

FROM POVERTY TO PROSPERITY

By John Gagliardi



Of all the most controversial subjects we face when talking about the “marketplace” or “workplace” ministry, is the hoary old chestnut – should Christians be rich? Ingrained in our collective Christian memory for some reason is a lingering sense that poverty is somehow holy and sacred, while wealth and prosperity are “worldly” and somehow evil.

As I talk to church and workplace groups around the world, it never fails to amaze me that no matter how hard we try to drum in to people that prosperity coupled with integrity is God’s will for us, there always remains a lingering sense of guilt, often buttressed on the totally erroneous teaching that Jesus and the disciples were poor and penniless.

Christian leader and visionary C. Peter Wagner in his seminal new book, *The Church in the Workplace*, grasps this nettle firmly in both hands, and prophetically lays the issue to rest in a chapter entitled, “From Poverty to Prosperity”. In it, he talks of another controversial topic – the end-time wealth transfer – and in fact states unequivocally that the Kingdom of God in the 21st Century will not advance until two things are in place:

- The activity of the Body of Christ in the workplace; and
- The transfer of wealth.

He also believes that for this to occur, “recognized, productive workplace apostles must be functioning in the workplace”. Peter sees workplace or marketplace apostolic leaders as a crucial link between the emerging church in the workplace and the promised end-time transfer of wealth.

He says: “Since God has said that He desires to release wealth, but we haven’t seen widespread release yet, there must be a timing factor involved. While there are some indications at this writing that the release is already beginning, it is still worthwhile to ask what God might be waiting for.

“I believe that getting workplace apostles in their proper places would be one thing He is waiting for. Another is getting rid of a ‘poverty mindset’. When this release comes, which it will, we will enter a time of abundance.

“Some will receive it, and some will not. Those who remain bound by the spirit of poverty will lose out. A poverty mind-set is not just a psychological problem. We are dealing with nothing less than a company of high-ranking demons assigned by the enemy to hinder the people of God from stepping up and taking their rightful dominion over God’s creation.”

Peter states categorically that it is God’s will for Christians to prosper, and quotes Deuteronomy 28: 1-14 and 3 John 2 to back up his claim. Abundant prosperity is ours if we obey God, and that prosperity is “multi-dimensional” with four facets:

- Material
- Spiritual
- Physical
- Social

He believes that if prosperity is a promised blessing, depending on our obedience to God, then equally if we disobey God, we come into poverty as a curse: “Poverty is nothing less than a curse. The first part of Deuteronomy 28 ... promises prosperity to those who obey the Lord. However, the second part of the same chapter, verses 15-68, promises poverty for those who refuse to obey.”

Peter believes that the latest and strongest step away from a poverty mindset is what he calls the “transfer of wealth movement”. He says that when the wealth is released, it will come to us through three main processes:

1. The Supernatural Transfer – God at times chooses to transfer wealth to His people supernaturally. The wealth is not produced by works of the hands of those who receive it. A Biblical example is the story of the Israelites leaving Egypt.
2. The Power to Get Wealth – God also transfers wealth by giving His people the power to get wealth. This is set forth in Deuteronomy 8: 18 – “And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the power to get wealth, that He may establish his covenant which He swore to your fathers”.
3. A Combination – A third way of activating this transfer is a combination of supernatural action plus the power of God on the person of the recipient. This may well be the most common. Even the Israelites who left Egypt had to take action in order to make it happen. They didn’t produce the wealth that God had prepared for them, but they wouldn’t have received it if they hadn’t taken what God supernaturally provided.

He goes on: “The Bible says that if we do the right things with money, including giving to the poor, widows and orphans, ‘God [will] bless you in all the work of your hand which you do’ (Deut 14: 29). In other words, as you go about your daily work, a supernatural dimension will enter the picture to make what you are doing more profitable than ever before.

“To convince Christians to believe the lie that piety equals poverty, the spirit of poverty would have to convince us that Jesus, our role model, was poor. Amazingly, this demon has had tremendous success in doing that.

“No, the idea that Jesus was poor is a myth. He was prosperous and yet He was pious! This is not good news for the spirit of poverty!”

According to Peter, the spirit of poverty is not the only “pothole” on the road to Godly prosperity. He identifies four others:

1. The spirit of greed – an excessive desire for material possessions;
2. The spirit of covetousness – a desire for specific things we are not supposed to have (such as our neighbour’s wife, or ox, as we see in the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20: 17); covetousness is identified with idolatry (see Colossians 3: 5)
3. The spirit of parsimony – parsimony is stinginess; it can cause rich people to be misers and to live in poverty even though they have wealth;
4. The spirit of self-reliance – a tendency to believe that once we have wealth, we don’t need God; wealth grants power, and we begin to think that we are so powerful that we can do anything we want by ourselves.

Peter Wagner’s prescription for Christians to move from poverty to prosperity is fourfold:

1. Operate in the Opposite Spirit – when we identify a principality we identify as the spirit of poverty; we move in the opposite spirit – the spirit of prosperity. We need to cultivate physical prosperity by taking vitamins, eating a healthy diet, taking nutritional supplements, having annual physical exams, exercising and losing excess weight. We need to cultivate spiritual prosperity by praying, reading God’s Word, going to church, receiving deliverance and staying filled with the Holy Spirit. We need to cultivate material prosperity by learning how to receive and enjoy money and material things, and how to multiply our wealth. If we are moving in the opposite spirit, we will be grateful for sufficiency, but we will go beyond that and expect abundance.
2. Listen to the prophets – The Bible says, “Believe in the Lord your God and you will be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper” (2 Chron. 20: 20) ... Believe the prophets, and you will prosper!
3. Delight in the Law of the Lord – recognize that God is our Creator, and follow the Operator’s Manual. “Blessed is the man (whose) delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in His Law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither, and *whatever he does shall prosper*” (Psalm 1: 1-3). Read the Book and delight in His Law. Don’t break the rules and the door will be open for prosperity.
4. Follow John Wesley’s Advice – “Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can”. This means you should work for the highest possible salary, given your circumstances and calling. When you save, you should invest the money to get the highest rate of interest or the highest return on the stock market or the highest profit on venture capital. Jesus commended the men who doubled their two talents and five talents, but scolded the one who did not invest the one talent for a return. Tithing is the minimal amount that you should give, because by tithing, you are simply returning to God the 10 percent that is His ... Your offerings over and above the tithe are what will begin to break the spirit of poverty and bring prosperity (Luke 3: 8-10).

C. Peter Wagner of course is only one of a growing number of Christian leaders and thinkers who are strongly espousing the marketplace ministry movement, as we understand and embrace that we are part of a church that takes two different but unified forms – the Nuclear church and the extended church. We are – or should be – part of both, and as we begin to operate in the spirit of multi-dimensional prosperity and integrity, rejecting the demonic spirit of poverty, we will start to see amazing and supernatural examples of God’s provision as we go through our daily lives.

As it is written: Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him (1 Corinthians 2: 9).