creator of heaven and earth. Therefore they are act of praising and glorifying the name of God. The privilege of worshipping and expressing one's gratitude through gifts without expecting any form of return.	4	22%
Not sure what it means	1	5.6%

**Table 4.8** shows that 72% of the studied population is of the view that tithe and offering are the prerequisite in the acquisition of God's blessing. On the other hand 22% believed that tithe and offering are acts of worshiping and acknowledging God as the father, creator, and savior whose blessing is far from just tithe and offering. But they are act of expressing gratitude and appreciating God. While 5.6% remains neutral.

## 4.9 Respondents' Perception of Using Holy Substances in Healing

Respondents Views	Frequency	Percentage
4.9 Jesus used mud to heal the blind man in the bible, Jesus' disciples used holy oil to heal and James also recommends the use of holy oil in healing people. So the use of holy water, holy oil and other holy substances in our time are biblical.	12	61%
The usage of holy oil and other holy substances are misapplied in our time as a scheme of deception in order to rube ignorant Christians. Besides that putting one's belief in a substance other than God is idolatry.	4	22%
Not Sure what it means	2	11%

### 4.9.1 Bar graph

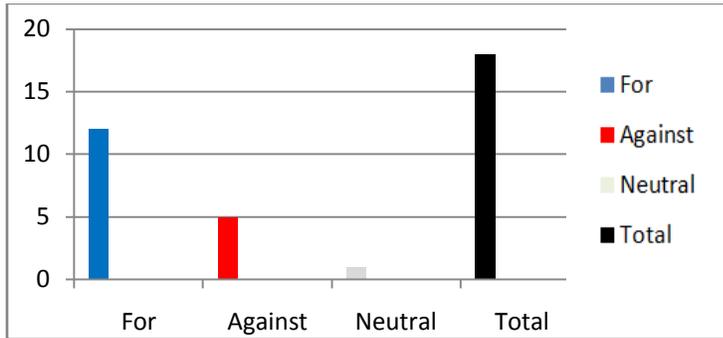


**Table 4.9 and Bar graph 4.9.1** illustrate that 61% of the studied population indicated that the use of holy substances in healing ministries are biblical as they emulate the example of Christ who healed with mud and other biblical narratives. Twenty two (22%) of the same population opposes the view and pointed out that it is a scheme of deception that tends to rube the ignorant Christians. while Eleven percent (11%) remains neutral.

#### 4.10 Respondents' perception of sowing faithful seeds

Respondents Views	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Creation demonstrates that there is a development before fruit is borne. Just as the seeds of the earth gradually mature and bear fruit, so do the seeds of the Kingdom and of the flesh. Sometimes we mistakenly expect our seeds to produce an immediate harvest or misunderstand our current circumstances having forgotten the seeds previously sown. The Word declares that a harvest is promised for every seed sown –whether good or bad. When we practice the habit of sowing our faithful seed through our substances, we are learning to move in the flow of the Spirit. He trains us to move victoriously through every situation and circumstance, in peace or adversity. This divine connection permeates our heart while being busy with that which come from the hand and presented to God. Therefore prophetic seed is the gift we give to the man of God to evoke the blessing of God upon our lives. Certainly the principle of faithful seeds do earn Christians God's blessing. God's principles or blessing usually flows through the expression of our faithfulness; like gifts and honour.</p>	12	66%
<p>The concept is unbiblical and does not earn Christians God's blessing. It is purely misinterpretation of scriptures and unbiblical.</p>	5	28%
<p>Not sure what it means.</p>	1	6%

#### 4.10-1 Bar Graph



**Table 4.10 and Bar Graph 4.10.1** demonstrate that 66% of the studied population concurs with the view that the practice of sowing faithful seeds to God is biblical. And that the practice should be encouraged, 28% believed that the concept is purely unbiblical. Six (6%) remains neutral.

#### 4.11 Respondents' Perception of Rating Preachers

##### Respondents Views

Preachers can be rated as great men of God base on the anointing bestowed upon them by winning souls for him. The gifts of the Holy Spirit differ in carrying out the work of God. One may be called to prophesy, others to sing, and others to evangelize. Like the case of Elijah and Elisha God called and anointed individuals differently. Therefore the fruit of the minister's work portrays him as a great or an ordinary minister of the Lord.

##### Frequency

**10**

##### Percentage

**56%**

All Ministers are equal servants of God. God called ministers to be humble servants of his word. Jesus told his disciples that the greatest in the Kingdom of God is the humble servant who does not boast for status, prestige or Lordship among his children. All may be called to serve in different dimensions but one Lord.

**6**

**33%**

Not sure what it means

**2**

**11%**

**Table 4.11** illustrates that 56% of the studied population indicated that a preacher can be rated as great men of God based on their anointing and their work carried out among Christians. On the other hand 33% argues that all servants are equal before God. There is no greatness in the servant hood of God, while Eleven percent 11% remains neutral.

#### 4.12 Respondents' Understanding of Prayer

<b>Respondents Views</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<p>Christian pray to God to thank him and ask for his authority and power to battle against the controlling powers of witchcraft, that attack us, Believed that whatever we bind on earth is indeed bound in heaven, which include unscriptural word spoken against our lives. Christians pray to break the power of confusion, torment, fear, control and manipulation. Humanity prays to take captive every vain imagination and high thought that is contrary to the word of GOD in life. It breaks the power of Satan's deception, seduction, sorcery and intimidation, knowing that at the name of JESUS every knee must bow. Christians pray to decree freedom from dark powers, false prophetic words, controllers, manipulators, sorcerers, witches, counterfeits, soul ties, spiritual folly, soothsayers, lying spirits, lying dreams and visions.</p>	<b>10</b>	<b>56%</b>
<p>Christians pray to seek the doctrine of God, the divine things not seen, acknowledging the existence of God, and extend our gratitude and appreciation to him. Christians bring their supplications and anxieties to God the creator for strength, protection and guidance. Prayer is a meditation and quiet time with God.</p>	<b>5</b>	<b>28%</b>
<p>Not sure what it means</p>	<b>3</b>	<b>17%</b>

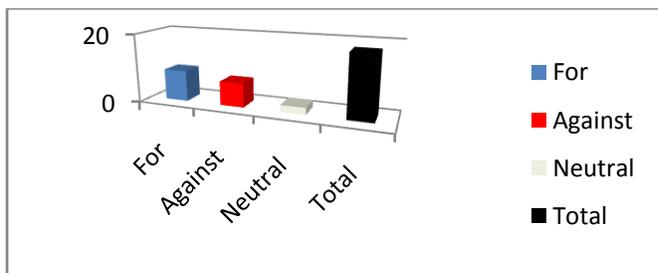
**Table 4.12** explains that 56% of the population understands prayer as warfare against the evil of this world. And can be used as a medium of breaking boundaries and reclaiming one’s destination. While 28% understands it as a medium of communication with the Supreme Being and seventeen percent 17% remains neutral.

### 4.13 Respondents’ View or Definition of Rhema

Respondents Views	Frequency	Percentage
Rhema refers to the direct word of God handed down to the prophets, Apostles and preachers of today.	12	61%
The one who prophesies or speaks the direct word of God to the people of today is called the man of Rhema.		
The Lord has already spoken to Christians through the inspired word written by inspired Men of God and ultimately through the savior	5	28%
Not sure what it means	1	11%

**Table 4.13** and **Bar Graph 4.13.1** illustrates that 61% of the studied population defined Rhema as the direct and living word of God. The same population (61%) points out that those who speak the direct word of God are called men of Rhema. Twenty eight percent believed that the Bible is now the living word of God among Christians and any other claim cannot be proven or verified

#### 4.13.1 Bar Graph



#### 4.14 Spiritual Gifts and Factors that Influence Denominational Migration

<b>Respondents Views</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<p>Some Christians migrate from church to church if their spiritual needs are not met in their previous congregations. Direct encounters with the Holy Spirit can lead a person to seek for a spiritual home. The Holy Spirit can direct the affairs of Christians and lead them to make meaningful decisions. Personal testimony like miraculous healing, revelation, vision and improvement of one's spiritual gift are also factors that facilitate migration. Other human factors like conflicts and misunderstanding may also play a part.</p> <p>The bible is an inspired word of God that is applicable from generation to generation. Therefore spiritual gifts mentioned in the bible can be exercised by today's generation.</p>	<b>11</b>	<b>61%</b>
<p>The Lord through the Holy Spirit leads Christians to his service. The right proclamation and interpretation of his word and the rightful administration of his sacraments can influence people in choosing or migrating to a particular church. Other human factors like conflicts and misunderstandings may also play part. Due to the grace of God some of the mentioned gifts in the Bible are no longer applicable to humankind.</p>	<b>6</b>	<b>33%</b>
Not sure what it means	<b>1</b>	<b>5.6%</b>

**Table 4.14** signifies that 61% of the studied population is of the opinion that migration within the church is triggered by a Christian's encounter with the Holy Spirit; who meets the spiritual needs of Christians. Personal aspirations also play a role in Christian's migration from church to church. Another 33% percent of the same population is of the opposite view that Christians' migration is prompted by the interpretation of the word of God and administration of the sacrament as the instruments of God's grace among humanity, while Eleven 11% remains neutral.

#### 4.15 Respondents' Perception of Miracles

<b>Respondents Views</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<p>A miracle is God's intervention in to the natural world (physical) to bring out a divine result into situations deemed impossible. A miracle is an occurrence that supersedes human control or the laws of nature and consequently attributed to a supernatural, especially divine agency. Such an event may be attributed to a miracle worker, saint, or religious leader. God empowered Christians to perform miracles as stipulated in the Bible. God gave Christians the power and will to surrender their lives to him in private or in public.</p>	<b>11</b>	<b>61%</b>
<p>Jesus told his disciples not to give more credence to the performance of miracles but rather seek eternal things. The Bible talks about miracles but warns Christians to watch out for wolves in sheep skin who will perform miracles to deceive the masses. The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to perform miracles but must be careful because the devil also has power to perform miracles as was in the case of Moses encounters with Pharaoh and his magicians. Through Christ, God had already called Christians to become his children and members of the royal family. So the act of altar called contradicts Jesus' work and achievement. Humans do not have the power to choose when to save themselves, but had already acquired redemption through Christ without human effort.</p>	<b>6</b>	<b>33%</b>
Not sure what it means	<b>1</b>	<b>6%</b>

**Table 4.15** illustrates that 61% of the researched population indicated that miracles are the supernatural work of God performed through the anointed ones ordained to carry out the duties. Thirty three percent (33%) holds a contrasting view that God warns Christians against performance of miracles, as it will be used as tools in deceiving people. While six percent (6%) remains neutral

#### 4.16 Perception as to Whether God Wants Humanity to be Rich

Respondents Views	Frequency	Percentage
Certainly God wants everyone to be rich that is why he gave Christians the authority and power to possess everything he created on earth. He gives human beings all the riches of this world as Lord over them. Which implies that God does not want humanity to lack anything but have everything in abundance? But there are things that hinder Christians' ability to becoming rich. Some of these include; human ability, spiritual encounters, gifting, and destination.	14	78%
God wants Christians to be rich but not temporal riches as defined in human terms. God wants Christians to enjoy life eternal and not concern themselves with the wealth of this world. He urged Christian to denounce the wealth of this world and first seek eternal riches.	3	17%
Not sure what it means	1	5%

**Table 4.16** illustrates that 78% of the examined population is of the perception that God wants everyone to be rich. They argued that it depends on the ability of every individual to achieve this divine purpose of God. Some other factors may serve as hindrance but Christians must remain steadfast to achieve their destination. Seventeen percent (17%) argued otherwise that God wants Christians to be rich in eternal things and not temporal, while five percent (5%) remains neutral.

#### 4.17 Human Suffering, Depression, Diseases, and Disaster

##### Respondents Views

Frequency Percentage

The condition of suffering, hardship, depression and other unfavourable conditions are the work of the devil. When God created the world he wanted human beings to enjoy it to the fullest extent but the devil interrupted this covenant with his tricks and deeds. A clear example of this is when Satan sought God's permission to torment Job, illustrating that he will also seek the downfall of Christians at all times.

10 56%

Therefore suffering, diseases, disaster are the work of the devil and his forces. Sometimes it can also be attributed to our lack of faith and ability to be proactive and combat the devil and his angels.

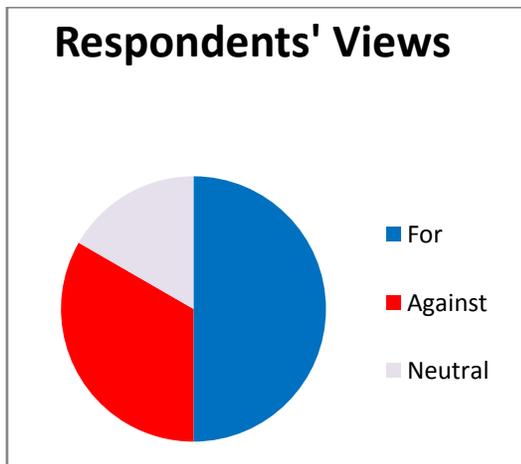
6 33%

Suffering is the mystery of God that is beyond human understanding. It is also attributed to natural events and human causes.

Not sure what it means

2 11%

##### Pie Chart

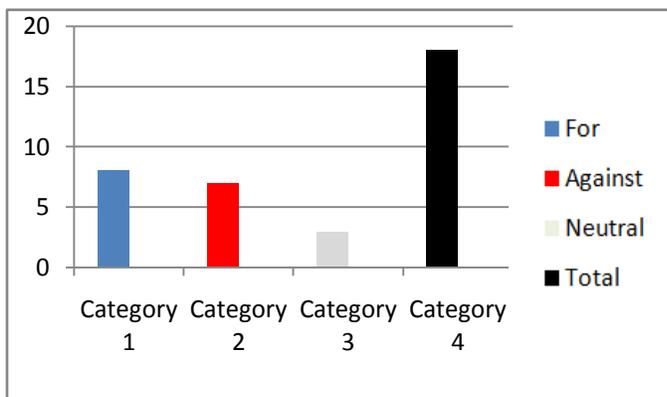


**Table 4.17 and Pie Chart 4.17** portrayed that 56% of the investigated population believed that unfavorable conditions like suffering, illnesses, depression and hardship are caused by Satan and his forces. On the contrast 33% argues that these unfavorable human conditions are natural occurrences that are inexplicable by humankind, while Eleven percent (11%) remains neutral

#### 4.18 Respondents' Perception and Understanding of Prophecy

Respondents Views	Frequency	Percentage
Jesus' teachings against false prophets are meant to open the eyes and mind of Christians so they cannot be deceived. Christians must be careful in interpreting the passage because it says that false prophets would claim of being Christ himself but not to judge those who are exercising their spiritual gifts as false prophets.	12	66%
Jesus warned Christians against ill preaching, teaching and false prophecy.	5	28%
Not sure what it means	1	5.6%

##### 4.18.1 Bar Graph



**Table 4.18 and Bar Graph 4.18.1** illustrate that 66% of the respondents are of the opinion that Christ's warning against prophecy does not refer to prophets of our time

who are preaching the gospel but to those who claimed to be Christ himself, Antichrist. On the hand 28% that argued the warning in fact referred to all those preaching false doctrine of and self-claimed prophets of our time, seventeen percent (5.6%) remains neutral.

#### 4.19 Respondents' Perceptions of Laying on of Hands

<b>Respondents Views</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
There is no point of contention between the missional churches and charismatic it is just that human beings always have problem with those who disagree with them. The teaching of Laying on-of-hands is in the Bible. It is usually done, doing the impartation of the anointing, healing of the sick, commissioning for the ministry. Exercising the gift of prophecy and laying on of hands does not contradict the Bible because Paul encourages Christians to manifest these gifts in diverse ways. In fact the person laying on hands may be imparting spiritual blessings or gifts or authority to the one whom hands are laid on.	<b>11</b>	<b>61%</b>
Laying on of hands is stipulated in the bible but the manner in which laying on of hands and prophecy are carryout by Christians needs urgent attention. No one is disputing the practice of laying on of hands and prophecy but their origin is questionable. Due to the tricks of the devil, not all prophecy coming from man is genius	<b>6</b>	<b>33%</b>
Not sure what it means	<b>1</b>	<b>5.6%</b>

**Table 4.19** illustrates that 61% of the studied population argues that the laying on of hands in Christianity is the exercising of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as stipulated in the bible. Thirty three percent (33%) warn that laying of hands and prophecy can be used to manipulate ignorant Christians, while six percent (6%) remains neutral

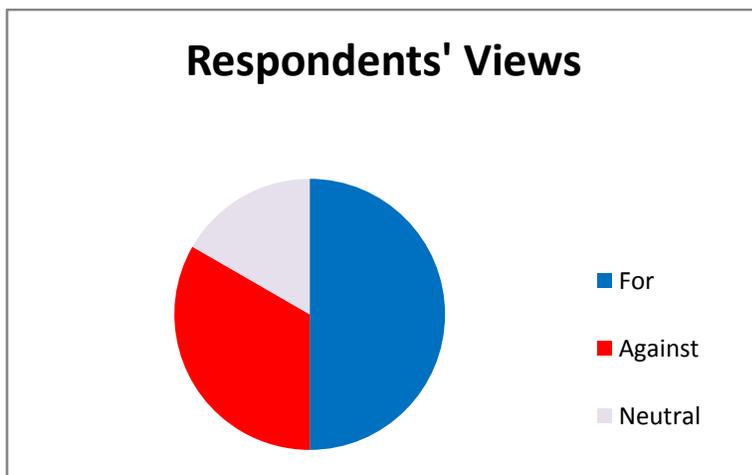
#### 4.20 Respondents' Perception of Dreams and Visions.

Respondents Views	Frequency	Percentage
In ages past, God occasionally spoke to humanity in dreams as they slept, he sometimes talked with them by way of visions and there were periods when God used angels to communicate his will to a person, which in this instance the visit by the angel is clearly distinguished from a "vision". There is biblical evidence and testimonies worldwide that God still speaks to committed Christians. There is a lot of documentation for angelic appearances in modern times.	13	72%
The assertion that God still speaks directly to Christians today in the modern world contradicts the message of Hebrews that God speaks to modern man through his son and his word. It climaxes the argument that God had spoken through Christ and would no longer speak to us through dreams, visions, etc.	5	28%
Not sure what it means	0	0%

**Table 4.20** illustrates that 72% of the interviewees are of the opinion that God still speaks to Christian directly, through revelations, dreams and visions. Twenty eight (28%) percent believes that God no longer speaks to Christians directly because he has already done so through His word and Son Jesus Christ. There was no neutrality (0%) in this case.

#### 4.21 Respondents' Perception of Demons and Witches

Respondents Views	Frequency	Percentage
The Bible talks about unfamiliar spirits, witches and demons. Jesus cast out the 7 demons; Paul says our fight is against dark forces and principalities of this world. So the casting out of demons and giving public testimony is biblical.	9	66%
One must be careful whether these claims are truth.	5	28%
Not sure what it means	1	5.6%



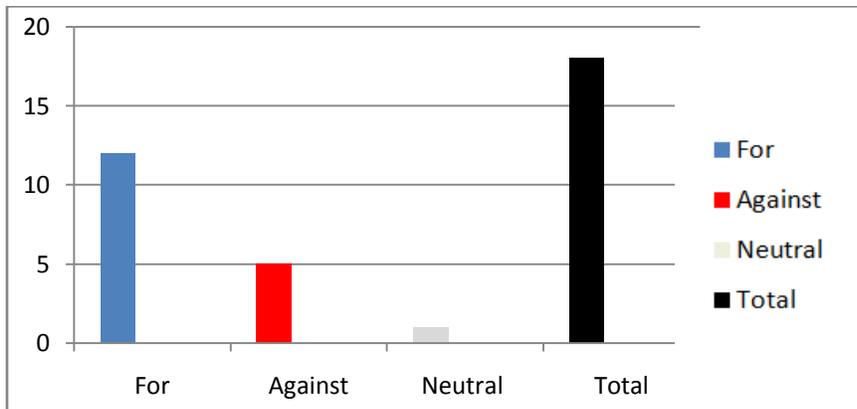
**Table 4.21 and pie chart 4.21.1** illustrate that 66% of the studied population concurs that the concept of demon and evil and the constant confession of Christians against these phenomena are biblical and real. But twenty eight percent (28%) believe it is a scheme to give credibility to false prophets, while five point six percent (5.6%) remains neutral

## 4.22 Positive Effect of Television Ministries on the continent

Respondents Views	Frequency	Percentage
It spreads the good news easily Helps people to hear the message daily and across all denominations	12	67%
It is good but the message needs to be scrutinised to avoid spreading heretic and deceive millions	5	28%
Not sure what it means	1	5%

Not sure what it means

### 4.22.1 Bar Graph



**Table 4.22 and Bar graph 4.22** illustrate that 67% of the examined group argues that Television ministry is of positive value to Christians as it easily spreads the message, and also useful for evangelism and spreading values worldwide. Twenty seven (28%) warn that it could be a means of spreading heretics, while six percent (5.6%) remains neutral.

#### 4.23 Respondents' Perception Average.

The perception average is the overall average of respondents views of either for, against or neutral.

Respondents' Average percent for the motion

##### Perception average percent of the motion

$$= \frac{56+61 + 72+ 61 + 72 + 61 + 66 + 56 + 56 + 61 + 56 + 61 + 78 + 56 + 66 + 61+ 72 + 66 + 67}{19}$$

$$= \underline{62\%} \qquad 19$$

Respondents' Average percent against the motion

##### Perception average percent of the motion

$$= \frac{39 + 28 + 22 + 28 + 22 + 22 + 28 + 33 + 28 + 28 + 33 + 33 + 17 + 33 + 28 + 33 + 28 + 28 + 28}{19}$$

$$= \underline{28\%}$$

Neutral Respondents'

##### Average percent

$$= \frac{5 + 11 + 5 + 11 + 6 + 11 + 6 + 11 + 5 + 11 + 11 + 6 + 4 + 17 + 17 + 6 + 0 + 5 + 22}{19}$$

$$= \underline{10\%}$$

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. Analysis and Discussion of the Research Findings

This section of the chapter focuses on the analysis of the findings of the study in relation to the research objectives which aim at answering the main research questions; whether God conditions his blessing upon humankind on giving? In other words, should we interpret wealth or luxuries and good health to mean blessing from God based on human giving power? As illustrated in the preceding chapters this section combines a qualitative approach with information acquired from literatures of the discipline and field experience.

In order to answer the main research question of the study, the following issues are discussed and analyzed; based on the findings.

- ❖ The effective communication of the message
- ❖ The role of the communicator
- ❖ The effect of the message and the generated perception of the receptor
- ❖ God of abundance and prosperity Christology
- ❖ Forces and battle ground
- ❖ Christian migration and factors that influence
- ❖ the growth of the movement on the continent
- ❖ Wealth and poverty
- ❖ Men of Rhema and the gifts of the Holy Spirit
- ❖ Synergism and Justification
- ❖ God of magic and divination.

These issues are deduced from the research findings as correlated views and perceptions of respondents and from the sources of literature used. Given the contrasting views and understanding of respondents an analysis is made to reflect on the objectives of the study. The theoretical framework of the study is also highlighted as a guidance tool in making meaningful arguments.

## 5.1 Interpretation of the Message – “Go and Tell the Word”

It was observed from the trends and patterns of data gathered, interpretation of the gospel is paramount and plays a vital role in the dissemination of the gospel to the masses (Pfeiffer 1908:163). Jesus instructed the disciples to go and proclaim to the world about his personality and his work. In order to have an effective and efficient communication three elements are involved; the communicator, the message, and the receptor (Kraft 1978:77). From Jesus’ instruction, it is crystal clear that the intended message is the gospel that portrays him as the savior, Lord, redeemer and Christ (Wicke 1992:239).

The interpretation of the gospel is essential in understanding the message and as well influences the perception generated from hearing the gospel. Hesselgrave (1978:220) argues that the language and exposition to the gospel transformed an individual to generate a belief. He noted that the truth of God is revealed in the propositions of the Old Testament and New Testaments understood in their historical and grammatical senses. He further observes that the Bible is not the product of holy men who intuited reality and attempted to convey some small measure of truth concerning ineffable experiences by means of inscrutable propositions.

Rather, the Bible is the product of holy men whose words were inbreathed, or inspired, words of God. Therefore, in citing Augustine, Hesselgrave argues that preachers must interpret and preached the gospel without altering its original message. “There are two things necessary to the treatment of scripture: A way of discovering (*modus inveniendi*) those things which are to be understood, and a way of expressing to others (*modus proferendi*) what we have learned (Hesselgrave 1978:26).

It is believed that the preacher is the custodian of his flocks who are the receptors of the message of Christ. For the preacher is called and ordained to confess in

accuracy and humility the message of scripture, by uncovering and recovering the main gospel of Christ (William 1981:17).

In the case of Prosperity gospel, the researcher attempts to establish that the 'encasing' of its message in the 'human context' (William 1981:17) has served as a fitting vehicle for its brand of communication on the continent. It is construed that preachers use indigenous systems and situations in providing interpretation of the word of God. The sixty-two percent (62%) perception average of the study in table 4.23, illustrates that the theology of prosperity is widely grounded and accepted on the continent.

The perception average means that 62% of the studied population concurred with or fully accepted the teachings of faith gospel. This observation is parallel to Jenkins' (2006:12) study that the Pentecostal movement has made about 350 million disciples for Christ worldwide. He stresses that the movement ranks as the largest Christian movement of the globe.

The socio-cultural position of the pastor in Christianity as the spiritual person who represents the Supreme Being makes his proclamation acceptable and considered infallible even if it goes to the extreme. Despite Prosperity Gospel preachers' global headway, they ignore the hermeneutical and exegetical principles of communicating the message of Christ to the world (Lausanne 2009, September). According to Kaiser (1994:19) exegesis and hermeneutics are vital to the proclamation of the gospel. These principles required that a preacher needs to carefully and systematically study a passage in order to arrive at its intended interpretation and meaning.

Kaiser further argues that a preacher needs to look up the history, the context of the text and the grammar of a given text before applying it to the situation of the receptor or audiences. For the precise meaning (William 1981:17) of a text is usually

influenced by its context. Similarly, to understand the events and messages of the bible the context must be thoroughly analyzed (Kraft 1978: 86-87).

The history of the text is also significant in preaching the gospel. It explains what happens at the time when the message was preached to the people. For the timing of the text also has a bearing on its meaning and purpose. Finally, the grammar of the text gives the message its exact meaning (Horton 1991:73-75).

However, prosperity preachers do not adhere to these ethics in preaching the gospel to the masses. Faith preachers' rejection of these core values leads to misinterpretation and manipulation of the gospel and gives it a different and wrong meaning. For instance, faith preachers use self-defined images and understanding in interpreting texts such as; John 10:10, Malachi 3.10, Mark 11.24, Job 1.3-9, and others. Another hermeneutical and exegetical error of Prosperity gospel in the study is the definition ascribed to faith.

The movement claimed that through the power of the mind, power of visualizing, and power of imagination Christians can bring into actualization their self-esteemed needs. Faith is considered a medium through which Christians can obtain the longing of their heart and mind by 'naming and claiming them by faith (Horton 1991:70). The movement's definition of faith altered the true meaning of faith as "things hoped for and certain of what one has not seen" (Archer 1957:71, cf Hebrew 11.1). Scripture explains that faith is the undoubted belief Christians have in the mysteries of God without seeking proof or evidence for the things of God. In this light, it can be argued further that Christians are saved by faith, live by faith, and receive a righteousness of God by faith. Christians have access to the grace of God, stand firm in their belief, receive the promise of the Spirit by faith, and wait for the second coming of Christ, all by faith (Oetting 1970:56-57). Oetting shows that the theology of the early church is Christ centric rather than human defined.

In contrast, Prosperity gospel uses faith to decree 'health, wealth and happiness depict faith as a matter of believing in created things rather than believing in God as the savior, the Lord and Liberator (Horton 1991:146). The concept of preaching the gospel from the economic perspective of 'needs and wants' makes the human race to focus on the greedy perception of consumerism (Winker 1994:44). 'Faith as things hoped for', points Christianity to the eternal things of assurance yet to come and refutes faith preachers' claim that it can be used as a medium of taking possession of one's wealth and happiness. Considering wealth from a human understanding Bonk (1994:90-99) argues that worldly wealth breeds pride, yields covetousness, derails Christians' repentance, illustrates a false sense of security and contempt for the poor.

The 'spiritualists' exposition of faith simply portrayed idolatry as it points humanity to worship an ungodly things (Horton 1994:146). Stott (1984:226, cf. Ephesians 1.3) also argues that during the Old Testament time God blesses, humanity with material things not because they decree them through faith but as a father having compassion on his children. That is why in the New Testament, He blesses humanity with eternal and spiritual things, in Christ. He blesses humankind with his unfading love and riches of eternal things that cannot pass away.

Hence humans' relationship with God is tainted and endangered by the false proclamations of prosperity preachers. These proclamations contravene Jesus' teaching that humanity cannot serve two masters at the same time and remain loyal to both. Christians cannot maintain a good life and luxury and have a good conscience simultaneously; one has to be scarified in favor of the other (Alcorn 1984:133-135). The argument is not meant to say that wealth is wrong but the obsession with it rather than the things of God makes it ungodly (Stott 1984:229).

Therefore, preachers need to systematically study a given text before preaching it to the masses to avoid proclaiming misleading messages to faithful children of God.

## 5.2 Prosperity Christology and God of Abundance

The data gathered at tables 4.6 and 4.16, and the general pattern and trend of the findings indicate that respondents' have redefined God in light of prosperity and wealth as a God who wants everyone to be rich and as such bestow wealth upon humankind. Table 4.16 shows that 78% of the studied population is of the perception that God want humanity to be affluent and enjoy the good of the world in all things. Similarly, in table 4.6, 72% of the respondents believe that giving and tithes can earn humanity God's blessing. The patterns show that these respondents narrow the personality of God to human definition of wealth.

These suppositions that God wants everyone to be rich contradict Jesus' conversion of Zacchaeus and his repentance message to the young ruler in Luke 18.18 or Matthew 19.19-29. In these cases, Jesus taught these characters to supplant their wealth to the things of God as a means of earning his salvation. He further noted that it would not be easy for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. To Zacchaeus who upheld to the instruction Jesus, said 'today salvation has come to this house', the reality is that Zacchaeus' willingness and eagerness to part with his wealth in favor of the things of God earn him salvation and as such Jesus wants humanity to follow suit (Alcorn 1984:18-21). Alcorn coined that the lesson in Jesus' teaching is that there is a powerful relationship between a person's true spiritual condition and his attitude and actions concerning wealth. Jesus' point that a rich person will find it difficult to enter the kingdom of God, illustrates the vices that are associated with human riches; an accumulation of wealth at the expense of the needy (like the case of Zacchaeus), greed, pride and others. It was of this bedrock that Peter (Peter. 5.2) reminded the leader of the early church not to be preoccupied with wealth but with the eagerness to serve the kingdom of God. Paul echoes this call that the lovers of wealth are not qualified to be leaders of the church (Alcorn 1984:86-87).

The aforementioned tables show that Christians following the faith gospel see God from an economic perspective rather than the Savior, merciful father, and maker of all things. Contrasting to the above perception Kolb (1993) explains the Christology of Jesus as a phenomenon about the works and person of Christ as stated in the Bible. He explains the personalities of Christ from his human and Divine nature that coexist within him. Basing his argument on scriptures Kolb accorded the following titles to Christ. The son of man – the son of the living God who came into the world to reconcile the world to God (CF Matthew 16:16). The Lord and God – A deity of Christ that points to him as God (Philippians 2:20). He expounded that Christ atoned the sin of the world, through his death and resurrection. Similarly, based on his work Kolb uses the following titles to depict the person of Jesus: as a prophet who reveals God to humankind (John 14:9), the light of God – (John 1:2), the medium and a message of God – 2 Corinthians 5:19, and the Messiah, the Promised Savior of the world.

On the other hand, a prosperity Christology's definition of God as an economic and commercial God ignores and deliberately objects to the biblical images ascribed to God as pointed out by Kolb. He is seen as the one who 'rain' money and luxuries on humankind for their faithfulness on an unprecedented scale like in Moses' time, in which He pours manna on the Israelites (Horton 1991:147). This ambivalent portrayal of God is purely unbiblical.

### **5.3 The Man of Rhema**

The study also discovered from respondents' view the stratification (inequality) of preachers as great or ordinary preachers. The question was posed to interviewees to uncover whether some preachers have more supernatural powers and a greater calling or office than others. Table 4.11 Shows that 56% of the respondents in the study believed that some preachers are greater than others based on their gifts of the supernatural powers, work and the Rhema he/she has in proclaiming the word of God. Great men of God are exalted and worshiped rather than being considered as

the servant of the 'most high' God. Rhema means the anointing or inspiration a preacher has to declare the direct word of God to the masses Shield (2004:125-129).

As a preacher of Rhema, he is ordained with extraordinary power and authority to evoke and decree the blessing of God upon Christians who comply with his guidance (Horton 1991:127). Like the scenario that transpired at the Answer of Jesus Christ Church, the pastor decreed on behalf of God that the 'time for the congregants breakthrough had come' and all their difficulties would come to an end should they comply with his command to give their last at that movement. It was decreed to the elder in front of the congregation that God would reward him with millions of school fees for giving or offering his son's school fees to the church. This is a big gamble that one would avoid taking but with a preacher declaring God's direct word in one's life, the congregant had no option but to comply with the mandate.

Similar situation occurred (Horton 1991: 127, 265) when Oral Roberts sold his "Blessing-Pact" to the public, he promised to decree the blessing of God in believer's life that purchases the item. As a man of Rhema, it was believed that whatever he declared in a believer's life will automatically happen, because whatever he says comes from God. A preacher of Rhema has powers to affect instantaneous healing, miracles, and exercise all the gifts of the Holy spirit; speak in tongues, prophesy, laying of hands and evoke God's instant blessing on Christians.

The supposition that a certain preacher has so much power from God earns him a 'watertight' (infallible) status among the people. Even if reason and logic tell that his proclamations are not obtainable, for doubting would mean lack of faith or not believing in the wonders of God. The question that comes to mind is, in cases where the proclamation or declaration from pastor did not manifest, does it mean that God change his mind about His promise. From the lay understanding of the researcher it is construed that whenever he commands his prophets to declare his word, the

declaration is bound to happen. "God is not human, that he should lay, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does He speak without acting? Does God promises and not fulfill? I have received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot change it," (Number 23.19). However, in the case of faith preachers, their declarations are not always fulfilled or manifested.

As a flashback, the researcher had numerous declarations and prophecies about his mother being healed should he comply with the Man of God's guidelines and principles. However, none of the proclamations manifested. The energetic message conveyed with claimed authority and seemingly backed by Scripture and strengthened by claims of the miraculous, has led many astray.

Contrary to faith preachers' description of a Rhema, Shield (2004:123-130)<sup>28</sup> argues that a Rhema is the word of God that speaks about his saving grace to humanity. It is the instruction that God gives humankind to proclaim the message of salvation to the world. Through the hearing of the word unbeliever can be saved by faith in Christ. Shield further states that an exchange takes place when the living word of God is preached to the masses; it stimulates a response that grows faith in a person. His argument is that faith comes by hearing the word of God, which is the mystery of God. In his view justification which is the divine righteousness is proclaimed in the word or Rhema of redemption. It is his direct word that imputes freedom and redemption to the world without human merit.

Based on Shield's argument it can be inferred that the explanation of Rhema by faith preachers conflicts with biblical revelation, and it is a departure from the historical Christian message. The message views Rhema as the living word of God handed down to his disciples for making more disciples and to save the world.

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<sup>28</sup> [www.google.com/book?id/eld](http://www.google.com/book?id/eld) Accessed: 2013-04-28

## 5.4 Wealth and Poverty

Another staggering finding in the study is the respondents' perception and understanding of wealth and poverty. From the findings in table 4.17, 56% of the studied population believes that misfortune, depression, suffering and destitution in the world originate from Satan and his evil forces in the universe. These believers attribute all human hardship to the devil, because according to them when God created the world and entrusted it to humanity it was free of suffering and poverty.

On the contrary, the bible teaches that poverty, natural misfortune and destitution in the world are mysteries beyond human understanding. Though there are isolated cases in the bible where God used Satan to tempt Job (Alcorn 1984:116, CF Job 1.6-22) as a means of testing his faithfulness cannot be interpreted that the suffering in the world comes from Satan. These perceptions concurred with Elijah Rufus' experience in Liberia, West Africa where his mental illness was attributed to evil forces. The religious person from whom he sought help advised him to declare spiritual warfare through fast and prayer against the demons that were tormenting him. Later after years of superstition Elijah was told by a medical practitioner that, in fact, his suffering was a result of a mental illness and not demons. Having done a lot of rituals and paid huge amount to spiritualists but in the end, he was cured by medical professionals.

Contrary to the belief that suffering, depression, illnesses and destitution originate from, Satan Jesus told his disciples that these phenomena were mysteries incomprehensible by humankind. Jesus stipulated that these spectacles do not normally occur as a result of human action or sin. The notion that wealth comes from God and poverty comes from Satan is an extreme theology that contradicts Jesus' teaching Matthew 16.25 and 1Timothy 6.10.

According to Alcorn (1984:56, CF John 9.3) Jesus' teaching that what will a man gain if he gains the luxury of the world, yet forfeiting his soul. Signified that human's

definition and manner of accumulation of wealth are contrary to the virtues and the kingdom of God and cannot endure forever. The passage in Timothy also explained that money which serves as the medium of earning wealth is the root of all evil. It shows that human terms of wealth are associated with arrogances, greed, suppression, and injustice against the less privileged. It is of this bedrock that Jesus said that it would not be easy for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

If the supposition that poverty comes from Satan is anything to go by, then it means that God is allowing Satan to torment 2/3 of the world population (cf Alcorn 1984:65). Because World Bank report shows 48% of the sub-Saharan live below the poverty line while 40% of Southeast Asia, 15% of south Asia, 12% of Latin America, and 1% of USA all find it difficult to fend for themselves daily. This means that this portion of the world population lives in an extreme poverty. The claim that wealth is a blessing from God is questionable because human understanding of wealth encompasses vices that deviate from Christian way of life and Christian virtues.

The argument is meant to say when human's fascination with wealth supersedes (Matthew 6.24) our ability to serve God as it is in the cases of faith preachers or when extreme importance is accorded to material possessions (Luke 16. 10-14) or when wealth is wrongfully gained (Luke 3.13-14) or become insensitive to the plague of the needy (Matthew 6.19-21, Luke 12.13-12) or wrongfully squandered then it is evil. It can also be argued from the passages above that money is indeed the root of all evil.

The evils that are associated with wealth are completely opposite to the way of God; therefore, it is unthinkable to argue that worldly wealth comes from God when in fact human definition of wealth comes with troubles and destruction (Alcorn 1984:64). In Christian services today sermons on the acquisition of wealth have replaced the true gospel of Christ on which the church stands (Alcorn 1984:102). It has created modern-day idolatry in the church.

In citing Savelle, Horton (199: 147) stated that Christians are not supposed to be 'poverty stricken' as a royal family of God. It can be said that God wants all Christians to be rich and live a luxurious life as defined by humankind. Similarly, one would take another step to argue from a biblical standpoint that poverty occurs as a result of natural happenings does not come from Satan as it is proclaimed or believed. Certainly, in the Old Testament God bestowed riches on individuals who lived upright lives before him.

He blessed them because they were humble and not because they demanded it or became obsessed with wealth (Alcorn 1984:191). However, in the New Testament, Jesus displayed the same humble spirit by becoming the sacrificial Lamb of God who became poor, so that believers will become rich eternally and enjoy the life yet to come. The riches bestowed on humankind by Jesus are the renewal of God's people and not temporal riches that are meant to eradicate poverty on earth. Due to the grace of God, the 'paradigm of riches in the old testament has shifted from temporal wealth to the wealth yet to come.

### **5.5 God of magic and divination**

From the findings in tables (4.19) and table (4.20) respectively it is apparent that 61% and 72% of the respondents expressed their conviction about the practice of the gift of the Holy Spirit. The respondents argued that through the Holy Spirit, God can empower Christians to perform miracles, prophesy or foretell the future of congregants, have dreams and visions, speak in tongues and received revelations from God. They are of the conviction that the gift of the Holy Spirit is a God-given entitlement to all Christians who live a spiritual life before him.

Likewise, Samuel (1978:14-23) also noted that believers are made to believe that these gifts can be used to achieve our God-given purposes. Respondents in their supposition treat these gifts of the Holy Spirit as a magical force that can unleash the power of the Holy Spirit to bring personal success among humankind. As a

flashback to the spectacle that unfolded at the Answer of Jesus Church, the pastor is believed to have some supernatural powers to foretell the future of the congregants. Through his powers, he proclaimed that God was about to bring them a breakthrough if only they adhere to the message of that day and respond by giving to the church in abundance. The superstition of expecting immediate miracles and blessings from God depict the work of the Holy Spirit as a magical force and divination that can bring automatic success to Christians.

Winker (1995:62) argues in this regard that humanity over time has sought to peer into the future with a crystal ball, throwing of dice, an oracle speaks through sacred smoke, and the so called materialistic and mechanical era is no exception. It can be inferred that the practice of prophesying in the consumerism, and materialistic era is no different from the false prophesy in the past. The Old Testament gave an account of a miracle and prophecy that took place during the biblical eras that were in fact, not from God but the practice of cultism.

The Bible prohibited these practices because they lead humanity to superstitions, and self-trust. In the perspective of Science of Religion, from the framework of Eliade (1987:89-95) it can be explained that religious men have accorded powers to objects believed to be the medium of receiving blessing and protection from the Supreme Being. This framework is meant to highlight the mindset of faith preachers who associate God's blessing with objects we offer unto him. Hence Alcorn (1984:32, 117) argues that this theology is 'man centered rather than God centered'.

## **5.6 Demonic Warfare and Battle Through Prayer**

It is construed from table 4.21 that 66% of the investigated group is of the opinion that God empowered Christians to bind and defeat the evil forces of this world. Their argument is based on Jesus' teaching that whatever you bind on earth will also be bound in heaven. They believe God bestowed special powers on Christians to declare war on the dark forces, principalities, Witchcraft and cast out demons from

the demon possessed and seek exceptional protection through prayers. Twenty-eight percent (28%) cautioned that these claims are misleading especially where Christians of today are so much preoccupied with transcendent warfare against forces deemed hindrance to human progress and success. In the African cultural orientation or context, Pretorius (1996:122-124) argues that every occurrence on the continent is often associated with spiritual things as either demonic or godly.

Most African believed that nothing happened without a cause so disasters and misfortune, in their eyes were caused by evil forces in the world. The church is seen as a replacer for the African traditional religion. Therefore, Christians looked up to the church and spiritual leaders to help them combat against forces that seek to harm them or hinder their progress in life. In this regard, the Bible is considered an object with an inherent power to defeat evil forces and spirits. It is used as a stool of binding demons, and all evil spirit that is why most believers in Africa often put it under their pillow at night as a surety of God's protection while asleep (Jenkins 2006:36). The passage of Ephesians 6.12 gives the practice a biblical backing.

In the quest for a spiritual home believers move or migrate from one denomination to another. Table 4.14 shows that believers become paranoid and move from one church to another when they believe that their current church is not meeting their spiritual needs. In the context of the study 44% of the studied population migrated to the faith churches because the missional churches could not combat demons, or protect them against demons or heal their incurable diseases. It can be argued that majority of the members of most faith churches were once members of the missional churches.

## **5.7 Synergistic Belief**

The findings in table 4.15 portray the perception of respondents from a synergistic perspective. The researcher wishes to term the belief that Christians can cooperate with God to earn his blessing as synergism. During the reformation period, the

'Majorism' coined the ideology that human effort or merit can earn humanity God's blessing (Engelbrecht et al 2005:527-528). Believers are made to believe that their good works and upright lives can earn humankind God's salvation.

The practice of alter called and the 'give and be blessed' gospel all fall in this category that since God has done his part in saving humankind, humanity has to do their part through good works in order to be saved. It holds the view that humanity has to do its part and cooperate with the Holy Spirit if they desire to be saved. The concept emphasizes that grace alone does not complete the salvation of humanity, a cooperative work between God and humankind causes Christian salvation.

Horton (1991:140) argues that this theology does not only place merit in good works but also denies the teaching of 'Sola Gracia' as is enshrined in the theory of justification. Horton buttressed his observation by citing Jimmy Swaggart, who denies that humanity is completely saved through justification by faith but argues that the righteousness in Christ requires a constant renewal through merit. 'A durability of Christian's justification by grace is based on obedience' (Horton 1991:143) and living out one's faith before God. On the contrast Swaggart propounded that Christians can lose their salvation through disobedience and neglect of God's will. However, in order to regain one's salvation a believer needs to be born again through the Holy Spirit. To be born-again, Christians need the redemptive work of God in their heart coupled with their cooperative effort or work. This concept brings to light the common saying in Liberia West Africa that "nothing for nothing." This implies that the salvation of God is not free, and that humankind must work tirelessly to earn it in full. Even, if it requires donating one's resources and wealth to earn God's salvation.

## 5.8 Conclusion

From the ongoing discussions, one can deduce that the Prosperity gospel is the "selling of blessings" much like the priests of the 15th century who "sold indulgences" in the church (Engelbrecht 2005:63-64). In assessing prosperity gospel from a missiological perspective it is indicative, therefore, that the concept is not distant from "Religious commerce." That is when a preacher or men of God conditioned God's salvation, blessing and favor on an exchange of a commodity, then it can be accorded that the gospel has been commercialized. In short, the gospel is termed to be commercialized in an event where it is construed that God can only bless humanity as per a monetary donation (Olivier 2003:56, 82-83)

In the argument, it can be deduced that prosperity gospel is detrimental to the sound teachings of scripture, which states that salvation and the blessings of God are the gracious and merciful work of the creator. According to (Lioy July 2007) faith gospel purely contradicts the teaching that humanity is not saved by the merits of our own deeds but by faith through the death and resurrection of Christ. He stresses that Paul addressed this issue to the Ephesians, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2.8-9). It is in this regard Werning (1975:1982-1983) argues that this prosperity theology completely deviates from the core teaching of scripture and replaces it with human interpretation and understanding.

It cannot be overemphasized that this theology totally diverges from the rich gospel of Jesus; that his kingdom is not of this world, and that humanity must set their eyes on the treasure in heaven. It also ignores his teaching that humankind cannot serve both God and wealth. This clearly shows that humankind cannot pursue wealth and at the same time serve God sincerely, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the

other. “You cannot serve both God and Money” (Alcorn 1984:124, CF Matthew 6.24).

Similarly, it can be argued that the narrative of Ashimolowo<sup>29</sup> in the previous chapter which is meant to illustrate the mindset and lifestyle of Prosperity gospel shows that these pastors are extravagant, wasteful and live at the expense of the masses. One can infer that there are many Ashimolowos who owns luxurious properties among their impoverished congregants today on the continent. To nurture their lifestyles, they become apostles or prophets of affluence because they carefully formulate their message to suit the condition of the people and preach what the people want to hear due to their perpetual hardship.

The persistent portrayal of material wealth as a sign of God’s blessing and poverty as a sign of curses or lack of faith accuses God of being unfair in the distribution of his blessing to humanity. Additionally, the theology gives the false impression that God’s blessing and miraculous powers are automatic toward the faithful who “Sow seed to the church” (Horton 1991:86). It is noted that these preachers often fail to use the gospel to provide a sustainable solution and comfort to the poverty of the continent.

Faith gospel presents a diversion that makes the people of the continent view Christ from the need-providing perspective, and as such Jesus is seen as the immediate provider, comforter and miraculous God, who would make them rich in the face of hardship, rejection and devastation. This formula has become the bedrock for the rapid growth of the theology on the continent (Lausanne September 2009).

The socioeconomic problems of the continent make the inhabitants look up to Jesus for immediate solution to their challenges (Jenkins 2006:89-93). It is believed that if Jesus can deliver the continent from the hands of the oppressors, he will surely meet all at the point of their need. He is the deliverer who redeemed the continent

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<sup>29</sup> (Jenkins 2006:93).

from the hands of tyrants and frees the people from the hands of bondage. This theology mostly emphasizes on what Jesus will do for the people in meeting their temporal needs rather preaching on what he did on Calvary to save humanity from the bondage of sin.

One advantage of the movement is the significant growth of membership in the faith gospel churches which indicates that Christianity is fast growing on the continent. The issue here is that the people need to be enlightened on how to contextualize and understand the gospel without manipulation (Lausanne, September 2009).

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **6.0 SUGGESTION: REFLECTION**

#### **Contextualization and Decontextualization of the gospel.**

The study demonstrated how prosperity gospel is making ‘headway’ through the inculturation of its message. It attempts to preach the gospel in the context of the African society. These preachers used the tool of contextualization to make their message meaningful, relevant, persuasive, and effective within the respondent culture. However, this mode of proclaiming the message presents a certain pitfall because the universalisms of Christian virtues enshrined in the Bible are compromised to suit the audience.

In this regard Hesselgrave (1978:86) observes that Paul warned Christians to ‘be diligent in presenting themselves as approved workmen who are not ashamed in handling with accuracy the word of truth’ (CF 2 Timothy 2:15). The accurate handling of the word according to Paul refers the decontextualization of the message in arriving at its supra-cultural form. That is, the culture of the bible that transcends all human culture and way of life. The peril and perversion that results from disregarding this caution is apparent in prosperity gospel that redefined social factors and structures as means of blessings.

#### **6.1 Two treasures**

Christians should watch out against preachers of two treasures. The study has demonstrated in the preceding arguments the beliefs that characterized faith gospel. The proclamation by faith preachers that God wants humanity to inherit the treasure of the world and at the same time inherit the kingdom of God is distorting and misleading.

The warning against preoccupation with materialism pervades scripture (Alcorn 1984:123-125). Jesus warned Christians not to store up treasures on earth but to

seek to inherit eternal things that are imperishable, Matt. 6.19-24. Jesus' teaching shows that there are two choices available. It means that you cannot be obsessed with wealth and at the same serve God sincerely.

Jesus gives Christians the opportunity in his teaching to exchange human wealth for eternal reward that is gained through faith in Christ as the lord and savior of the world. "Christ's primary argument against amassing material wealth is that earthly affluence is a poor investment." That cannot yield a lasting result, he put it that; "if they escaped moths and rust thieves, they cannot stand the test of eternity," Alcorn (1984:125). God's kingdom should always be the reference point of Christians at all time. Therefore, Christians should take a tenacious stand against the proclamation that has the predisposition of destroying the foundation of their faith like the preaching of 'two treasures.'

## **6.2 Man Centered Gospel**

The Church should concern itself at all times in evaluating the message and proclamation of different theologians within its fold. This suggestion is based on Horton's observation that faith preachers present gods to Christians other than the triune God. They preach that they can decree health and wealth, and happiness; 'that they are gods who can tell God what to do is tantamount to idolatry and is an affront to the sovereignty of God the father' (Horton 1991:263). These false proclamations and prophecies mock the ancient past (Horton 1991:264, Jeremiah 6.16). Faith preachers' preaching is mostly 'man centered gospel', which is meant to create excitement and in so doing, assures their followers that their direct insight or revelation is superior to the wisdom, orthodoxy and knowledge of historic Christianity.

Their proclamations and prophecies are inventive theories that contrast the plain teaching of scripture that is meant to bear Christological witness of Jesus as the redeemer of the world. The church should beware of false prophets who give an

impression that they have the 'in side 'scoop' of spiritual things concealed from the apostles, martyrs, doctors, and apologists for the last two millenniums (Horton 1991:262)

### **6.3 Human Greed**

The church should be observant against greedy preachers who employ deceptive means to exploit humble and sincere Christians of their earnings. Horton (1991:264) professes that Peter (2 Peter 2.1) cautioned believers of his time that "these teachers 'in their greed', will exploit you with stories they have made up." According to Horton, Peter (2 Peter 2.3, 4) stresses that these preachers are "experts in greed and are an accursed brood." Thus let believers emulate the example of Peter (Acts 8.20) to rebuke those who want to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit with money, and also claim to be the 'salesmen' of God. Greed is the mark of false prophets (Horton 1991:265).

False prophets place themselves as mediators between God and humankind. An example is the case of Roberts, who claim to have supernatural powers to pronounce God's blessing on believers (Horton 1984:123) should they act according to his pronouncement and guidance. The claim of being a mediator between God and humankind undermines the unique and exclusive role of Christ as an advocate, pleading the human case before the father. Graebner (1910:134-136) argues that Christ is the propitiation for the sin of all humankind. For no man has the power and authority to stand before God and tell him what to do, who to do it for, and when to do it, as Christ is the only one who pleads the cause of humankind before God.

### **6.4 Pastoral Office in Perspective**

Owing to the proliferation of economic Christologies on the continent and the globe at large, Christians should scale and investigate the human motive, and the objectives and offices of preachers who preach distorting and misleading gospel. The study has illustrated from the findings the misunderstanding of the pastoral

ministry by Prosperity gospel preachers who are so concerned about temporal riches. The impact of using the pastoral office to mislead congregants is damaging, spiritually unhealthy and deflects people from the main message of eternal salvation to 'the salvation of wealth'.

Muller (1984:11-18) in his argument describes the pastoral office as a call to humanity to proclaim the kindness of God, his saving grace, mercy, salvation and to pronounce the forgiveness of God to humankind. This means that men of God are called to apply the means of grace, in corporate and individual settings and to meet the spiritual needs of the people God entrusted into their care. Another 'eye opening' argument of Muller that relate to this is his observation that many preachers have drifted away from preaching the true gospel toward worldly views, secular values, and promotion of human needs and success. This argument sounds the alarm bell that the church should take an 'apologetic approach' to root out ill preaching from its fold.

The source and focus point of all Christian preaching is in Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for the salvation of humankind. The bedrock for all Christians preaching is the revelation in Christ, which is given in the Holy Scripture that is inspired to teach people who they are, who God is and what he has done for humanity; so that all Christians can be equipped to rebuke and reject the false proclamations in doing the will of God (Muller 1984:260-61, CF 2 Timothy 3.16-17). It can be further argued that Christians should study to use scripture at all time as a foundation to rebuke, correct, and direct others from taking the wrong path in leading God's people.

Preachers are called and ordained to be shepherds of God's flocks that are entrusted to them, serving as overseers and not because the preacher must, but of his willingness and as God wants him to be, not greedy for money and material things but eager to serve and lead the children of God to the right path and direction, (1984:263). Thus, the church should use the authority of scripture as demonstrated by Muller to deem as irrelevant faith preachers whose gospel is egocentric, and

does not clearly define the will and purpose of God to the people. Those, whose preaching focuses on the accumulation of wealth rather than using scripture as guidelines in meeting the spiritual needs of their folks, should be rebuked.

Misinterpretation and misapplication, in the proclamation of the gospel tends to have a negative effect on how some believers perceive the church. Stiton (2003:42-43) in his study uncovered that some respondents in his findings view the church as 'Moneymaking galore', due to faith preachers' concept of prosperity. The respondents in Stiton's findings used time as a factor in judging the prohibited gospel as inappropriate teaching of the church. The respondents' remark that "now a day you go to church to become prosperous," show that they have insight into the right gospel of the past that has been altered by faith preachers. This incident is cited to encourage believers to follow suit and condemn prosperity gospel like these characters mentioned by Stiton. The church should take a radical approach to restore the appropriate and credible gospel of Christ.

### **6.5 Implication or Conundrum of Economic Gospel**

From the on-going discussions and findings, one does not need to be omniscient to discern the threat, danger, and challenges prosperity gospel poses to the proclamation of the church. The underlying argument is that self-proclaimed prophets use the power of scripture to influence and deceive Christians with their unrealistic claims. In their preaching, they refocus the heart of the gospel to fund raising, unverified miracles, claims of revelations and visions from God. They use their eloquences to stimulate the minds of their audiences to listen to unimportant messages that overlook the systematic exposition of the word that direct the mind and soul to the triune God.

Instead, they give great importance to subjects like marriage, wealth, giving, and other emotional issues. The saving faith in Christ, the forgiveness of sin, and the hope of eternal life are substituted by gospel of material wellbeing, which fails to

provide a sustainable answer to a human spiritual and eternal problem. It is thus observed that many Christians around the globe have been duped by such teachings into a false faith and false expectations and when they (expectations) are not satisfied, they 'give up on God', or lose their faith altogether and leave the church.

The replacement of the traditional call to repentance and faith with a call to give money, the failure to preach the whole gospel message of sin, faith and eternal hope, ignoring or contradicting the New Testament teaching with influential preaching of wealth, all endanger the true gospel and Christian values. Therefore, the church should remain critical and renounce the phenomena of Prosperity gospel as heresy of the twenty-first century.

## **6.6 Recommendation**

The researcher wishes to vigorously deny the claim of Prosperity gospel that our blessings from God are based on giving. Biblical findings affirm that indeed God promised to reward his children in the Old Testament with material wealth based on their obedience, but in the dispensation of grace, in Christ, He blesses humanity 'with every spiritual blessing' (Eph. 1.3), and redirects humankind to the everlasting riches yet to come. In this light, the researcher wishes to recommend that Christians should seek to live a simplify life free of temptations and worldly desires. In short let us not 'conform to the pattern of this world, but seek to be transformed by renewing of the mind. In other words, Christians should test all things and live according to God's purpose and will'.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>(Roman 12.2)

## 6.7 Conclusion

It can now be accorded that from the arguments given above my discernment of a term, the Prosperity gospel as “Commercialized Gospel,” “holds water” because these men of God present the message in a monetary exchange manner. The “commercialized gospel” while perhaps has its roots in some scriptural teaching of Christ, nevertheless, fails to portray the true scriptural doctrine on the continent. Because the practice of selling the gospel is contradictory to the fundamental teaching of the gospel that humanity must preach the “message” to all nations. To put it uprightly this practice is unethical, unacceptable and unbiblical. In other words, Jesus warns humanity against false prophets who deceive, mislead, misinterpret, and above all manipulate the scripture and His purpose of saving humankind.

Therefore, the failure to preach the gospel in its actuality is detrimental to the existence of the church and its teaching on the free grace and salvation of God. The manner of presenting God’s blessing and favor in an exchange scenario creates the picture that we cannot earn God’s favor freely. In this respect, I would like to point out that these preachers fail to be ‘the salt and light of the world’ as commanded by Christ. This unbiblical, unethical and deplorable manner of disseminating God’s word is steered by greed. According to Platt (2010) this greed that has its root in the “American dream” has over shadowed the true biblical mission of God of making disciple of all nations. Based on the assessments mentioned the word of God should not be used in any human context or manipulated to suit our understanding or given condition. From the discussion herein, Prosperity gospel refers to situations, persons and scenarios in which the gospel is preached in a material-gain fashion. However, despite the weaknesses of Prosperity gospel, we cannot question the authenticity of the message they preach, but we must continue to stand against their manner of interpreting and explaining the message to our fellow Christians. It is imperative therefore; that the gospel is preached in its context, explained well, and the application of the message is in line with the actual text. Let us stand for the truth as

it is stipulated in the Bible, which is the optimal of all doctrinal matters. The continual attempt to manipulate the biblical doctrine of Christ by the Prosperity gospel preachers has the potential to cause ineffectiveness and inefficiency to the fundamental teaching of the church.

In conclusion, we must be content with what we have and serve God without any condition. In this regard let us pay heed to Timothy's advice on the matter:

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grieves."(1 Timothy 6.6-10).

### **6.8 Limitation of the study:**

The major problem encountered in this research was the lack of literature on the topic. Secondly, the books did not explicitly describe Prosperity gospel and its effect on the African scene, thus making the researcher to infer from the writers' ideas. Many of the respondents showed unwillingness to discuss the subject in detail, as they regarded the subject as undermining their denomination and attack on their spiritual leaderships. The larger size of the survey population would have given the study more representatives of opinions across the continent. However, the unwillingness of the respondents limited the ability of the researcher.

### **6.9 Area for further study:**

The researcher wishes to recommend that further study is required to follow up the miracles and healing by faith gospel. A study is required to verify the medical reports and history of individuals and people claimed to be healed. Furthermore, the study also needs to investigate the reason for the respondents' unwillingness to share information about their church.

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## 6.10 Appendixes A:

### Daily Invitation or Flyer of Prosperity Gospel

*Worship with us @*  
*(Home of Signs & Wonders)*

**Experience**  
**Double Portion**  
*That will move you to the*  
**Next Levels**

• Salvation • Prosperity • Victory • Healing & Deliverance • Peace & Progress  
• Family & Marital Breakthrough • Business & Career Breakthrough

**WEDNESDAYS**  
Communion Service  
5.30pm

**SUNDAYS**  
Liberation Hour Service  
1st Service: 8.00am  
2nd Service: 10.30am

Address: 506, Frederick Corner Rose-Etta Street, Pretoria  
Telephone: 011 327 29 1, 012 5988

Pretoria.

- a. The flyer calls on Christians to attend divine service at the home (Church name withheld) of signs and wonders
- b. The flyer claims that they will experience the divine blessing of double portion, a belief that was adopted from one of the songs of a famous gospel group in South Africa.
- c. For attending the divine service Christians will automatically enjoy the following blessings:
  1. Salvation

2. Prosperity
3. Victory (against all odds)
4. Experience the healing power of God
5. Peace and tranquillity in their lives
6. Family and marital breakthrough
7. Business and career breakthrough

The second side of the flyer shows unverified claims and testimony of believers who have experienced the breakthrough of God.

# Testimonies

Testimonies are a confirmation of God's spoken word according to Mark 16:20. There are diverse testimonies of the supernatural moves of God among his people at all our services. You will have a definite testimony as you worship with us.



## SUNDAY SERVICES FREE TRANSPORT SCHEDULES

### MIRACLE JOB PROVISION

My name is Thulani, I would like to thank God for new job provision. For the past weeks I've been to many interviews that I have been counting on but unfortunately they came with a negative feedback that I was far from the workplace (Johannesburg). Honestly, that bothered me, but as a Winner I didn't stop praying. 2 days after, I received a call from the company which is based in Durban, that they want me urgently. They said there was no need for interviews, all they want is for me to be there by the following Tuesday to resume work. I return all the Glory to God.

Brother

### MULTIPLE DIVINE HEALING

I had been having this tooth ache for some times, I told myself that I am not ready to lose another tooth. I am a lady and I won't find it funny if I didn't have any more teeth in my month. The pain started again earlier in the week and it had been causing me a lot of sleepless night and stress. On Friday, it was joined by this excruciating heart burn, so I decided to do a vigil. I said "If the earthly physician doesn't have a permanent solution to these issues then let me turn to the heavenly physician that can heal and replace at the same time". I took the Holy Communion and prayed, applying the blood of Jesus. Instantly the pain disappeared. The second day, I was having chest pain due to the nature of my work. I prayed for it and the pain has gone. I am so grateful to God for His numerous healings in my life. I returned all the glory to Him.

Sister

You can SMS your prayer request(s) to our prayer line:  - Somebody will pray for you.

## 6.10.1 Appendixes B:

### Interview Questions

#### Designed Questions for Focus Group on Prosperity Gospel

Introduction of The interviewer: I am a Graduate student from the University of Pretoria; I am conducting a research on the Debate Prosperity Gospel. I will be grateful if you could be one of my co-researcher (interviewee) for this topic.

1. I am sure you have heard about the theological debate on topic Prosperity Gospel. What is your understanding of this issue -Prosperity Gospel?
2. Other theologians believe that prosperity has much to do with giving what is your understanding of giving in Christianity?
3. How do you view God in regard to giving?
4. What comes to your mind when the issue of giving is discussed?
5. Do you believe that our human actions like giving can earn us God's blessing?
6. Are you a baptized member of this church? (In referring to respondent's current place of worship), If no where were you baptized?
7. How did you become member of this church?
8. How do you call your Pastor or Preacher?
9. Do you believe everything your pastor preaches or teach?
10. What is the teaching of your church on offering and tithes?
11. Do you believe that if we buy holy water, holy oil and other holy substances God can use them as a point of contact to bless or heal our sicknesses?
12. How often do you attend prophetic and healing services?
13. What is your understanding of "sowing prophetic seed"?
14. In your view can our faithful seed earn us God's blessing?
15. How does God call people to ministry?
16. How do you rate a preacher as a great "Man of God"?

17. There are many faith gospel Churches today in Africa with various forms of prayers, what is your view on these forms of praying?
18. How would you feel if you were to take a relative to a healing service that was not healed?
19. Do you believe that humanity can still enjoy the spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible today?
20. In your view what are some of the influences that make people to choose a particular church or break away from a particular denomination?
21. What is your view about the practice where congregants are asked to surrender their lives to Christ?
22. What is your understanding of Miracles?
23. In your view do you think it is God's will to make all believers rich?
24. How do you understand the "Faith teachers" explanation of adversity, poverty, and depression in the lives of believers?
25. What is your view on Jesus' advice that believers should be careful against false prophets in the world?
26. The performance of miracle, laying of hands and prophesy in the faith churches has become point of contention between the missional churches and the faith movement. As a Christian what is your view on this issue.
27. In your view why do we give tithes and offerings to the church?
28. Similarly, there are preachers who claim that God communicate with them direct and that they see visions daily from God. What is your view and understanding of visions?
29. In faith churches there are testimonies and confessions of witchcraft and demon possess during church services. This practice has drawn stern criticism from the traditional churches. What is your view on this practice?
30. In our time how would you describe the effect of television ministry? Either positive or negative.

31. In your view what are some of the factors that contribute to the rapid growth of Faith ministry in Africa (Especially in your area)?
32. If you realize that your prophet or Apostle is doing or teaching something wrong, will you confront him?
33. How often do you go church? Or how active are you in the church?
34. What is your understanding of the Bible? Or how do you regard the Bible?
35. As a Christian do you see visions? How will you differentiate natural instinct, dream and vision?
36. How will you feel if you were labelled as a witch craft by a preacher and ask to confess?
37. In your own view who do you consider a faithful Christian?
38. What will you propose as a guideline against false teacher or preachers?
39. There is different understanding of the Holy Spirit what is your view on that matter?
40. To conclude this interview what is your advice on the subject matter "Prosperity Gospel"?

## 6.10.2 Appendixes C:

### Definition of Terminology: In order of how the words were used

**Que Dieu vous benisse, pour toujours** May God blesses you always.

**Colloquial *language*** informal language that does have rules, and cannot be used in formal situations.

**Wealth** An abundance of valuable material possessions or resources; riches. b. The state of being rich; affluence.

**Faithful seed** It is the gift given to God by believer to be germinated and except harvest.

**Commercialised Gospel** the gospel that preaches financial reward and then except a return on gift (usually of money) as a “harvest”  
Material reward for a giver with a perceived value, in other word it is an attempt to sell the *gospel* to believers

**Missiology** the theological study of the mission of the church, especially the character and purpose of mission work.

**Yardstick** a standard used to compare similar things in order to measure their value or standard upon which one can earn a reward.

**Breakthrough** Special blessing from God

**Hopelessness** providing no hope beyond optimism or hope, desperate

**Prophet** A person regarded as an inspired teacher or proclaimer of the will of God: "the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah".

**Affluence** abundant wealth

<b>Phenomenon</b>	A fact or situation that is observed to exist or happen, especially one whose cause is in question.
<b>Proclamation</b>	A public or official announcement, especially one dealing with a matter of great importance
<b>Propagation</b>	Spreading of something (a belief or practice) into new regions.
<b>Imperishable</b>	undying, immortal, eternal, indestructible, deathless
<b>Inheritance</b>	The action of inheriting: "the inheritance of traits".
<b>Resurrection</b>	The action or fact of resurrecting or being resurrected.
<b>Justification</b>	means to set something right, or to declare righteous. ... This legal act means Christ's righteousness is imputed, or credited to believers.
<b>Redemption</b>	The action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil: "God's plans for the redemption of His world".
<b>Salvation</b>	Deliverance from sin and its consequences.
<b>Christological</b>	the branch of theology dealing with the nature, person, and deeds of Jesus Christ. 2. An interpretation of the nature, person, and deeds of Christ.
<b>Lutheran</b>	characterized by the theology of Martin Luther.
<b>Gnostics</b>	a heresy which is made up of a diverse set of beliefs. It is the teaching based on the idea of <i>gnosis</i> (a Koine Greek word <i>meaning to know</i> ).

<b>Heretics</b>	A person believing in or practicing religious heresy. A person holding an opinion at odds with what is generally accepted.
<b>“The sowing of seed”</b>	Giving bountifully to the preacher and God’s ministry with an expected reward and something worthy of appreciation from.
<b>Mega profit</b>	large or overwhelming profit.
<b>Jackpot</b>	the chief prize or the cumulative stakes in a game or contest
<b>Individualism</b>	a doctrine that the interests of the individual above all other things.
<b>Materialism</b>	a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.
<b>Universalism</b>	the theological doctrine that all people will eventually be saved.
<b>Secularization</b>	the activity of changing something (art or education or society or morality etc.) so it is no longer under the control or influence of religion
<b>Krahn</b>	A tribe within Liberia, West Africa
<b>Rhema (ῥῆμα in Greek)</b>	literally <i>means</i> an "utterance" or "thing said" in Greek. It is a word that signifies the action of utterance.
<b>Dispensation</b>	is usually <i>defined</i> as a "period of time"
<b>Reconciliatory</b>	promoting peace
<b>Splendours</b>	great beauty that attracts admiration and attention