

7 Signs of Prosperity Pimps

I believe very strongly that God wants to bless His people and give them an abundant life (John 10:10). I also believe poverty is a curse and something the gospel reverses when biblical principles are applied properly.

Furthermore, I do not believe pastors and church ministers should take a vow of poverty and that churches should give ample compensation to their lead pastors. That being said, I have been appalled by what I am calling in this article “prosperity pimps”—which are those who use the word of God primarily as a means of personal profit (1 Tim. 6: 5).

The following are seven signs of prosperity pimps:

1. When the focus of the ministry is always raising money

I have no issue with churches and ministries taking large segments of a service at times to raise money. After all, without money ministry cannot continue. What I am referring to in this point is the fact that some preachers use their platform to be purveyors of “prosperity” every time they minister.

When raising money is the primary focus of a minister every time they have a platform—that is a red flag to me (and a sign they may be a prosperity pimp!).

2. When money is used to obtain a blessing

There are some so-called prophets who charge money for personal prophecies (more money is for a “life-transforming word” than for a regular word from “God”).

The apostle Peter rebuked Simon Magus when he attempted to purchase the gift of God with money (Acts 8). God judged Christianity and used Martin Luther to launch the Protestant Reformation because the Roman Catholic Church was practicing

“indulgences” which was a way of purchasing an exemption from punishment for some types of sins.

In spite of these biblical and historical facts, some religious leaders still preach and/or practice the sin of “Simony” in their ministry.

3. When the leader lives lavishly off the church salary

Although I believe a church or ministry should provide ample compensation for its leader (the apostle Paul calls it “double honor” in 1 Tim. 5), prosperity pimps receive huge salaries from tithes and offerings to support their lavish lifestyle. This is especially egregious when said pastor is ministering in a poor community, since they are living luxuriously off the backs of people who can barely pay their rent!

(In high-end economic communities, a wealthy church is expected to grant a larger than usual salary to their pastor so they can comport with the culture of the congregation.) However, lest we be quick to judge pastors who have a high standard of living—many have other forms of income (such as speaking engagements, book sales, personal businesses and other forms of income to supplement their church salary) so that they do not place an undue financial burden upon their congregation. Some wealthy pastors I know don’t even receive a salary from their church because their outside business is so lucrative.

4. When the Bible is twisted to prove a point

The Bible talks about money a lot, since it is a primary means of growing in biblical stewardship. Most of Jesus’ parables dealt with the use of money, and Paul devoted two whole chapters to giving offerings (2 Cor. 8, 9) and only one whole chapter on “the greatest of all things” which is love (1 Cor. 13).

That being said, “prosperity pimps” typically distort

Scripture and prove text biblical passages to overstate a point they are trying to make (most likely regarding the blessing of sowing into their ministry).

5. When only certain biblical topics are preached

Some ministers I have heard only talk about money and prosperity week after week—even though they are supposed to shepherd their congregation by feeding them the whole counsel of God. (Many take up to three offerings per service and spend more time raising money than teaching the Word!)

(If a person is an itinerant minister whose specialty is raising money for churches and/or teaching on financial stewardship, then focusing on money every week in various churches is acceptable, in my opinion; I am referring in this point to a lead pastor and their congregation).

Also, prosperity pimps will only preach on subjects that will motivate the congregation to give financially—and usually avoid biblical passages dealing with holiness, repentance and taking up the cross. (In some of these ministries, the church is viewed more as a business than a family of families.)

6. When there is no financial accountability

Prosperity pimps usually never give financial reports and disclose their ministry expenses to their audience—and are not usually accountable to a legitimate trustee board.

If they do have a board, it is a “captive board” made up of family members or those who have vested interest in the way the church business is conducted.

7. When the needy are not empowered by the ministry

Finally, one of the primary signs of a “prosperity pimp” is the fact that they are in the ministry solely for their own gratification.

While biblical leaders and churches empower the poor and elevate the quality of life of their community—prosperity pimps function as parasites who suck the finances out of their congregation and community.