

New Year. New Life. New You.
The Abundant Life
John 10:10

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;
I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*

- I. Who wants an abundant life?: A Biblical definition
 - Context from John 9
 - John 10/Shepherd & Sheep (cf Ezekiel 34)
 - Saves
 - Knows
 - Leads
 - Provides (1 Timothy 6:7-11, 17-19)
 - Protects
- II. This is success: A worldly definition
 - Material Wealth
 - Ease/Pain-Free
 - Status/Power
 - Self-Absorption/Actualization
 - Satan's Lies (Genesis 3:1-7; Luke 4:1-13; 1 John 2:15-17)
- III. God wants you to prosper: A counterfeit definition
 - Prosperity Theology (Word-Faith, Seed Faith, Name It/Claim It)
 - False Gospel/Heresy
 - Galatians 1:6-10; 2 Corinthians 11:1-4; Irenaeus quote; Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:29-30; Jonathan Leeman quote
 - Truth = Focus on gospel, person of Jesus Christ, glory of God
- IV. The Abundant Life in 2015
 - Hebrews 13:20-21

For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness....

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. (1 Timothy 6:7-11, 17-19)

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (Genesis 3:1-7)

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry. And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.'" And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO GUARD YOU,' and, 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'" And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is said, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'" When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time. (Luke 4:1-13)

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:6-10)

I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me. For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully. (2 Corinthians 11:1-4)

"Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced (ridiculous as the expression may seem) more true than truth itself."

Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1:2

Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. (Matthew 7:15)

I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. (Acts 20:29-30)

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21)

"Here's a prediction: as Western culture increasingly turns against Christianity, the prosperity gospel will keep growing. It won't be the only false teaching whose stock rises in a spiritually bearish market. Theological liberalism in some fangled form will always lurk in the shadows, ready to mug anyone who lets down their guard. But the prosperity gospel is a uniquely attractive stock in a materially acquisitive and entitlement-driven age, so expect its share price to keep rising on exchanges around the globe. This trade is hot! God wants to provide you with gabled double-front doors, leather interiors, satisfying sex, and an all-around better you. It's like a wedding between a Wall Street shark and a self-help guru, all decked out in the paraphernalia of a Christian bookstore....

Prosperity is a different kind of sneaky than theological liberalism because it usually affirms the doctrines you affirm, at least with its lips. Liberalism appeals to the intellect, prosperity to the appetite. But it's like liberalism in two ways: it exploits the evangelical inclination toward an attractional model of ministry, which builds on common ground with the culture; and it enters church buildings and sermon manuscripts wearing Christian camouflage. It sneaks in softly, gently, not with the BLING BLING of the Preachers of L.A., but with a nodding and sympathetic, "You want a healthy marriage? Jesus wants that, too." Which of course is true. Yet little by little, the Bible becomes a handbook to your best life. Church morphs into a therapy session. And God and his gospel exist for your sake, not you for his. Hello, Shadow Christianity."

Jonathan Leeman, Editor's Note from IX Marks Journal: Prosperity Gospel (Jan-Feb 2014)