

## The prosperity gospel in black and white

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November 12, 2014

Last winter, I wrote a somewhat [contrarian blog post](#) on the prosperity gospel. I never did endorse it, but I was trying to talk about the fact that for those on the lower economic margins that happen to think about money, they are more willing to talk about finances and how this relates to their walk with God.

Something made me think about the prosperity gospel again and I noticed something about most of the critics of it: they're all white.

Now, I can only make that statement from what I've observed. Maybe there is an African American pastor railing against the prosperity gospel. But there's something telling that there seems to not be a person of color who obsesses over the prosperity gospel in ways that whites do.

I think there is a reason for all of this. Here are some observations that I've made:

African Americans and Latinos think about money more, especially those on the lower rungs of the economic ladder. African Americans and to a large extent Latinos tend to be more money-insecure than white Americans. It's not uncommon for whites to have more in savings and more in terms of wealth that might have been passed down to the next generation. That is almost never the case when it comes to most people of color. Even those who make into the middle class are more insecure because they don't have wealth built up. Being African American and married to a white person, I can tell you there are stark differences between our families when it comes to wealth. So, if you have less, you will be thinking more about how to pay this or that bill which means you think about money a lot. Now if you are an African American and finances are tight and you hear some preacher talk about prosperity, do you scoff at this? Probably not. Why? Because this pastor understands what you are going through and is preaching a way out—a lifeline. I think prosperity preaching is bad, but let's face it; it's a tempting message for a real reason.

If you are a middle class white person, you are more than likely to have a fair sum of money saved up, or your parents have a good sum that you can borrow. You also

probably have some inheritance of some kind (stock, land, etc.) that you can use. In short, white Americans don't tend to think so much about money problems. It's easy to warn of the dangers of prosperity gospel while you are sitting on financial reserves.

Again, there is a lot that is bad about the prosperity gospel. But that doesn't mean that prosperity or finances shouldn't be talked about—especially when money is such a big part of the lives of many people of color, not because of greed, but because they don't have much of it and the needs are many.

*Originally posted at [The Clockwork Pastor](#)*