

# **Remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel": A Petrine paradigm**

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May the words of Ezra Brainard's poem: "*A fool for Christ*" encourage all of us to serve Christ regardless of earthly sacrifice:

*To live for Christ is foolish to the World; But when sinners into Hell are hurled;  
And fools for Christ have not a single fear; Then who was truly foolish will be clear;  
Without exception every man's a fool; I choose for Christ, and bear the ridicule;  
I glory in my weakness and my pain; For earthly loss will bring eternal gain.*

## ABSTRACT

Over the last few decades the African church has been significantly exposed to a “Prosperity Gospel”. These prosperity beliefs propose abundant wealth and excellent health for all believers who have adequate or sufficient ‘faith’. In Africa, where numerous challenges like poverty, disease (e.g. HIV/AIDS) and political failures are faced, these propositions seem to have fertile soil, but hold negative consequences for followers who do not experience such promised abundance. A “Prosperity Gospel”, its Scriptural validity and its implications for adherents are investigated in this study from a Practical Theology vantage-point. This research is done to assist the pastoral duty of shepherding God’s flock (1 Pt 5:2) amid suffering (1 Pt 2:21; cf. Mk 8:34) to find meaning in God and live in hope again.

The methodological approach of the study utilises Osmer’s (2008) four tasks designed for Practical Theology, namely descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative and pragmatic, to determine the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel”. This is done to determine what paradigm can be found in 1 Peter for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

Research findings on the descriptive-empirical task show that the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” can result in negative consequences for its followers. The qualitative empirical research in this study confirmed such consequences and rendered insight into the faith-related problems for “Prosperity Gospel” adherents. Ignorance of the Biblical Gospel of Jesus Christ and faulty Bible interpretation, which result in various unbiblical beliefs and practices, are the most prominent problems. These empirical results indicate the need for remedial pastoral guidance due to a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

The interpretive task’s focus is on understanding the possible reasons for the attractiveness of a “Prosperity Gospel” from sociological, psychological and missiological perspectives. The research findings indicate that religion affects people’s social interaction and a “Prosperity Gospel” has influence on societies. Various socio-cultural themes from both the Western World’s influence in Africa, as well as specific African related social themes make a “Prosperity Gospel” attractive to people who are in search of meaningfulness in the midst of dire circumstances. Furthermore, traces of psychological manipulation can be detected in the beliefs and practices of a “Prosperity Gospel” and prosperity preachers, either intentionally or unknowingly, employ these strategies to manipulate parishioners towards the beliefs and practices of a “Prosperity Gospel”. Missiologists attribute the successful mission of a “Prosperity Gospel” to Africa’s aspiration to the capitalistic Western World and to specific African related socio-cultural themes.

Findings on the normative task yield normative principles from 1 Peter (aided by selected sections from 2 Peter and Mark's Gospel) regarding pastoral guidance of suffering believers for whom the abundant temporal/material blessings proposed by a "Prosperity Gospel" is not a reality. Peter's value system for believers opposes what a "Prosperity Gospel" proposes. The believer obtains meaningfulness and hope in the possession of eternal/imperishable blessings provided in the Gospel, rather than in the temporal/earthly blessings. Four specific values emerge out of Peter's pastoral guidance of suffering believers, namely:

- The value of God's control and compassion.
- The value of Christ and being in Christ.
- The value of belonging to the new people of God.
- The value of God-provided leadership to the people of God.

These four values can guide the believer toward meaning, value and hope in God amidst suffering and lack of earthly prosperity.

The descriptive-empirical, interpretive and normative principles converge in the pragmatic task. A Petrine paradigm is presented for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" as a new praxis within Practical Theology. The paradigm consists of six *nouthetically* designed discussion sessions with the aim of confronting pastorants (making them aware of their problem with a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel"), teaching them the Scriptural value system (as presented in 1 Peter) unto meaningfulness and hope in God, and warning them against false teaching and false teachers. The paradigm is designed to guide pastorants away from a dangerous "Prosperity Gospel" milieu into a Gospel-believing, Bible-teaching church with faithful shepherds who care for their souls.

**Key terms:**

Remedial

Pastoral guidance

Prosperity Gospel

Petrine paradigm

Practical Theology

## OPSOMMING

Met die verloop van die laaste paar dekades is die kerk in Afrika aansienlik blootgestel aan 'n "Welvaartsteologie". Die welvaartsleringe stel uitermatige welvaart en uitstekende gesondheid voor vir alle gelowiges wat voldoende of genoegsame 'geloof' kan beoefen. Afrika, waar uitdagings soos armoede, siekte (bv. HIV/VIGS) en politieke mislukkings aan die orde van die dag is, blyk 'n vrugbare teelaarde vir hierdie voorstelle te wees, maar dit hou negatiewe gevolge in vir gelowiges wat nie hierdie beloofde oorfloed beleef nie. In hierdie studie word daar vanuit 'n Praktiese Teologiese oogpunt na 'n "Welvaartsteologie", die Skriftuurlike geldigheid daarvan en die gevolge vir aanhangers gekyk. Hierdie navorsing is gedoen om die pastorale plig rakende die herderlike versorging van die Here se kudde (1 Pet 5:2) te ondersteun om ten tye van lyding (1 Pet 2:21; verwys Mark 8:34) betekenis in God te vind en weer in hoop te leef.

In die metodologiese benadering van die studie is Osmer (2008) se vier take vir Praktiese Teologie, naamlik deskriptief-empiries, interpretatief, normatief en pragmaties aangewend om die praxis van 'n "Welvaartsteologie" te bepaal. Dit is gedoen om 'n paradigma vir remediërende pastorale begeleiding rakende 'n geloofsoortuiging in 'n "Welvaartsteologie" in 1 Petrus te vind.

Die navorsingsbevindings van die deskriptief-empiriese taak bevestig dat die praxis van 'n "Welvaartsteologie" negatiewe gevolge vir volgelinge van die beweging kan inhou. Die kwalitatiewe empiriese navorsing bevestig hierdie gevolge en bied insig aangaande die geloof-verwante probleme vir "Welvaartsteologie"-aanhangers. Die prominentste probleme is onkunde rakende die Bybelse Evangelie van Jesus Christus asook foutiewe Bybelse interpretasie wat verskeie onbybelse geloofsoortuigings en praktyke tot gevolg het. Die empiriese resultate dui op die noodsaaklikheid van remediërende pastorale begeleiding aan persone wat deur 'n geloofsoortuiging in "Welvaartsteologie" ontnugter is.

Die interpretatiewe taak fokus daarop om die moontlike redes vir die aantreklikheid van 'n "Welvaartsteologie" vanuit sosiologiese, sielkundige en missiologiese perspektiewe te verstaan. Die navorsingsbevindinge dui aan dat godsdiens mense se sosiale interaksie beïnvloed en dat 'n "Welvaartsteologie" 'n invloed op samelewings het. Verskeie sosiaal-kulturele temas van die Westerse wêreld se invloed op Afrika, asook spesifieke Afrika-verwante sosiale temas dra by tot die aantreklikheid van 'n "Welvaartsteologie" vir mense wat op soek is na sinvolheid te midde van haglike omstandighede. Aspekte van sielkundige manipulasie in die geloofsoortuigings en praktyke van 'n "Welvaartsteologie" kom na vore en welvaartspredikers, bewustelik of onwetend, implementeer 'n manipulerende strategie om mense tot die geloofsoortuigings en

praktyke van 'n "Welvaartsteologie" oor te haal. Missioloë skryf die sukses van 'n "Welvaartsteologie" toe aan Afrika se strewe om soos die kapitalistiese Westerse wêreld te wil wees, asook aan spesifieke Afrika-verwante sosiaal-kulturele temas.

Bevindinge van die normatiewe taak lewer Bybelse beginsels vanuit 1 Petrus op (met bykomende geselekteerde gedeeltes vanuit 2 Petrus en Markus se Evangelie) rakende pastorale begeleiding van lydende gelowiges vir wie die oorvloedige tydelike/materiële seëninge wat deur 'n "Welvaartsteologie" voorgestel word nie realiseer nie. Die Skrif se waardesisteem soos dit in 1 Petrus vir gelowiges gegee is, repudieer die leringe wat deur 'n "Welvaartsteologie" voorgehou word. Daarteenoor vind gelowiges sinvolheid en hoop in die onverganklike seëninge wat in Christus is eerder as in tydelike/aardse seëninge.

Vier spesifieke waardes kom na vore uit Petrus se pastorale begeleiding van lydende gelowiges, naamlik:

- Die waarde van God se beheer en medelyde.
- Die waarde van Christus en om in Christus te wees.
- Die waarde om deel van God se nuwe mense te wees.
- Die waarde van die God-voorsiende leierskap aan die mense van God.

Hierdie vier waardes kan die gelowige na betekenis, waarde en hoop in God lei te midde van lyding en 'n gebrek aan aardse welvaart.

Die deskriptief-empiriese, interpretatiewe en normatiewe beginsels konvergeer in die pragmatiese taak. 'n Petriniese paradigma vir remediërende pastorale begeleiding rakende 'n geloofsoortuiging in 'n "Welvaartsteologie" is as nuwe praxis in die Praktiese Teologie aangebied. Die paradigma bestaan uit ses *nouteties*-ontwerpte gespreksessies met die doel om pastorate te konfronteer (bewus te maak van hulle probleem rakende geloofsoortuiginge in 'n "Welvaartsteologie"), om hulle te onderrig in die Skriftuurlike waardesisteem (soos in 1 Petrus weergegee) wat sinvolheid en hoop in God waarborg, en om hulle teen valse lering en valse leraars te waarsku. Die paradigma is ontwerp om pastorate uit 'n gevaarlike "Welvaartsteologie"-milieu te begelei na 'n kerkgemeenskap met 'n Evangelie-georiënteerde-geloofsoortuiging en Bybelse lering met 'n getroue herder wat hulle siele met deernis sal versorg.

## **Sleuteltermen**

Remediërende

Pastorale begeleiding

Welvaartsteologie

Petriniese paradigma

Praktiese Teologie

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and problem statement

#### 1.1.1 Background

Over the last three decades a “Prosperity Gospel” has made phenomenal inroads into the African church (Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:22). American theologians and pastors observe that this phenomenon from American religious soil (Coleman, 2000:40; cf. also Van Emmenes, 2016:167), has expanded far and wide over the borders of their own country. In an updated edition of world-renowned author, conference speaker and Pastor John Piper’s (2010) book, *Let the nations be glad*, the focus is on the supremacy of God in global missions. An eighteen-page introduction to the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition was included under the heading: “*New realities in World Christianity and Twelve Appeals to Prosperity Preachers*” (Piper, 2010:15-32). The fact that this topic was not a part of the first two editions (1993 and 2003 respectively), indicates that prosperity beliefs have become an increasingly influential global phenomenon. African churches, as a case in point, showed phenomenal growth (Piper, 2010:16) and while this growth may be viewed as a positive development, Horton (2008:45) puts such optimism into perspective when pointing out that a “Prosperity Gospel” is largely responsible for this growth.

Convincing evidence substantiates Horton’s claim. In an article entitled *Gospel Riches: Africa’s rapid embrace of prosperity Pentecostalism provokes concern and hope*, Phiri and Maxwell (2007:22-29) verify the progresses made by prosperity messages. Phiri and Maxwell (2007) refer to an African-focussed survey conducted by Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life Study (2006). In this survey, participants were asked whether they believe that God will bless all Christians with material wealth, and whether financial prosperity is linked to religious faith. More than ninety percent of the participants answered both questions in the affirmative – persuasive evidence that prosperity beliefs occupy firm ground on African religious soil.

More recent research indicates this influence’s firm hold. In a book authored in a collaboration of African and American pastors, *Prosperity, seeking the true Gospel* (Mbugua *et al.*, 2015), the preface states the book’s purpose in no uncertain terms: “... to counter the great damage that the so called ‘prosperity’ or ‘health and wealth’ gospel is doing in **Africa** and around the world” (Mbugua, 2015a:i – emphasis added). Indicating the problematic

praxis<sup>1</sup> of such a “Prosperity Gospel”, the authors unambiguously call this notion a “false gospel” (Mbugua, 2015b:2) with the dangerous potential to lead people astray from God (Mbugua, 2015b:12) in their quest to acquire the ‘prosperity’ that these beliefs suggest.

Given the nature of scholars’ criticism regarding the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel”, research from a Practical Theology paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance is indeed necessary. Mbugua *et al.* (2015) tender a diagnosis of a “Prosperity Gospel’s” problematic theories and practices, but from a Practical Theological perspective it has little to offer towards the pastoral objective of this study. In this study, the objective is to develop a sound Scriptural approach for practical theological application in pastoral situations (cf. Heitink, 1999:151). Such a theory is imperative for a renewed praxis or theory of action (Heitink, 1999:6) with which believers who were or are exposed to prosperity beliefs, can be guided with a Scriptural paradigm.

The consequences stemming from the problematic praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” merit this research, considering pastoral comments regarding prosperity preaching. Jennings (2016) researched the impact of prosperity beliefs and in a specific case study found that prosperity dogmas result in negative consequences such as agony, unwarranted guilt over sin or a lack of faith and one of the most despairing realities is that followers of the prosperity phenomenon lack caring shepherds who should bring hope through the encouragement of the Word.

Serious concerns over the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” are raised on South African soil. In a journal article published in 2014, it was indicated that a number of people joined a certain church in South Africa after being members of well-known “Prosperity Gospel” churches for many years. The reason why they left their former (prosperity) churches was disillusion and even anger when they discovered they were misled. Most of all, they were anxious for their friends who were in “Prosperity Gospel” churches (Retief, 2014:6).

Both abroad (e.g. Eastern Europe, India and the Latin Americas) (Hunt, 1998:272) and on the African continent, the popularity of a “Prosperity Gospel” is a well-established fact (Evans G., 2000:55; Morris & Lioy, 2012:74). The concerns over the problematic praxis of this movement amongst scholars and specifically pastors are too important to be overlooked.

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<sup>1</sup> In Practical Theology, praxis is defined as actions in service of the gospel (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:26; Smith, 2011:11) or as Heitink (1999:151) elaborates: “Praxis is understood as the actions of individuals and groups in society, within and outside the church, who are willing to be inspired in their private and public lives by the Christian tradition, and who want to focus on the salvation of humankind and the world.”

Adeney (2009), an anthropologist and associate professor of world Christian studies at Seattle Pacific University, takes a global tour of Christianity in the book *Kingdom without borders, the untold story of global Christianity*. Regarding the African church, Adeney (2009) highlights poverty-related problems that Africans face and how the church could possibly be part of the solution. Adeney (2009:249) is positive that Christianity can assist people who suffer financial distress – as Piper (2010:21) avers that where the true Gospel advances, prosperity might follow for people who accept the Gospel and are transformed in their ways of thinking about money and accordingly align their conduct in a Christian lifestyle (cf. also Adu, 2014:30 personal interview with Anning, 2013). Adeney (2009:249) differentiates, however, between what could make such a positive impact and what could be considered false gimmicks that will cause more damage to people's lives.

In their empirical research, Rotini, Nwadior and Ugwuja (2016:18) state that a significant number of Nigerian believers reported that from their experience they found a "Prosperity Gospel" cannot and will not improve the lives of the poor. Rotini *et al.* (2016:18) emphasise, however, that on a psychological level the optimistic approach in prosperity preaching could have a positive influence by leading church members on paths of self-help and individual well-being regarding prosperity. The prosperity movement is then not entirely without merit, as a positive sociological attempt is being made in spurring people on to improved circumstances.

In the context of the practical theological approach of this study, that attempt seems to endeavour to help believers in their search for meaningfulness (Frankl, 2007:127; Kruger, 2016:7). Real concern over the Scriptural-theological foundation and problematic praxis of a "Prosperity Gospel" is, however, raised (Piper, 2010:19; Van Emmenes, 2016:220-221) and the implied quasi-Biblical persuasions upon which these beliefs seem to be founded, and the consequences they might have for Christian believers must be critically appraised from thorough theological research.

Prosperity<sup>2</sup> that would result from a wholesome lifestyle and honest work apparently is not what popular "Prosperity Gospel" promoters purport to proclaim. Instead, their 'prosperity'

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<sup>2</sup> 'Prosperity' could be an ambiguous term and therefore, in the context of this study, requires clarification. The Oxford English Dictionary defines prosperity as: "the condition of being prosperous, successful or thriving, good fortune, success, well-being." The economist Cassiers (2015:1) describes prosperity on two levels: what people are and what they have. On the level of what people are it is measured in their "happiness, luck or even joy", whereas what they have is simply measured in their "increased wealth, and advanced towards abundance, affluence, or even opulence" as opposed to "hardship or failure" (Cassiers, 2015:1). Cassiers and contributors

would have people believe that God wants to make every believer materially very rich, physically perfectly healthy and generally very successful in all areas of life. The one condition for this ‘prosperity’ is that believers must ‘trust’ God for it (Copeland, 1978:37-38; Pilgrim, 1992:3) and this ‘trust’ must be shown or expressed, for example, by ‘speaking prosperity into existence’ through positive confession (Copeland, 1974:19; Copeland, 1978:65; Osteen, 2004:125, 129). ‘Confession’ must then be tangibly enacted by generous and sustained financial support to the ministries of prosperity preachers (Copeland, 1978:54; Tilton, 1983:41).

Such beliefs and practices seem to offer an over-simplified approach to life’s problems and have proven to have serious, negative consequences for believers. As an example, Adeney (2009:249) cites the situation of someone that relied on “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs and practices of substantial returns on offerings. Nothing came of the promised return on tuition fees deposited in the offering bag of a prosperity preaching church and the disastrous outcome of this person’s ‘trust’ in and obedience to this quasi-‘gospel’ was expulsion from school due to unsettled fees. It led to utter confusion and disillusionment that ended up in disbelief and in the end, this person’s rejection of the Christian faith.

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(2015) argue that, at the expense of measuring prosperity on the level of what people are, what people have has been dominating people’s pursuit of prosperity, i.e. a pursuit of acquiring material wealth has been the order of the day. This is the emphasis of a “Prosperity Gospel’s” definition of prosperity. Cassiers, (2015) however, questions from a secular perspective whether material possession is the pathway to happiness, arguing that an obsession with material prosperity might be disastrous (Jackson, 2015:xii). Cassiers (2015) posits a more meaningful vision of prosperity that emphasises the social and psychological well-being of people (Cassiers, 2015:xii).

Similarly, from a Christian perspective, prosperity (or value) focusses more on who the believer is in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ) through the powerful work of the Spirit, rather than on what we receive from God (from His hand). This begs the important question regarding what a dignified human being is from an anthropological perspective: Are we living because of what we have or because of what we are in Christ? Vorster (2011:1) argues that human dignity/worth lies in man’s human essence, i.e. all humans are dignified beings by nature of being created in the image of God (Imago Dei) (Vorster, 2011:3-4) and receiving his spirit from God (imago Spiritus) (2011:6). Humans, therefore, are intrinsically valuable due to their relationship to God, despite what they have or do not have otherwise. For Christians specifically, their dignity/value/worth lies in their reconciliation to God through the atoning sacrifice of Christ through which they become the ‘image of Christ’ (Imago Christi) to enable them to fulfil their God-given task and search for the righteousness of the Kingdom of God. Vorster (2011:7) states that through the renewed humanity in Christ, the faith community with Christ becomes people meant to ‘be’ again, i.e. they have value and meaning by means of what they are in Christ.

Vorster (2011:9-10) further highlights the Christian value of being imago Spiritus – the promise of restoration and renewal along with the promise of being heirs of the new heaven and earth, i.e. eternal life. What Vorster refers to regarding human worth, would be true spiritual prosperity. This spiritual prosperity is the essence of Christianity and a “Prosperity Gospel” can even impede such spirituality (Rotini, Nwadiolor & Ugwuja, 2016:17).



There is overwhelming evidence even from a secular perspective that wealth does not solve life's problems and neither does it add to life's meaningfulness (Myers, 2000:ii). Research has shown that even with a secular emphasis on prosperity in postmodern times there is less joy, more depression, more broken relationships, less community zeal, less work security and more demoralised children (Myers, 2000:ii). A crucial question that this study addresses is how a Christian message of prosperity can have any different result than what Myers (2000:ii) points to, especially if one considers that the Bible warns about the disappointments, even dangers, that may accompany wealth (e.g. Mt 6:19-20, Mk 10:23-27, Lk 8:14, 1 Tm 6:9-10, et cetera) and a hope that focuses on the present/earthly life (1 Cor 15:19).

Piper (2010:19) maintains that "Prosperity Gospel" proponents fail to notice (or deliberately ignore) the Bible's teaching to guard against the temptations which accompany wealth and the God-intended purposes of suffering. If a "Prosperity Gospel" claims that it is God's will for all followers of Christ to be free from all forms of suffering (especially pertaining to finances and health), while purposeful suffering for Christians can be found in the Bible's pages (cf. Mk 8:34-38, 1 Pt 4:19), the possibilities of both spiritual and temporal consequences for believers become real when the claims and promises of a "Prosperity Gospel" do not realise for them. In a "Prosperity Gospel's" perspective, however, poor or suffering believers then simply receive or have what they deserve.

### **1.1.2 Problem statement**

Within the field of Practical Theology, the emphasis is on understanding religious actions (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:6, cf. Otto, 1974:201). Concerns over a "Prosperity Gospel's" preaching and practices as highlighted above (refer 1.1.1), necessitate investigation into what seems to be a problematic praxis (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:26) within the church. A sound theory is then necessary to provide impetus to the potentially problematic praxis believers are experiencing within prosperity beliefs.

Kruger (2016:1) notes the importance of recognising, within the field of Practical Theology, that people are trying to make sense of acts, people and events by what they know and observe (cognition) (cf. Fiske, 2004:123). Kruger (2016:1) highlights that " ... cognitive distortions could possibly endanger people's ability to have right cognition about people, events and life itself." Various kinds of suffering in all walks of life pose perplexing questions for many people about the meaning of (their) existence and even life itself and questions about suffering have become an existential issue (Louw, 1982:1; Louw, 2015:1). This means

that man's quest for meaning can be frustrated by suffering and give rise to disappointment (Frankl, 2007:130).

Men's efforts to reconcile, or even to simply understand how God's omnipotence and His goodness harmonise with suffering is the essence of the age-old theodicy question (Louw, 1982:2; Cooper-White, 2012:24; cf. Louw, 2015:303). Theodicy finds itself in an almost constant dilemma, for when God's love and compassion with suffering people is mentioned it would appear as if God is powerless over evil. When God's omnipotence in the midst of suffering and even evil is confessed, critical questions regarding God's love are almost invariably brought into equation (Louw, 1982:2). It is, therefore, understandable that against the backdrop of the reality of suffering, theology endeavours to give assurance of God's presence with people who suffer and provide care that leads to purposeful, sustainable and enduring hope (Louw, 2015:1).

It is virtually impossible to give an accurate answer to why God permits suffering (Louw, 1982:2). Suffering of any kind influences man in his identity. It influences his very existence and his understanding of the meaning of life (Louw, 1982:1; Louw, 2015:2). In its promotion of wealth and health, a "Prosperity Gospel" claims to counter suffering and promise meaning, but when a follower of such a paradigm posing as theology suffers disappointment and disillusionment, the ensuing crisis of misunderstanding sets the task for pastoral care to help that person find meaning in God and to live in hope again (Louw, 1982:1; Louw, 2015:13).

The materialistic optimism of an affluent society creates the impression that it can cope with life's demands, but such is merely "imaginative dreaming" (Louw, 2015:13). Louw (2015:28-29) then considers Christian hope as necessary in a suffering world filled with disappointments and this hope is only founded upon the redemptive work of Jesus Christ which provide the believer with an anticipation of future restoration.

Louw's (2015:273ff) emphases on a theology of compassion is relevant for the pastoral task of guiding people towards such Christian hope and it is maintained that compassion gives meaning to life and, therefore, a praxis of hope is necessary in pastoral guidance (Louw, 2015:294-295). Simultaneously, Louw (2015:294) warns that the existential realities of life must be not ignored for it is crucial in pastoral theology to deal with an understanding of God as compassionate, suffering and all-empowering rather than simply apathetic, immutable and omnipotent. It is this compassion that makes life bearable, and Louw's (2015:295) reference to Dostoyevsky's (1973:263) argument that compassion gives meaning to life as

the only law of human existence, highlights the necessity to find meaning in God and to live in hope again.

The real danger in a “Prosperity Gospel’s” praxis is highlighted by Fiske (2004:123-127; cf. Kruger, 2016:7) who warns that people often try to cut corners in trying to make sense of people, things and the social environment (Kruger, 2016:7-8). Prophetic discernment (Osmer, 2008:129ff; Kruger, 2016:1) concerning suffering then becomes critically important from a practical theological perspective. Where pastoral guidance aims to understand acts within the seemingly problematic praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” and assist believers by means of sound theories toward new praxis, people can refocus on the essence and meaning of life and live in hope.

Adherents of a “Prosperity Gospel” might encounter disillusionment and hopelessness. This reality dawned on the researcher in his pastoral capacity and as a lecturer in a Reformed Baptist Church and Seminary in South Africa. Due to the nature of these roles in a multicultural seminary and in a multicultural local church, the researcher rubs shoulders with Africans from different countries on the continent and over a wide spectrum of different social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Apart from financial loss, many of them even suffered spiritual consequences due to the prosperity phenomenon. The overwhelming popularity of this phenomenon and the lack of resources regarding remedial pastoral guidance of those who were or are influenced by a “Prosperity Gospel” were raised in a Master’s Study in New Testament at North-West University on *Christian discipleship in Mark’s Gospel as critique on the Prosperity Gospel* (Van Emmenes, 2016 – free translation). The critical need for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” is the motivation for this study.

Considering the great influence of a “Prosperity Gospel” on African soil and its consequences for gullible believers who embrace its teachings, the key question addressed is how pastors can be equipped to effectively guide believers who are exposed to prosperity beliefs. For such guidance, a new praxis is necessary. In recent publications, significant strides are made toward making Africans aware in general regarding what Mbugua *et al.* (2015) call the erroneous and dangerous teachings of a “Prosperity Gospel”. Valuable contributions towards analysis/critique of a “Prosperity Gospel” were made (Mbugua, *et al.*, 2015; Heuser, 2015; Kasera, 2012, Gbotoe, 2013), but valuable as they are in identifying and describing a “Prosperity Gospel’s” problematic praxis, these works offer very little in the way of practical theological data and/or sound theory that might serve as pastoral empowerment for religious leaders to offer pastoral guidance (a new, effective praxis).

A brief survey of literature on a “Prosperity Gospel”, of which some sources are mentioned above, reveal lacunae regarding substantial material to address pastoral aspects related to the consequences believers encounter and the guidance they require. Available material is not only limited, but appears to be inadequate for remedial pastoral guidance purposes. Some of the sources offer solutions, such as establishing more Gospel preaching churches (Retief, 2014:7-9), but in general, little specific help is available to pastors who are responsible for guiding their members through a possibly problematic praxis.

From a practical theological perspective, resources on focussed Scriptural-based paradigms or models are required that can assist pastors to guide pastorants who are suffering, or have suffered consequences due to a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. An understanding of suffering, hope and important theological core concepts to help Christian believers make sense of suffering is important. To this end, Louw has several works (*Pastoraat en lyding* [1982] and *Wholeness in hope care: on nurturing the beauty of the human soul in spiritual healing* [2015]) that contribute to our understanding, but do not offer what this study proposes. Morris’ (2012) research is also relevant in that a different methodological approach was followed to review relevant scholarship for a situation analysis without empirical research (Morris, 2012:7). However, Morris’ research focuses on pastoral implications for the Church of God which limits its benefits to a particular denomination.

To address the lacunae and to develop a counselling paradigm or model for remedial pastoral guidance for pastorants who have or had experiences with a “Prosperity Gospel”, the present research makes use of an empirical approach to analyse such scenarios. It was necessary to find out what such a ‘situation’ involves (cf. Osmer, 2008:4 concerning ‘what is going on’) to be able to implement an exegetical approach towards the proposal of a Biblical paradigm for cross-denominational remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

The research problem can be stated thus: **What paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” can be found in 1 Peter?**

## **1.2 Preliminary literature study**

### **1.2.1 A Prosperity Gospel’s problematic praxis**

The research is not to present new academic perspectives and insights on either the systematic outlining or the analysis/critique of the theological convictions of “Prosperity

Gospel” beliefs, as sufficient literature from the last fifty years exists on both aspects.<sup>3</sup> The research problem, however, addresses the lacunae of Biblically-based remedial pastoral guidance for people regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. This unavailability was identified in the problem statement (1.1.2) and is highlighted in the preliminary literature study set out hereafter. The study makes an important, and in this stage of available research, a unique contribution to Practical Theology in the field of pastoral studies.

For the purposes of the literature review it is necessary to identify the phenomenon by means of available scholarly literature of primary voices of “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs and scholars who analyse or render a critique on a “Prosperity Gospel”. The aim of the preliminary literature review is, therefore, to find answers to questions such as: What are the central theological convictions of a “Prosperity Gospel”?; How have these theological convictions been analysed/critiqued?; What is the level of influence of “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs on people and why might this be so popular?; What potential negative consequences does a “Prosperity Gospel” hold for people? The sources on the theological convictions and analysis/critique of the theological convictions of “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs, as listed in footnote 3, will be used as the representative sample for the review.

#### **1.2.1.1 Brief background outline on a “Prosperity Gospel”**

There can be little doubt that the popularity of a “Prosperity Gospel” has grown within the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century Evangelical Church (cf. Farah, 1982:15; Hunt, 2000:73; Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:22; Morris & Liroy, 2012:74). Historically, “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs are firmly rooted in the USA (Coleman, 2000:40; Beckford, 2001:15-16; Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:23), where it is difficult to attach them to any specific church denomination (Kaiser, 1988:151). This ambiguity regarding the classification of the “Prosperity Gospel” does not, however, mean that it should not be considered a known, identifiable and widespread religious movement of our modern times, as it is definitely not limited to the United States of America.

Although Sarles (1986:337) posits that the movement was too young in the mid-1980s to compile an accurate and complete systematic theology of its teachings, scholars agree and insist that a “Prosperity Gospel” is expressed in formal and identifiable religious movements

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<sup>3</sup> For the theological convictions of a “Prosperity Gospel” cf. for example Kenyon, 1970; Copeland, 1974; Copeland, 1978; Hagin, 1979; Hagin, 1983; Hagin, 1995; Meyer, 1997; Osteen, 2004; Hinn, 2008; Osteen, 2012 et cetera; For analysis/critique of the theological convictions of a “Prosperity Gospel”, literature from Farah, 1982; Sarles, 1986; Kaiser, 1988; MacArthur, 1992; McConnell, 1995; Hollinger, 1997; Hunt, 2000; Fee, 2006; Liroy, 2007; Phiri & Maxwell, 2007; Hanegraaff, 2009; Hollifield, 2011; Morris & Liroy, 2012, Mgugua, et al., 2015 provide an abundance of data.

which comprise distinct teachings, key preachers, a certain clientele, conferences, massive publications, media ministries and local congregations that identify with the teachings and preachers thereof (Hollinger, 1988:131-132). More recently, scholars became increasingly outspoken that a “Prosperity Gospel” is a unique and identifiable ‘brand of religious thought’ (Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:24; cf. also Gifford, 2007:22) that has infiltrated the church around the globe in the last fifty to sixty years.

#### **1.2.1.2 Spread of a “Prosperity Gospel” on African soil**

Africa’s religious soil appears to have been especially fertile for the seeds of a “Prosperity Gospel”.<sup>4</sup> In South Africa, this is evidenced in the largest formal Evangelical congregation that teaches and promotes a “Prosperity Gospel” and whose lead Pastor was trained by Kenneth Hagin, the person who is considered the ‘father’ of the modern-day prosperity phenomenon (cf. Coleman, 2000:32; McConnell, 1995:3; Hollifield, 2011:30). Essentially, this fact substantiates the opinion that this South African church is a “Prosperity Gospel” denomination (Retief, 2014:8).

The methodology of making extensive use of media – electronic, printed and broadcasting – has successfully boosted the spread of a “Prosperity Gospel” message all over Africa and other parts of the world. Christian believers outside the mainstream prosperity churches are inundated with books that proclaim a “Prosperity Gospel” on the shelves of the largest South African Christian book dealer (*CUM Books* – Van Emmenes, 2016:7). *Trinity Broadcasting Network* or *TBN* (considered the world’s largest Christian broadcaster) is possibly singlehandedly responsible for the massive growth in African adherents’ belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” (Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:23).

#### **1.2.1.3 Attractiveness of a “Prosperity Gospel”**

The striking rate at which this prosperity belief system has grown begs the question as to what makes it so attractive. The core teachings of a “Prosperity Gospel” partly provide potential insight into its popularity<sup>5</sup>: it emphasises three main tenets namely faith (paraphrased as ‘positive confession’), wealth, and health (cf. *inter alia* Kaiser, 1988:153;

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<sup>4</sup> By 2005, the “Prosperity Gospel” movement reaped a harvest of up to an estimated 147 million African followers (Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:23).

<sup>5</sup> It is not the aim of this study to examine or describe every dogma of a “Prosperity Gospel”, as many of the core Evangelical doctrines like the deity of Jesus, necessity of rebirth for believers, the atonement of the cross of Christ, etc. are asserted by many/most prosperity belief preachers (Hollinger, 1988:132). Rather, the focus will be on the main teachings which are unique to prosperity beliefs that potentially hold consequences for followers of Christ.

Moo, 1988:191; Barron, 1990:9; Coleman, 2000:28). This study's focus is not analysis or critique<sup>6</sup>, yet the relevant, available research from the perspective of critical review could give an indication as to why a "Prosperity Gospel" is so popular, i.e. to aid Osmer's (2008:79ff) second task of interpreting a phenomenon (refer chapter 3).

Hollinger (1988:146) strikingly comments that it should be kept in mind that all religious expressions are shaped by their social-cultural contexts and Osmer (2008:85) likewise comments on the necessity to draw on various social sciences to interpret a religious setting. The relevant question flowing from this statement which comes under scrutiny in this study is which social-cultural factors contribute to the popularity of a "Prosperity Gospel" message?

In available scholarly work, it is indicated that cultural themes of American society are contributing factors to the African receptivity of a "Prosperity Gospel" (Mbugua, 2015c:66). These so-called prosperity beliefs include materialism (Morris & Lioy, 2012:98), individualism (Baer, 2014:23), specific African cultural themes such as obsession with dynamic leaders (Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:25), obsession with the supernatural (Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:26), Satan (Sarles, 1986:345), social problems such as poverty (Lioy, 2007:49), and failed governmental ideologies (Gifford, 2007:22-23; Adeleye, 2010). Part of the research objective is to determine whether these social-cultural factors influence people's attraction to a "Prosperity Gospel".

#### **1.2.1.4 Hermeneutical approach of a "Prosperity Gospel"**

It is worth noting that a common ground in many of the critical scholarly works on a "Prosperity Gospel" include a critique of Scriptural interpretation. Aspects such as interpreting words or concepts without consideration for their literary and historical context (Evans G., 2000:55), little (or possibly no) consideration for the various genres of the Scriptures (Hollifield, 2011:32-33) and extensive use of 'proof-texts' without the necessary consideration of the context of these texts (Kaiser, 1988:169), are highlighted.

A vital question that was answered by the present research is whether the way in which adherents of a "Prosperity Gospel" interpret God's Word, satisfies responsible hermeneutics and resultantly, the exegeses of the Bible in what is proclaimed from the pulpits. Given the

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<sup>6</sup> Theses, books and many journal articles by academic scholars and church pastors have been written to analyse and critique a "Prosperity Gospel" (cf. for example Farah, 1982; Hollinger, 1988; Kaiser, 1988; MacArthur, 1992; McConnell, 1995; Hollinger, 1997; Fee, 2006; Lioy, 2007; Phiri & Maxwell, 2007; Hanegraaff, 2009; Hollifield, 2011; Morris & Lioy, 2012; Mbugua, et al., 2015; Van Emmenes, 2016, etc.).

uncritical acceptance by audiences, it remains a moot question whether exegeses of prosperity authors and/or preachers are ever critically evaluated by its devotees.

In proposing a Scriptural-based paradigm from 1 Peter regarding pastoral guidance on consequences resulting from a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, the opposite of a “Prosperity Gospel’s” perspectives on, and treatment of Scripture must then be considered *de rigueur*. Specific hermeneutical principles and an exegetical approach to interpretation of the Biblical text are, therefore, fundamental to this research. The proposed pastoral paradigm is mainly Scripture-based for its theological substance. In chapter 4 (refer 4.3.1) a description is set out regarding the hermeneutical/exegetical approach followed in this study to compile theological principles that would assist in remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

### **1.2.2 Sound theory from 1 Peter towards a renewed praxis**

Based on cautions of the consequences for life and faith caused by a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” (refer 1.1.1 and 1.1.2), there is an identified need for a Biblical paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance of people that have suffered/could be suffering consequences due a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

Peter’s first epistle (1 Peter) provides the selected focus of the proposed Scripture-based paradigm for this study. For this purpose, the following literature review questions guided the review: What were Peter’s initial expectations regarding following Jesus?; What did Jesus teach Peter regarding following him?; What situation/circumstances did Peter’s audience find themselves in?; What are the main themes addressed in 1 Peter?; How does Peter pastorally guide his audience with these themes in their historical situation/circumstances?

For the literature review, the researcher made use of exegetical commentaries, articles, books and other relevant internet sources of New Testament scholars’ work on the apostle Peter and his first epistle.

#### **1.2.2.1 Pastoral care from 1 Peter**

Mark’s Gospel divulges Peter’s ‘prosperity’ expectations from Jesus (Martin, 1972:152; Telford, 1995:36). Peter accepted Jesus as *χριστός*, (Christ) (Mk 8:29) but apparently, he did not accept the concept of a suffering *χριστός*, (Mk 8:31-33). Culpepper (2007:286) avers that to the contrary, Peter entertained an expectation or prospect regarding benefits and



privileges for him and the other followers of Christ. Jesus then corrects Peter's 'prosperity' expectation with teaching on what Christian discipleship entails, namely 'self-denial' and 'taking up one's cross' (Mk 8:34-38). These actions require submission to God's will at the expense of one's own preferences, even if it is costly, painful and/or dangerous (Brooks, 1991:137; France, 2002:340).

In the Book of Acts, Peter acted as a transformed follower after the ascension of Jesus and, thereafter, Pentecost. He embraced suffering rather than shy away from it (cf. Ac 4:1-31; 5:17-42 and 12:1-5) and it could be concluded that Peter had first-hand experience of submission to God's will at the expense of one's own preferences. He was able to identify with the ministry context of his audience in 1 Peter, a group of believers who doubted and were confused (Jobes, 2005:4) due to their suffering (Kümmel, 1975:418; Grudem, 1988:40; Davids, 1990:30; Schreiner 2003:45; Carson & Moo, 2005:636; etc.).

Based on Peter's example of submission to God's will at the expense of one's own preferences, the objective of this research is then to propose a Petrine paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". The exegetical analysis of Peter's pastoral guidance in 1 Peter seems appropriate as Peter himself once had prosperity expectations (Martin, 1972:152; Telford, 1995:36; Culpepper, 2007:286) but the Master guided him to the road of probable suffering (Brooks, 1991:137; France, 2002:340). Peter was informed of his error (Mk 8:33 "... you are not setting your mind on God's interest, but man's ..."); and confronted with correct teaching (Mk 8:34 "If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me") and lastly, he was warned of dangerous consequences (Mk 8:35-37 "... for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?").

It seems fitting then that the most prominent pastoral term in 1 Peter is παρακαλέω (1 Pt 2:11, 5:1 and 5:12), which indicates Peter's intent to urge/exhort/comfort his suffering audience by confronting, warning and teaching. Louw (1999:34-35) indicates that the *paraclete*-metaphor refers to 'comfort, care and help' that enacts the will of God in crisis and suffering, and could be considered the most central motif in all pastoral work, which is aimed at bringing the body of Christ to maturity in the faith (Louw, 1993:29). Such is the purpose of the pastoral paradigm for the pragmatic task in this study (refer chapter 5).

The study benefits from normative perspectives obtained from various passages in 1 Peter to determine the theological principles that would correct the errant views of a "Prosperity Gospel". Remedially, the church can be presented with fitting human ways to respond and

to provide hope, and some of the major theological themes by which Peter offers pastoral guidance to his suffering audience include aspects of Theology Proper, Christological, Pneumatological, soteriological, ecclesiological and missional emphases (refer e.g. Kümmel, 1975:418; Grudem, 1988:40-44; Davids, 1990:15-44; Guthrie, 1990:781; Schreiner, 2003:45-46; Jobes, 2005:42-50; Horrell, 2009:502-522; etc.).

These themes provide and form a significant part of the paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Jobes’ (2005:44) comment that Peter’s first epistle is filled with theological statements that are put into operation to offer hope and exhortation to a suffering community, supports the viability of a Petrine paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance of people who were or are suffering consequences due to a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

### **1.3 Research question, aim and objectives**

#### **1.3.1 Research question**

The question answered by this research is: *What is the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” and what paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” can be found in 1 Peter?*

The outcome of the research for the pragmatic task is to propose a Petrine paradigm *cum* model for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. To this end, the following questions arising from the “research question” were attended to:

1. What can available literature and a descriptive-empirical study, by means of responses from pastoral counsellors who offered/offer pastoral guidance to a pastorant who once expressed/still express belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, highlight about the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel”, its potential consequences on African believers (both of European and African descent) and the pastoral guidance being offered regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”?
2. What can an interpretive pastoral study highlight about why African believers (both of European and African descent) are attracted to/adhere to/express a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”?
3. What is the normative task according to Peter’s pastoral guidance of suffering disciples in 1 Peter?

4. What is the pragmatic task on presenting a pastoral paradigm/model for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”?

### **1.3.2 Research aim and objectives**

#### **1.3.2.1 Aim**

The aim of this study is to investigate a “Prosperity Gospel’s” praxis from empirical research data and available literature, and to compose a sound theory from normative theological principles from 1 Peter for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

#### **1.3.2.2 Objectives**

The research objectives address the abovementioned questions by pursuing the following:

1. To determine, by means of a literature study and a descriptive-empirical study, what the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” is, what the state of influence of a “Prosperity Gospel” is on believers and what pastoral guidance is being offered.
2. To determine, by means of an interpretive pastoral study, the possible/probable reasons why African believers (both of European and African descent) are attracted to/adhere to/express a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.
3. To exegetically analyse the normative task of Peter’s pastoral guidance of suffering disciples in 1 Peter.
4. To propose a Petrine paradigm *cum* model for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” for the pragmatic task.

### **1.4 Central theoretical argument**

The central theoretical argument of this study is that African Christians (of both European and African descent) who have expressed/still express a belief a “Prosperity Gospel” can be assisted by a Petrine paradigm for pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

## **1.5 Research design/Methodology**

### **1.5.1 Methodology**

The research focus is in the field of Practical Theology with the aim to propose a Scripture-based pastoral paradigm from 1 Peter for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Within the field of Practical Theology, various models exist that facilitate the flow between theory and practice. The chosen methodological model for the research is based largely on Osmer’s (2008) methodology as presented in the book *Practical Theology, An Introduction*.

### **1.5.2 Review of other methodological models of Practical theology**

The choice of Osmer’s methodological model in this study must be accounted for and, therefore, it is briefly viewed against a literature background of two other Practical Theology models. A critical understanding of these models is included below.

#### **1.5.2.1 Browning’s model**

Browning’s model (1991) is viewed as a classic within the field of Practical Theology (Anderson, 2001:26). The model aims to bring a correlation between the tradition, the theory and the practice so that practical experiences can be understood and change could be brought about where necessary (Pieterse, 2013:68, cf. Browning, 1991:2-3,44). As is the case with Osmer (2008), Browning’s model is built primarily on Gadamer’s (1975) hermeneutical approach (Browning, 1991:37-45).

For the integration between theory and practice, the model suggests four sub-movements, namely descriptive, historical, systematic and strategic Practical Theology. The first task then is to describe the experiences which provoke questions such as “What shall we do”? (Anderson, 2001:27). This description of the practice takes place firstly by means of ethnography and psychology (Pieterse, 2013:68; cf. Browning, 1991:110-135). The necessity also exists, however, to draw from “... the larger context of historical consciousness, communities of memory and experimental probes” (Anderson, 2001:27). In this regard, Browning’s model seems to make too little of the complexity of discerning contemporary situations.

The model requires five levels of enquiry for strategic Practical Theology and Ogletree (1992:908) submits the levels as visional, obligational, tendency-need, environmental-social and roles of life. According to Browning’s ‘narrative envelope’, vision and obligation concern

theological and ethical ideas where the former is the “outer envelope” and the latter the “inner core” of strategic Practical Theology. The other three levels (i.e. need, social and role) are enlightened by means of human sciences. The model seems to stress a hermeneutical paradigm while also incorporating social empirical methods.

Critique of Browning’s model includes that it relies heavily on philosophical meta-theories and is not sufficiently grounded in Scripture (Boslinger, 2000 as referenced by Anderson 2001:29 – note 21). Furthermore, as Anderson (2001:30) indicates, the model lacks ‘Christological core’, or what is called a ‘Christopraxis hermeneutic’ which requires Scripture to be central. These shortcomings could prove problematic for this study in that this study’s approach is specifically to seek and probe Biblical principles from 1 Peter which could be implemented into a paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

Although Osmer’s (2008) model share similarities with that of Browning (1991) in that it also approaches Practical Theology hermeneutically (mainly following Gadamer’s hermeneutic) (Pieterse, 2013:70), Osmer’s (2008:37) ‘priestly listening’ improves on Browning’s approach to interpret ‘what is going on’. It is especially the emphasis of qualitative empirical research that Osmer’s (2008:50ff) model stresses, that seems more fitting for the empirical research done in this study.

#### **1.5.2.2 Zerfass’ model**

Zerfass’ model (1974) aims at leading from a particular praxis to form a new theory which can in turn lead to a new praxis (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:35). The process begins by considering the influence theological tradition and/or other theological disciplines have on an unsatisfactory practice. This is followed by an empirical situation analysis to investigate possible reasons for the practice (Zerfass, 1974:166). The result obtained from empirical research can be used to create a ‘new’ theory, however this theory should not be applied exclusively. Other contributing disciplines like historical data, Biblical studies and other theological subjects must play an integral role in formulating new theories that answer the questions relating to an unsatisfactory praxis (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:36).

As is the goal in Practical Theology, Zerfass concludes with emphasising that the theory must be applied in practice. After testing the new practice against the situation and tradition, slight modification could be made after which the new praxis is implemented. The model’s three pillars are highlighted as: 1) What can be seen from “authoritative tradition”?; 2) How is

this supplemented by a “situation analysis” to create a new theory?; and 3) How does this new theory influence a new praxis (called “operational impetus”)? (Zerfass, 1974:169).

Zerfass’ and Osmer’s models are not dissimilar in approach and outcome. Zerfass’ model, however, more specifically rests on a base theory rooted in church tradition and other theological practices. One can say the model builds on a hypothesis, which is then tested in empirical research. Osmer’s model, conversely, works from a thesis which is obtained from empirical research as the first and defining task. More recently, Practical Theologians agree that the first step should be the analysis of practice itself, followed by an explanation of the situation, followed by the normative phase, and finally, all practical theological work aims toward making suggestions and recommendations to improve and transform the existing practice (Dingemans, 1996a:92). This agreement would indicate that Osmer is an improvement on Zerfass and more suitable for contemporary research.

### **1.5.3 Explanation and motivation for Osmer’s methodological model to Practical Theology**

Osmer’s (2008:4) four core tasks of practical theological interpretation that guide the pastoral task of interpretation of, and response to specific situations, are as follows:

- The descriptive task – understanding: *What is going on?*
- The interpretive task – understanding: *Why is it going on?*
- The normative task – understanding: *What ought to be going on?*
- The pragmatic task – understanding: *How might we respond from a pastoral perspective?*

Osmer’s model is a hermeneutical approach to Practical Theology (Osmer, 2008:20-21). This means that within the model one is consistently working with interpretation throughout the four interconnected tasks (Smith, 2011:22). Within this interpretation, Osmer (2008:23) upholds Gadamer’s (1975) five descriptions of the hermeneutical process, namely pre-understanding, being brought up short, dialogical interplay, merging of horizons, and application. Osmer’s (2008:12) primary aim is for church leaders to be interpretative guides of episodes, situations, and contexts. An episode refers to a single event, a situation to a broader path of events, and context to the social system in which a situation unfolds.

Osmer's four tasks are elaborated on by tying a question and function to each task. A helpful diagrammatical summary is presented by Smith (2010:101) as follows:

**Table 1-1: Summary of Osmer's four tasks and their functions**

| <b>Task</b> | <b>Descriptive</b> | <b>Interpretive</b> | <b>Normative</b>           | <b>Strategic</b>      |
|-------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Question    | What is going on?  | Why is it going on? | What ought to be going on? | How might we respond? |
| Function    | Priestly listening | Sagely wisdom       | Prophetic discernment      | Servant leadership    |

From a Reformed perspective, the strength of Osmer's model might lie in these four functions as they build on the threefold office of prophet, priest and king.

The Reformed approach of Osmer's model is evident in the summary above (cf. also Osmer 2008:28; Pieterse, 2013:70). This aligns well with both the researcher's and the North-West University's (NWU) theological approach and sustains the research topic of a Petrine paradigm for pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". For this study, the Bible is considered as the Word of God and ultimate normative source for basis theory (cf. Rousseau, 2010:22). This consideration does not discredit cross-disciplinary dialogue in Practical Theology, as indeed Osmer (2008:160ff) highly encourages it, but as Smith (2010:112) points out, even with a greater emphasis on the Scripture within the normative task, Osmer's model is still usable by those who hold to a more conservative theological approach.

Additional motivating factors for choosing Osmer's model as the basis for methodology in this study include the recommendations it receives among contemporary academics and researchers (e.g. Smith, 2010:110-111; De Klerk & De Wet, 2013:284; Pieterse, 2013:72) and the way it models the pastoral cycle outlined by practical theologians such as Billard and Pritchard (1996:77-78).

A summative explanation of the methodological approach for each of Osmer's four tasks implemented in this study follows below (refer 1.5.4, 1.5.5, 1.5.6, 1.5.7), while a detailed discussion of the methodology for each of the four tasks is included in the respective chapters dealing with each respective task (refer chapters 2-5).

#### 1.5.4 Summative methodology: The descriptive-empirical task

Priestly listening ('What is going on?') may be a formal, semiformal or informal way of interpreting the text of contemporary lives to relate to the uniqueness of others with 'openness, attentiveness and prayerfulness' (Osmer, 2008:34). Osmer aims mainly at formal interpretation and embraces qualitative empirical research (Osmer, 2008:39) to enable leaders to deepen their understanding of 'What is going on?'.

The academic contribution of this research based on perspectives from Osmer's descriptive task (chapter 2) aims at understanding 'what is going on' by means of:

- (a) a brief literature study from appropriate books, journal articles and various internet resources describing the problematic praxis of a "Prosperity Gospel", and
- (b) a qualitative empirical research. The envisaged research with participation by pastoral counsellors in Southern Africa afforded them an occasion to voice experiences with pastorants who needed pastoral guidance due to their life experiences regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". According to Osmer (2008:4, 43), such empirical research will primarily provide insights into the ministry context and issues.

Due to the need for an in-depth study of believers' views and experiences regarding "Prosperity Gospel" beliefs and the resulting consequences for their lives, the methodological approach followed for the descriptive-empirical task is qualitative in nature. Within a hermeneutical model like Osmer's (2008), the qualitative approach seems to be the most appropriate methodology for empirical research (Pieterse, 2013:70) (cf. Osmer, 2008:39).

The empirical research consists of a concise in-depth unstructured questionnaire to acquire data from a variety of qualified pastoral counsellors to obtain answers for Osmer's (2008) diagnostic question: 'What is going on?'. The following question was put to participants:

**In-depth unstructured question: Describe the nature of pastoral guidance you offered to people regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".**

Provision was made for a follow-up participant-specific questionnaire from which further necessary information could be obtained regarding believers' concept of and experiences with a "Prosperity Gospel" and resulting pastoral guidance that was offered. However,



answers to the initial empirical question stated above produced satisfactory research data and no need existed for such a follow-up questionnaire for any of the participants.

#### **1.5.5 Summative methodology: The interpretive task**

Sagely wisdom ('Why is it going on?') requires deep reflection on the challenges of life (labelled 'thoughtfulness' by Osmer [2008:82]) and wise judgment [2008:84ff] founded upon Israel's wisdom tradition reflected in Scripture, which could guide others towards submitting themselves to God's royal rule over their lives.

The interpretive task for the study, focuses on answering the question of why an activity or practice is taking place. In the case of this study the goal is to understand why a belief is exceptionally popular among believers and possibly assess what impact the belief has on believers. Various theories (particularly from the sociological, psychological and missiological disciplines) were investigated from both a theological perspective as well as from the perspective of relevant arts and sciences (Osmer, 2008:100). Inclusion of perspectives from those metatheories are important components of Practical Theology (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:36; Osmer, 2008:57-58).

Available scholarly literature like articles, books and internet resources were reviewed alongside data obtained from the empirical research to structurally present possible reasons for believers' attraction or negativity toward a "Prosperity Gospel".

#### **1.5.6 Summative methodology: The normative task**

Prophetic judgement ('What ought to be going on?') requires " ... the discernment of God's Word to His covenant people in a particular time and place" (Osmer, 2008:133). Osmer (2008:137) emphasises an openness to 'divine pathos' (God's suffering). Pastoral guides will be able to offer words of hope and grace when they have a sympathetic identification with God's Word. This 'Word' reveals Jesus as entering a creation marred by suffering, with compassion towards suffering others.

Osmer's (2008) third task is to determine the 'normative' situation (i.e. 'What ought to be going on?'). Osmer writes from a liberal Protestant perspective (Smith, 2010:111) whereas the research for this study is done from a conservative Evangelical perspective. In this research, a greater emphasis is then placed on the Bible for the normative task. Within the discipline of Practical Theology, the basis theory focus on the Bible for extracting theological principles (Rousseau, 2010:11) – stated by Dingemans (1996a:93) as the "(p)astoral care

and catechetics – are ‘*Ausrichtung des Wortes Gottes an den Einzelnen*’ [an application of the Word of God to individuals]”.

In a review of Osmer (2008), Smith (2010:112) considers the lack of Biblical prominence in Osmer’s model as a weakness and Smith clearly articulates the approach followed for the normative work for this research in the statement: “For anyone with a high view of Scripture, even practical theology must be exegetical theology.” The paradigm for pastoral guidance is Scripture-based, and this point of departure necessitates a clear statement that the research is conducted within the Reformed tradition of *Sola Scriptura* (cf. De Wet & Pieterse, 2013:4; Pieterse, 2013:55).

Theological concepts as presented by Peter were extracted from passages in 1 Peter by means of a grammatical-historical exegesis. This is in line with the Reformed tradition from which this study was conducted. The aim of exegesis under the grammatical-historical approach is to determine what the text says rather than reading something into the text (*eisegesis*) (Zuck, 1991:58). Krabbendam (1990:74) simplifies this exegetical approach by arguing that it should do nothing different from what is done when other (non-Biblical) literature is read and understood. Deist and Burden (1980:111) and Silva (2007:21) concur regarding this hermeneutical importance in referring to aspects such as recognition of the original language, the grammatical rules of the language and the specific historical culture of the author and first readers of the original text.

The hermeneutical approach was supplemented by a social-scientific enriched socio-historic hermeneutic (cf. Rousseau, 2010:22) where the *Sitz im Leben* (life context) of the first audience is accounted for in the hermeneutical process. De Klerk and Janse van Rensburg (2005:54-55) refer to an ‘emic’ approach where the particular society and period guides the data interpretation.

The teachings of Peter in his first epistle were exegetically analysed to draw out theological principles for Osmer’s normative task (2008:139ff). According to Osmer (2008:137), leaders require *sympathy* to offer words of grace and hope to those who are suffering. This *sympathy* involves an expression of God’s identification with the suffering in this world (Osmer, 2008:137). As a first-hand witness of the sufferings of Jesus, as well as the teaching of Jesus on suffering for His followers, Peter is a sound source and foundation for a (proposed) pastoral paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. The research aim is to investigate how Peter’s teachings can serve as a paradigm for contemporary pastors to offer such remedial guidance.

### **1.5.7 Summative methodology: The pragmatic task**

Finally, servant leadership ('How might we respond?') strives to help God's people towards their God-given purpose/mission and leading a congregation through the potentially risky but necessary process of change (Osmer, 2008:178).

The data obtained from the empirical-descriptive, interpretive and normative tasks was consolidated and applied by means of a Petrine paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". The paradigm was formulated around discussion sessions (Rousseau, 2010:231-236) that could highlight the errors and dangers of prosperity beliefs and thus contribute towards correcting the expectations created by a "Prosperity Gospel" and instructing/encouraging believers toward normative expectation, hope and practice amid suffering.

Working towards the praxis as product of the first three foundational tasks, this current research answers the question of how people influenced by a "Prosperity Gospel" can be pastorally guided. The aim of the research is to present a Petrine paradigm for this purpose.

The pragmatic task requires insights from scholars in the field of Practical Theology as it pertains to new praxis (cf. Osmer, 2008:176), a process typically described by practical theologians/Christian counsellors as affecting 'change' (Adams, 1986:3; Osmer, 2008:176, Breed, 2013:232-235) or bringing Christians to maturity in their faith (Louw, 1999:222; cf. Collins, 1988:17). This could be considered an adequate working definition for the concept of 'pastoral guidance' in the context of the study. The aim of renewed praxis in Practical Theology is helping people in their convictions about God, understanding who they are as Christians, what their expectations should be in the world they live and how they should conduct themselves in the light of these realities.

### **1.6 Clarification of concepts/definition of terms**

Important concepts in literature in the field of study have been defined in the body of the first chapter. Below is a list of such concepts along with the section references above where working definitions were formulated/proposed:

- Praxis – section 1.1.1 note 1
- Prosperity – section 1.1.1 note 2
- Prosperity Gospel – section 1.2.1.3

- Grammatical-historical hermeneutical approach – section 1.5.6
- Pastoral guidance – section 1.5.7

## **1.7 Classification of chapters**

The thesis outline is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction, problem statement and research method

Chapter 2: Descriptive-empirical task: “What is going on?”

Chapter 3: Interpretive task: “Why is it going on?”

Chapter 4: Normative task: “What ought to be going on?”

Chapter 5: Pragmatic task: “How might we respond?”

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

Bibliography

Addendum

## CHAPTER 2

### DESCRIPTIVE-EMPIRICAL TASK:

### DESCRIPTIVE-EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVES ON A BELIEF IN A “PROSPERITY GOSPEL”

#### 2.1 Introduction

The first task in Osmer's Practical Theological research model (Osmer, 2008:4, 129ff) is to answer the vital question, 'What is going on?'. This descriptive-empirical task's focus is to require information and evidence to find out 'what is going on'. The function is described as 'priestly listening'.<sup>7</sup> Diagram 2-1 below represents Osmer's (2008:11) approach and depicts the first task in relation to the other three tasks:

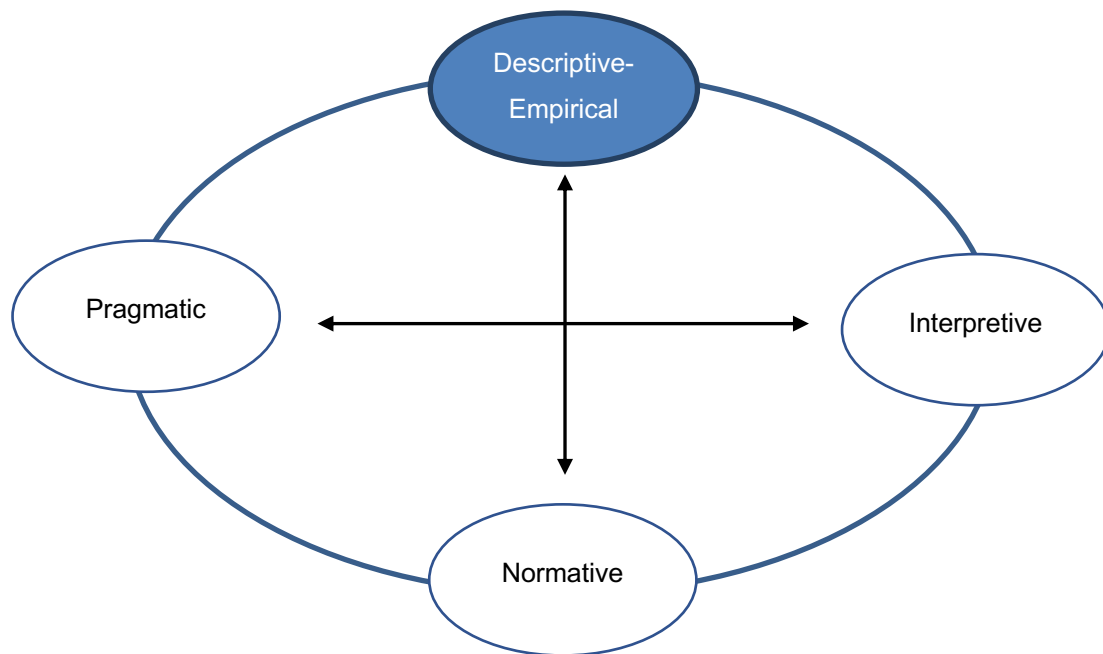


**Diagram 2-1: Osmer's Descriptive-empirical task**

It is imperative for interpreting guides (pastoral counsellors) to investigate people's experiences to gain the best possible picture of the 'lay of the land' (Osmer, 2008:40). Osmer (2008:37-39) describes three forms of a spirituality of presence by which counsellors can obtain information for effective 'priestly listening':

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<sup>7</sup> Priestly listening is the pastoral counsellor's attempt to interpret the context of contemporary lives and practices (Osmer, 2008:33). Adequate listening requires accessing a problematic situation through personal context, empathetic ('priestly') listening, and imagination (Osmer, 2008:35).

- Informal attending – attending to others and understanding their world through interpersonal communication or observation of what is generally going on around us, for instance in nature and in the newspapers;
- Semiformal attending – attending to others by considering specific people, their circumstances and life experiences;
- Formal attending – attending to others by formal investigation through empirical research.

The researcher's focus for this study is formal attending: to enhance the understanding of people's episodes, situations and contexts<sup>8</sup>.

## 2.2 Objectives

For this study the aim of the descriptive-empirical task is to investigate the context of the so-called "Prosperity Gospel" and its effects for pastorants who have engaged in its beliefs. This context is accessed with the professional assistance of pastoral counsellors who are/were required to guide believers through their situation and outcomes of a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

The research objective for this task is to determine:

- what the praxis of a "Prosperity Gospel" is,
- what the state of influence of a "Prosperity Gospel" could be on believers, and
- what pastoral guidance is being offered.

The methodology toward this objective is two-fold. *Firstly*, it comprises a brief literature study to define what a "Prosperity Gospel" is, and *secondly*, an empirical study to understand:

- (a) the nature of the problems pastorants encounter/ed with a "Prosperity Gospel",
- (b) the nature of the pastoral assistance rendered to pastorants regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel", and

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<sup>8</sup> Osmer (2008:12) defines episodes as daily incidents of life; a situation is longer patterns of episodes; a context is the system in which the situation takes place.

- (c) suggestions towards development of a remedial pastoral paradigm to assist pastorants that were/are affected by a “Prosperity Gospel”.

Research findings on a) above are incorporated into this descriptive-empirical chapter while the findings on b) and c) above are reported on in the pragmatic chapter (refer chapter 5).

The ethical requirements in terms of empirical research are fundamental and a detailed explanation of the research design, methods and ethical implications of the research are set out in 2.4 hereafter.

### **2.3 Descriptive perspectives on a “Prosperity Gospel”**

The first aspect of the research is to describe the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel”. In chapter 1 (refer 1.1.1 and 1.1.2) the necessity is stated to address the problematic praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” within the modern-day African church from a Practical Theology viewpoint. The lack of information and data within the field of Practical Theology on a “Prosperity Gospel”<sup>9</sup>, and particularly a paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding this phenomenon, motivates this study.

The research is conducted within the field of Practical Theology and the intended focus is not apologetic in nature, however, a clear understanding of the prosperity phenomenon on the modern Christian landscape is considered a necessity. In light of the research aim of investigating a “Prosperity Gospel’s” praxis to compose a sound theory from normative theological principles from 1 Peter for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, the elements/beliefs need to be addressed from Scripture.

The overview of the prosperity phenomenon includes the following two aspects:

- (a) Defining a “Prosperity Gospel”;
- (b) The world-wide influence of a “Prosperity Gospel”.

These aspects are briefly discussed by means of a literature study from appropriate books, journal articles and various internet resources of both proponents of the “Prosperity Gospel” as well as scholarly critique.

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<sup>9</sup> With the various search engines available to the NWU library (the library catalog, EBSCO HOST, SACat, ProQuest and SAePublications), searches with the key words and combinations of the key words “Prosperity Gospel” and “Practical Theology” did not yield significant results. Concerning a “Prosperity Gospel” from a Practical Theology perspective, results did not yield anything meaningful in the context of this study.

### **2.3.1 Defining a “Prosperity Gospel”**

#### **2.3.1.1 Descriptive perspectives from practical theological vantage-point on a “Prosperity Gospel”**

Definition of the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” has not yet received sufficient attention in the field of Practical Theology. Two practical theological aspects, namely people’s search for meaningfulness (cf. for example Frankl, 2007:127; Kruger, 2016:7) and the age-old theodicy problem (cf. for example Cooper-White, 2012:24; Louw, 2015:303), relate particularly to a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. These two aspects and their relation to a “Prosperity Gospel” received attention in chapter 1 (refer 1.1.1 and 1.1.2) and it is indicated that various forms of suffering pose perplexing questions to many people about the meaning of (their) existence and life itself. This quest for meaning can be frustrated by suffering (Frankl, 2007:130) and pastoral guides should endeavour to help believers in their search for meaning in life (cf. Kruger, 2016:7).

A “Prosperity Gospel” over-simplifies the theodicy question by denying that any form of suffering in life – apart from possibly the temptation to sin and certain forms of persecution – comes from God and is not, and cannot be the will of God for any believer (cf. example Hagin, 1982:4; Osteen, 2004:205-212). For this reason, theologians consider a “Prosperity Gospel” to have a theology of ‘non-suffering’ (compare Horton, 2008:96; MacArthur, 2011:95). When believers in such a paradigm suffer disappointment and disillusionment the ensuing crisis of misunderstanding sets the task for pastoral care to help them find meaning in God and to live in hope again (Louw, 1982:1, Louw, 2015:13).

A “Prosperity Gospel” claims to offer an easy outcome to life’s problems in its claim to be the channel towards obtaining perfect health and abundant wealth. The negative consequences, however, that might result from this problematic praxis justify the necessity for a remedial pastoral paradigm regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Fiske (2004:123-127) rightly warns against trying to cut corners in efforts to make sense of your circumstances in a social environment often dotted with occurrences entailing suffering that are difficult to grasp. These efforts and their methods make the understanding of suffering critically important for the pastoral caring task.

Louw (2015:1) offers particularly helpful insight to ‘hope care’ and maintains that the task of pastoral caring requires that people who are suffering are given the assurance of God’s presence to lead them to purposeful, sustained and enduring hope. People cannot cope



with life's demands by a materialistic optimism (Louw, 2015:13), but rather it is compassion which gives meaning to life and, therefore, a praxis of hope is needed in pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" (cf. Louw, 2015:294).

Due to the limited research material available on a "Prosperity Gospel" within the field of Practical Theology (refer 2.3.1.1), scholarly material from theologians and practical experience from pastors who interact with pastorants regarding their belief/s in a "Prosperity Gospel" will assist the necessity to define the praxis of a "Prosperity Gospel" in 2.3.1.2, 2.3.1.3, 2.3.1.4 and 2.3.2 below.

### **2.3.1.2 Brief historical overview of the "Prosperity Gospel"**

A "Prosperity Gospel" is not unique to the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century religious landscape. Throughout the 2,000 years of church history, some beliefs of a prosperity message featured regularly in some faction of the church (cf. Hollinger, 1988:131-132). It could even be espoused that the twelve disciples of Jesus harboured a form of a "Prosperity Gospel" in their expectation of an immediate earthly kingdom with material blessings for all the loyal followers of the Messiah (Van Emmenes, 2016:87-161). The most popular recognised version of the modern-day "Prosperity Gospel" goes by many names, including The Word of Faith Movement, The Faith-Formula Movement, The Health and Wealth Gospel, The Positive Confession Movement, Name-it-and-claim-it theology or, simply, the Prosperity Gospel (cf. Morris & Lioy, 2012:73-74).

The movement originated in the teachings of men like E.W. Kenyon (1867-1948) and W.M. Branham (1909-1965) who are generally considered the 'fathers' of the modern-day "Prosperity Gospel" (cf. Hollinger, 1988:143; MacArthur, 1992:351-352; Adu, 2014:22). Hollinger (1988:144) highlights some prominent features in Kenyon's teaching and notes that Kenyon was convinced that the 'inner person' is controlled by what is professed with one's mouth. Greatly influenced by metaphysics and the 'New Thought' of the Emerson College of Oratory where he studied during the 1890s, Kenyon was the first to make the 'what I confess, I profess' statement, now very popular in "Prosperity Gospel" vocabulary (Kenyon, 1970:98). Other popular statements which identify the crux of Kenyon's teaching include, for example, confidence to command disease to leave the body in the 'Name of Jesus' (Kenyon, 1970:99).

Branham's contribution to the modern-day "Prosperity Gospel" movement comes from the connection with the "Latter Rain Movement" of the healing revivals after the Second World

War (MacArthur, 1992:238). Branham's teachings focussed on, amongst others, reinstating the first-century practices of the church like the five-fold ministry of the apostles and prophets (with particular emphasis on miracles and healing) by current pastors and evangelists, and reinstating personal prophecy in the church (Bowman, 2001:44-77). Current prosperity preachers are considered to build upon the foundations laid by the viewpoints of Branham and the "Latter Rain movement" (Bowman, 2001:89).

Many others followed in the footsteps of Kenyon and Branham to play a vital role in formulating the "Prosperity Gospel" movement's distinct teaching and clientele. Key figures include, amongst many others, Kenneth Hagin Sr., Kenneth and Gloria Copeland and more recently, Joel Osteen (cf. van Emmenes, 2016:176-177; cf. also McConnell, 1988:3, 4; Lioy, 2007:45; Byassee, 2005:20). From an African perspective names such as TB Joshua, Chris Oyakhilome, David Oyedepo, and Michael Okonkwo serve as examples of key voices in the movement (cf. Gifford, 2007:21; Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:22, 25).

#### **2.3.1.3 Main tenets of the modern-day "Prosperity Gospel"**

Prosperity preachers are not known for denying fundamental aspects of orthodox Evangelical beliefs. Key doctrines such as the virgin birth and deity of Christ, the necessity of rebirth by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ and other such core aspects of the Christian faith are affirmed by many prosperity preachers (cf. Hollinger, 1988:132). Moo (1988:191) posits that if prosperity preachers proclaim a 'different/false gospel', it is due to adding beliefs foreign to what sound exegetical interpretation of the Bible teaches, rather than denying key traditional/orthodox doctrines.

It is not this study's objective to analyse and critique every doctrinal conviction of the modern-day "Prosperity Gospel". A brief defining of the key aspects differentiating the "Prosperity Gospel" movement in the Evangelical church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is considered a necessity, however, for the study's aim to propose a paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" in our times.

Regarding Osmer's (2008) necessity to find out what is going on, the obvious first question in the context of this study is: What do "Prosperity Gospel" adherents believe? In comparing a "Prosperity Gospel" to more traditional Christian doctrines, three distinct beliefs emerge, namely supernatural faith, abundant wealth and perfect health (cf. Barron, 1987:9; Kaiser, 1988:153; Moo, 1988:191). These three tenets can be considered the backbone of the prosperity movement's religious convictions and are briefly discussed below.

- **Supernatural faith**

Within the framework of a “Prosperity Gospel”, ‘faith’ is understood from a mystical perspective as a supernatural force (Copeland, 1974:19; compare Sarles, 1986:332; McConnell, 1995:186; Liroy, 2007:43-44). Believers can ‘apply’ their faith to obtain any form of desired success. The realm of success is understood to be unlimited, but focuses mainly on wealth and health (Liroy, 2007:42).

The faith is put into operation/activated by the believer’s spoken words, so-called ‘positive confessions’ (cf. Sarles, 1986:348), and it is averred that believers’ words have creative power similar to that of God who created the universe by speaking it into existence (cf. Olagunju, 2009:149-150). Hagin (1979:3-5) paved the way in the early years of the modern-day prosperity movement for this understanding of faith as a powerful weapon in the mouth of a believer by assuring believers that this faith enables them ‘to write their own ticket with God by saying it, doing it, receiving it and telling it’. Another highly popular contemporary prosperity preacher (Osteen, 2004:125, 129) promotes the ‘spiritual principle’ that every believer has a miracle-working-ability in their spoken words.

It is from this understanding of ‘faith’ that the popular prosperity mantra: ‘name it ... and claim it’ derives its origin. Critically considered, such a conviction results in God being forced into action towards the fulfilment of every desire verbally uttered by the believer (cf. Duty, 2014:54). It seems to be as simple as believers deciding what they want, believing that it is already theirs and then simply ‘speaking it into existence’ (cf. Liroy, 2007:44).

The infallibility of this ‘faith-formula’ also requires patience. A believer must endure in ‘faith’ as defined by a “Prosperity Gospel” until the desired ‘prosperity’ is obtained (cf. Copeland, 1978:94-95). This quasi-faith joined by persistence is understood to be the perfect combination and guarantees to produce results every time. The implication is that believers who are not ‘prosperous’ have something lacking in their ‘faith’.

Scholars who critique the prosperity view of faith (cf. Morris & Liroy, 2012:87) posit that such an understanding of ‘faith’ is more in line with the teaching of the metaphysics of the middle to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, than finding its roots in the teachings of Scripture.

- **Abundant wealth**

The name “Prosperity Gospel” derives from the teaching assuring believers that God’s will for them is abundant financial prosperity. This is claimed to be the birthright of every

believer and, therefore, any desire – from expensive cars, huge mansions and bulky bank balances – is considered a legitimate expectation (demand) (Pilgrim, 1992:3). It depends, however, on the size and persistence of a person's 'faith' whether or not the desired 'blessing' is fulfilled. Logically, the lack of financial blessing is direct evidence of someone's lack of 'faith', and prosperity preachers even propose that since it is God's will for every believer to enjoy abundant financial provisions, a (financially) poor believer must be considered dishonouring to God (cf. Lioy, 2007:44) and, per implication, living in sin.

Critically appraised, financial prosperity could be a blessing from God, but the guarantee of unlimited earthly prosperity as God's will for all believers contradicts what the Scriptures teach (Kaiser, 1988:162). Evans G. (2000:55) notes that prosperity proponents miss the fundamental shift implemented by Jesus in the New Covenant – a shift from the material-temporal realm to the spiritual-eternal realm.

The "Prosperity Gospel" dogma rests on three main pillars, namely God's Covenant with Abraham, Jesus' atonement and the sow-and-reap principle. Prosperity preachers (cf. for example Copeland, 1974:51; Copeland, 1978:4-6; Hagin, 1983:14) guarantee believers that all the physical, spiritual and financial blessings encapsulated in God's promises to Abraham are irrevocably applicable to them. Copeland (1974:41), for example, explains Abraham's blessing in the statement: "*Poverty is not a blessing of God*". Contrarily, the orthodox theological position has always been that there are, indeed, certain aspects of God's covenant with Abraham from which all believers benefit, but the emphasis is soteriological and not material (Morris & Lioy, 2012:99). Galatians 3:13-14 serves as evidence of this soteriological blessing for all children of Abraham but, ironically, prosperity proponents take this passage for their own use to claim their right to financial blessings (cf. Sarles, 1986:347). The text reads:

*<sup>13</sup> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" -- <sup>14</sup> in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, .... (Bible, 1995)*

Prosperity proponents are adamant that all blessings promised to Abraham, including and especially material/financial wealth, are also the guaranteed possession of all spiritual children of Abraham. Indeed, exegetically one must conclude that Galatians 3:13-14 guarantees 'blessing' for spiritual children of Abraham, but it is the type of blessing a "Prosperity Gospel" proposes which is to be disputed. Sarles (1986:347) highlights the fact that prosperity proponents conveniently leave out the last clause of Galatians 3:14 " ... so

that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith". In context then, the verses address the spiritual blessing of receiving the Holy Spirit, while material prosperity is not mentioned or even alluded to. This is a clear misappropriation, and might even be a deliberate manipulative misuse of Scripture.

Prosperity proponents are nevertheless convinced that the 'curse' from which believers are redeemed through Christ (Gal 3:13), is the curse of misery and affliction spelled out in Deuteronomy 28:15-68, but Kaiser (1988:153) refutes this connection as there is no legitimate exegetical indication in either Galatians 3:13 nor Deuteronomy 28 that these texts are to be considered as parallels. Within the context of Galatians, Paul (the author) was concerned with the believers' position in Christ and the 'curse' (Gal 3:13) logically refers to eternal death to which sin leads believers. That is a completely different context to Deuteronomy 28 which describes Israel's inability to keep the moral law of God, and as a result incurred more punishment from God (Kaiser, 1988:165; compare also Sarles, 1986:347). Critically appraised, a "Prosperity Gospel's" misuse of Deuteronomy 28 and Galatians 3 can be ascribed to poor, or possibly a complete lack of, exegesis as both chapters' context is obviously ignored (refer 4.3.2. and 4.3.3).

The link between the atoning work of Christ and abundant financial prosperity for every believer is clear from an analysis of prosperity literature – the atoning work of Christ is the means by which the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant is transferred to believers. Within a prosperity framework, the emphasis of the atonement is not on the forgiveness of sins and the satisfying of God's holy wrath, but on the deliverance from the curses of sin (sickness, poverty and suffering) that were placed on Jesus in order that believers can be completely set free from them 'here and now' (Copeland, 1996:6). Unlimited wealth is proposed as a direct result of the atonement and the right of every believer (Copeland, 1974:41; Bishop, 1997:18, 20). Evans G. (2000:56) correctly criticises this prosperity spin on Galatians 3:13 by showing that the 'law' in this verse points to the righteousness of, and satisfaction of the righteousness of God, and in no way implies aspects of wealth and poverty.

Within the modern-day "Prosperity Gospel", the sow-and-reap principle (or law of compensation) is strongly emphasised. It simply posits that the more one is willing to give, the more one must expect to receive in return (Copeland, 1974:79-80). This abundant giving of money, for instance, to the ministries of prosperity preachers (Chilenje, 2014:7; Hood, 2004:57-65) is what is required. Tilton (1983:41), for example, claims to have been introduced to the 'law of compensation' when he gave away a few watches and then noticing (seemingly out of the blue) a Rolex watch appearing on his wrist. A proof-text popular with

“Prosperity” advocates for this dogma is Mark 10:29-30 where Jesus makes the promise that those who make sacrifices in this life will receive a hundred times more in the life to come. Copeland (1978:54) explains (without consideration for the context) the principle prosperity proposers apparently find in these verses as a guaranteed hundred fold multiplication in this life of all money given away. Such simplistic application and ignoring of context is hermeneutically flawed (Morris & Lioy, 2012:105-106). Any principle that becomes a manipulative action by which God would be ‘moved to action’ by men becomes invalid (Sarles, 1986:349). Fee (2006:41) makes the striking observation in this regard that it is not always understood why the wicked are blessed at times while believers suffer lack and, therefore “ ... [c]onventional wisdom ... cannot be made a part of the Biblical view of poverty and prosperity”.

The motive of giving for self-enrichment within the prosperity phenomenon seems contrary to the servitude and generosity encouraged by the New Testament Scriptures (cf. example 2 Cor 9) and critics (e.g. Hollifield, 2011:54 – note 10) of a “Prosperity Gospel” argue that ‘worship of God, gratitude and even Christian duty’ are the motives Scripture encourages for the self-sacrificial giving of believers.

- **Perfect health**

A “Prosperity Gospel” insists that no believer who understands his authority ought to suffer any illness or physical deficiency. Miraculous healing for all believers with so-called sufficient ‘faith’ is, therefore, an integral part of the belief system of a “Prosperity Gospel”. Throughout church history it has been acknowledged that God can/does miraculously heal, but within a “Prosperity Gospel’s” framework it is always God’s will to miraculously heal every believer (cf. for example Savelle, 1981:8).

Prosperity proponents hold that Jesus never refused anyone who came to him for healing (Mt 9:35) and that only a lack of faith can prevent such healing from taking place (Mk 6:5-6) (compare Moo, 1988:193). The followers of Christ, therefore, received the ability (and responsibility) to continue this ministry of miraculous healing (Jn 14:12). The healing ministries of the apostles Peter (Ac 10:36-43) and Paul (Ac 14:8-10) are frequently pointed out as examples of where the focus of every minister/prophet/apostle’s ministry in the modern-day church ought to be (cf. Moo, 1988:193).

As in the argument for financial prosperity, so the physical health/healing is proclaimed as part of the atoning work of Christ. As part of the benefits of the atonement, believers must

exercise power over all disease/bodily defect. Three Scripture passages are singled out as the basis for this belief, namely:

- Isaiah 53:5 “ ... by His scourging we are healed” (Bible, 1995),
- 1 Peter 2:24 “ ... by His wounds you were healed” (Bible, 1995), and
- Matthew 8:16-17 “ ... He ... healed all who were ill ... He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases” (Bible, 1995).

At face value, these verses seem to affirm exactly what a “Prosperity Gospel” proposes regarding health and healing, but conservative exegetes like Moo (1988:203) warn that there must be a distinction between immediate results and indirect results of Christ’s atoning work. Forgiveness of sins is a clear, direct result of the death of Christ in each of the contexts of these verses, whereas the transformation of the body is considered an indirect result which is not necessarily promised immediately. Physical healing is a possibility for any believer (Moo, 1988:203) but to proclaim that it is always the will of God to heal every believer based on these verses, is to abuse the text and make it say something that the author did not intend (Moo, 1988:203).

The physical restoration of the body (complete liberation from disease/bodily defect) debate raises the question as to the timing of such fulfilment. Kaiser (1988:167) and Moo (1988:198) are both of the opinion that a “Prosperity Gospel” is the product of ‘over-realized eschatology’ which claims eternal/heavenly realities for the present/earthly sphere.

#### **2.3.1.4 Preliminary conclusion on defining a “Prosperity Gospel”**

Popular prosperity voices (e.g. Copeland, 1978:20; Tilton, 1983:2; Hagin, 1983:15-16; Bishop, 1997:16, 18) are united in their conviction that God’s will for believers is their financial and physical prosperity – clearly evidenced in the title of Copeland’s book *God’s will is prosperity* (1978). The logical conclusion from this conviction is that poor or sick believers are actually living in sin and against God’s will for their lives. Copeland (1978:20) implies that much in claiming that these so-called ‘laws of prosperity’ are guaranteed to be successful for all who obey God’s Word. In this light, sick or poor believers are directly responsible for their circumstances (compare Sarles, 1986:229) which, apart from suffering poverty and illness, results in unwarranted guilt due to not being ‘obedient to God’s Word’ as Copeland (1978:20) posits above. Believers’ disillusionment, frustration, disappointment and questioning of their faith as a result of poverty, illness or any other form of physical or

emotional suffering experienced in this world, would be more than enough reason why someone would require pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

Critically appraised, the question must be asked whether these prosperity doctrines concur with the Scriptures in any way. Ironically, Jesus is the most valuable witness against a “Prosperity Gospel” (Sarles, 1986, 340-341). Not only was He born in poverty (Lk 2:22-24; Lv 12:8), but later in life He did not even have a proverbial ‘roof over His head’ (Mt 8:20). In the religious perspectives of a modern-day “Prosperity Gospel” Jesus would have been labelled a sinner considering He did not have enough money on Him to pay temple tax (Mt 17:24-27). Furthermore, when He died, all He possessed was the clothes on His back<sup>10</sup> (Lk 23:34) and could He not even leave anything for the sustenance of His mother but had to ask a disciple to care for her (Jn 19:26-27). If the ‘message’ proposed by a “Prosperity Gospel” is consequently applied, Jesus’ poverty might be the reason why He was crucified.

The crucial question is whose will reigns in a “Prosperity Gospel”: is it God’s will or that of a materialistically-minded believer with his ‘faith’-wand? In a review of Osteen’s book *Break Out* (2013), Johnson (2014:63) comes to the conclusion that, logically evaluated, the implication of a “Prosperity Gospel” is that God is not majestic in His Transcendence, but the real majestic power belongs to man. Copeland (1978:72) states unambiguously that ‘God will never override the authority of a believer’. According to a “Prosperity Gospel” then, man is in charge and God stands submissively in the service of man. Human authority is considered infinite, while God’s sovereign, sometimes mysterious will receives little recognition (Moo, 1988:208). The only logical conclusion is that a “Prosperity Gospel” is not theocentric but anthropocentric in its beliefs (Sarles, 1986:343; Morris & Lioy, 2012:74).

### **2.3.2 The “Prosperity Gospel’s” world-wide influence**

The modern-day version of a “Prosperity Gospel” essentially has its roots in the United States of America (Coleman, 2000:40; Beckford, 2001:15-16; Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:23), but the world-wide influx of the prosperity message in the Evangelical Christian church of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries cannot be denied (Morris & Lioy, 2012:74). It is so widely spread in the land of its origin (USA) that it cannot be considered the product of a single church institution (Van Emmenes, 2016:167), but three probable contributing sources can be posed

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<sup>10</sup> The value attributed to the clothes of Jesus by certain prosperity preachers (e.g. Avanzini [1991] in Hanegraaf [1993]) is unsubstantiated from both historical and scholarly-exegetical resources.



for the origin of the movement, namely the Pentecostal and Charismatic faith movements, the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century American Revival movement and specific cultic influences<sup>11</sup>.

This popular prosperity message has made significant strides for approximately six decades (Evans G., 2000:55). In particular, this trend was noticed in the late 1980s when prominent prosperity preachers boasted a significant following, not only in the United States of America, but also in large parts of Europe and the Third World. The movement continued to spread rapidly and in the 1990s regions like Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, Africa, India, Latin-America and the Southsea region of South-East Asia were infiltrated by the teachings of prosperity preachers (Hunt, 1998:272).

It is the African soil which seems to have been especially (although not exclusively) fertile for the growth of the prosperity phenomenon. By the year 2005, the formalised modern-day “Prosperity Gospel” movement reaped a harvest of up to an estimated 147 million African followers (Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:23)<sup>12</sup>. Researchers are of the opinion that a “Prosperity Gospel” is not only the fastest growing Christian phenomenon south of the Sahara, but also the fastest growing of all religious movements, including, for example, Islam (Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:22). In this light, Farah’s (1982:15) view that a “Prosperity Gospel” is the most popular and attractive message preached in the contemporary church has merit.

The impressive rate at which this movement has grown begs the question as to what makes it so attractive. Why do people fall for/buy into what a “Prosperity Gospel” sells? The answer to this question is essential for the interpretive task of the research (refer chapter 3) as it will give church leaders/pastors the ability to apply ‘wise judgment’ (Osmer, 2008:80) as they seek to “... lead the people of God on their journeys of faith ... ” (Osmer, 2008:40).

## **2.4 Empirical perspectives on a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

### **2.4.1 Research design**

The first aspect of the research was to describe the problematic praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” by means of a literature review (refer 2.3). The second aspect was to conduct empirical research on pastoral counsellors’ experience with people who express/had expressed a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Due to the need for an in-depth study of

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<sup>11</sup> It falls outside the scope of this study to discuss these influences in detail. For details, please see MacArthur, 1992:351-353; McConnell, 1995:15-26; Coleman, 2000:40-47; Van Emmenes, 2016:168-172.

<sup>12</sup> A more recent figure could not be obtained.

believers' views and experiences regarding their "Prosperity Gospel" beliefs and the resulting consequences for their lives, the methodological approach for the descriptive-empirical task is qualitative. This study is not concerned with statistics and variables (cf. Rousseau, 2010:191), in other words, to test, prove or disprove theories (De Vos *et al*, 2002:79) but it is concerned with life-experiences of pastoral counsellors and their pastorant-clients regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". Berg's (2007:3) argument that it is impossible to express certain life-experiences in statistics, supports the conclusion that a quantitative approach was not suitable for this study.

A qualitative methodology, as implemented by this study, seeks to interpret verbal or written data obtained from participants (De Vos *et al.*, 2002:79; cf. also Rousseau, 2010:191) where personal perspectives on, or experiences of a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" could be obtained. Within a hermeneutical model like Osmer's (2008), the qualitative approach would be the most appropriate for empirical research (Pieterse, 2013:70) (cf. Osmer, 2008:39) to find out 'What is going on?' to assist guiding believers regarding said "Prosperity Gospel".

There are various models available for qualitative research (refer Osmer, 2008:50-52), but for this study, narrative analysis was used to obtain credible substance to the empirical aspect of the study. Participation by qualified pastoral counsellors concerning their interaction with pastorants regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" provided the substance. In narrative research the aim is to allow participants freedom to express their life-experience (story) in their own words (cf. Anderson & Goolishian, 1988:381). This freedom was availed to the participants by making use of a questionnaire which allowed participants to submit reports on experiences in a pastoral setting with pastorants regarding their belief in a "Prosperity Gospel", and pastoral guidance offered to their pastorant/s. The methodology eliminated the risk of a researcher who might influence participants and dictate answers by leading questions based on the researcher's own knowledge or presuppositional ideas (cf. Deist's [1992:85] warning regarding '*epoché*' – remaining neutral in narrative research and allowing participants to tell their own story [refer also Rousseau, 2010:192-193]).

Participants included pastors, missionaries or other qualified pastoral counsellors who have previously been engaged or are currently engaged with believers ('pastorants') who have expressed/still express a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". With the guidance of the promoters, participants were identified by the researcher – the promoters best understood the research question/s as well as which participants would most likely provide constructive data that would serve the objectives in the aim of the research. The research, therefore, was intent on

obtaining information from participants based on their pastoral experience. No gatekeeper was appointed since only a questionnaire was used for the empirical research, and no interviews were conducted at any stage of the research. The recruitment process which was followed is set out in detail below (refer 2.4.5.4).

The empirical research consisted of a concise *in-depth unstructured* questionnaire to acquire data from a variety of qualified pastoral counsellors to obtain answers for Osmer's (2008) diagnostic question: 'What is going on?'. This questionnaire consisted of **one** open-ended research question to understand the experiences of pastoral counsellors and the meaning they make of their experiences (encouraging the formulation of participants' own responses – Osmer, 2008:62). The empirical research question is as follows:

**In-depth unstructured question: Describe the nature of pastoral guidance you offered to people regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".**

The research question was elucidated with the request that respondents structure their responses along the following lines:

- The nature of problems a pastorant encountered with a "Prosperity Gospel";
- The nature of the pastoral assistance/aid/intervention rendered to a pastorant;
- Suggestions/recommendations towards development of a remedial pastoral 'model' to assist pastorants affected by a "Prosperity Gospel".

Based on the information obtained from the initial in-depth unstructured question as stated above the research design made provision where necessary for a further participant-specific questionnaire. This would be to obtain additional information regarding the believers' concept of and experiences with a "Prosperity Gospel". This questionnaire would comprise mainly open-ended questions to encourage description and discussion narrative. However, answers to the initial one open-ended question provided sufficient data and, therefore, an additional questionnaire was unnecessary for any of the participants.

In keeping with the ethics of the research methodology, the respondents' informed consent was obtained. Participants returned their response to the research question via e-mail to the researcher. Coming from pastorally involved participants, apart from information on people's life stories, additional informed feedback was obtained regarding appropriate or effective pastoral guidance people might require regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

In accordance with Osmer's (2008:49) description, the qualitative research aimed at an in-depth understanding of the actions, practices (and beliefs) of individuals. Answers and information obtained from the questionnaires were applied to compile an impersonal, objective interpretation from the believers' life stories regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" and the pastoral guidance that was offered. The thematic data obtained in this way was incorporated into the developed Bible-based paradigm or model for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" (refer chapter 5).

#### **2.4.2 Research methods and monitoring of research**

The research protocol is not complex but to ensure compliance, the study promoters were kept informed before and during various stages of the research as well as on the progress of each stage. Potential ethical issues were identified and discussed with the promoters throughout each research stage. The researcher adhered to the prescribed protocols by the NWU Ethics Committee and verified with study promoters on a regular basis that these protocols are being followed.

#### **2.4.3 Research setting**

The ingress of "Prosperity Gospel" beliefs into churches in Africa is significant. This context is the focus of the study. Accordingly, data was obtained from qualified pastoral counsellors who previously dealt with, or are currently dealing with believers (pastorants) who have expressed/still express a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" and where there were consequences for their lives and Christian beliefs to such an extent that they required remedial pastoral guidance.

#### **2.4.4 Method of data collection**

The initial phase comprised participation for all participants in answering the single question decided upon by the researcher under the guidance and approval of the promoters (refer 2.4.1). The question was aimed at gathering input from the participants regarding their pastoral interaction with pastorants who were/are involved with a "Prosperity Gospel". Furthermore, the aim was to find out if such involvement with a "Prosperity Gospel" has/had consequences for the pastorants' life and Christian faith to such an extent that they required pastoral guidance. Answers to the question were evaluated in lieu of the research questions (refer 1.3.1).

## **2.4.5 Population, sample size, participants and participant recruitment**

### **2.4.5.1 Population**

The influence of a “Prosperity Gospel” on the African church has been well documented. The findings of the study aim to propose a paradigm that pastoral counsellors can apply both in a South African context as well as in the wider African context to offer remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. The same would apply to include other ethnic groups.

### **2.4.5.2 Sample size and motivation**

The study is an intensive, in-depth study which essentially requires a small number of individuals or a group to obtain the best results (Osmer, 2008:50). Regarding sample size in a qualitative empirical research, Maree (2010:145) raises an important, and in the context of this study, a relevant suggestion that one must guard against quantity above quality. Maree’s study (Maree, 2010), for instance, accommodated four respondents and for this study’s empirical aspect, five to eight respondents were envisaged to gain the necessary information in the chosen qualitative research design. Finally, five respondents participated (refer 2.4.5.3).

The aim of the research is to propose a paradigm that can assist pastoral counsellors to offer remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Although not specifically designed to that end, such counselling might also lend itself to preventative application. Believers who might consider following a “Prosperity Gospel” could seek advice from a pastor or pastoral worker on doing so, who could then guide believers in a Scriptural path regarding the material promises that this belief system espouses and so might avoid potential consequences.

### **2.4.5.3 Participants**

The choice of participants was made with the research question and aim in mind. The prospective participants are all pastoral counsellors who have adequate, and some expert, knowledge of a “Prosperity Gospel” and experience in pastoral guidance of people who are/were influenced by a “Prosperity Gospel”.

A total of nine prospective participants were approached to partake in the study. The responses were as follows:

- Two did not respond to the request (a follow-up request was sent which also yielded no response);
- One declined the request;
- One withdrew from participation after signing the Informed Consent Form;
- Five accepted the request for participation.

The five participants are all resident within Southern-African countries (providing representation from Botswana, Zambia and South Africa) and all are actively involved in pastoral work in local churches. Due to ethical requirements relating to anonymity and confidentiality further specifics regarding the participants are not divulged. Participants and their pastorants are identified by a neutral *nom de plume* (for instance, 'Participant A' and 'Participant A's pastorant').

#### **2.4.5.4 Process of participant recruitment**

With the promoters' guidance, the researcher identified potential participants. The criteria for participation was pastoral knowledge and experience which would enable participants to provide meaningful answers towards achieving the research objectives.

With the promoters' guidance, the researcher obtained the cooperation of an independent person who has expert knowledge regarding practical theological empirical research. The cooperation of Dr Bertie Hanekom of Perspective Training College in Potchefstroom was obtained to act as the independent person for the research. Hanekom is a Practical Theologian and was duly informed about the nature and objectives of the study and his assistance was obtained to approach potential participants and to explain the research process to them individually.

The independent person was availed with the participants' e-mail contact information and the Informed Consent Form (Addendum A) with the research question and guidance towards structuring the answer to submit required information clearly set out. The independent person initiated the contact by e-mail to request participation in the proposed study. In this first communication, prospective participants were informed of the proposed methodology of filling out a questionnaire with a single question about the participant's pastoral experience in working with believers (pastorants) who were/are involved with a "Prosperity Gospel" and where there were consequences for the pastorant's life and Christian beliefs.

After explanation of the research process by the independent person, potential participants had two days to make a decision on their willingness to participate in the study. The participants who agreed to participate in the study signed the Informed Consent Form and returned it to the independent person via e-mail. The independent person, in turn, submitted all the participants' Informed Consent Forms for safekeeping to the researcher.

Prior to answering the questionnaire, participants were required to obtain formal consent from the pastorant-client/s whose life experience they would use to answer the questionnaire. The researcher provided the independent person with the consent form for pastorant-clients (Addendum B), which was then e-mailed to participants who agreed to take part in the study once they submitted their Informed Consent Form to the independent person.

Once participants obtained consent from their pastorant-clients they were to safeguard these consent forms to protect the privacy and anonymity of the pastorant-clients. For confidentiality purposes, these consent forms of the pastorant-clients were neither sent to the independent person nor the researcher.

Participants were requested to submit their answer/s to the single question by e-mail to the researcher.

#### **2.4.5.5 Sampling method**

**Inclusion criteria:** The choice of participants was made with the research question(s) in mind. Information was required from participants (pastoral counsellors) on how they sought to effectively offer pastoral guidance for pastorants regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". Answers were expected to give an indication of how and why their pastorant(s) became involved with a "Prosperity Gospel" and what the pastorant's life experience has been with the movement and why they required pastoral guidance.

An ethnic combination of Southern African pastoral counsellors was approached as potential participants. African people of local origin (South Africa) were preferred for the research, although Africans from other countries in Africa, where prosperity beliefs are popular and very active (for instance Zambia), were included.

The research required that only adults with expertise in pastoral counselling would participate. Only experienced/qualified pastoral counsellors who counselled believers who were/are involved with a "Prosperity Gospel" and where there were consequences for the

pastorant's life and Christian beliefs participated. People were engaged who are competent to understand the process and purpose of the research and have an adequate knowledge of prosperity beliefs and who are capable to verbalise their experiences with believers (pastorants) who required pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

Identifying possible participants was based on personal conversations that the researcher and/or promoters had with the proposed participants who indicated that they could provide answers pertaining to the research questions.

**Justification:** The reason for an ethnic combination of participants is based on the documented fact that a "Prosperity Gospel" is popular over a wide spectrum, especially in a possession-driven social environment of 'haves and have nots' (Morris & Liroy, 2012:98; cf. also Gbotoe, 2013:62). The infusion of "Prosperity Gospel" beliefs into African churches is a significant phenomenon as is pointed out in chapter 1 (refer 1.2.1.2), and it poses significant consequences for the pastoral guidance of communities, both of European and African descent. This context is the focus of the study.

**Exclusion criteria:** Non-pastoral counsellors were not considered to participate in the study, even if they had a generally well-informed view on a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". Although non-Christian counsellors' views and understanding of the prosperity phenomenon and how to guide people in their experiences regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" might provide a basis for study, such insights were not accommodated in the present research.

**Justification:** The study's focus is in the field of Practical Theology with the aim to offer a model for pastoral guidance to followers of Christ specifically. Under normal circumstances non-believers/non-Christians do not provide pastoral guidance, nor do they identify with the challenges facing the Christian community in general.

#### **2.4.5.6 Vulnerable participants**

Vulnerability for respondents was not foreseen. Participants are pastoral counsellors reporting on their interaction with pastorants – something that they are used to doing in a day's work.



#### **2.4.6 Informed consent**

With guidance from the promoters, the researcher appointed an independent person as identified above (refer 2.4.5.4) who made contact with potential participants via e-mail and explained all aspects of the study to them. The initial request for participation in the research stated that participation is completely voluntary. Assurance was given that participants may withdraw from the research at any time without any necessity of providing reasons or any prospect of negative consequences to the withdrawing participant. The time involved was clarified with the participants. Potential participants were afforded the opportunity to ask questions on clarification of the research and their participation in the research. The researcher could be consulted by the independent person for any clarifications necessary. Refer Addendum A for a sample Informed Consent Form.

Seeing that all participants are literate in both English and computers, they were supplied with an Informed Consent Form in English by e-mail. Considering the nature of the research requiring an informed opinion on the effects of prosperity beliefs on people, all participants are adults who are adequately equipped and experienced in pastoral counselling.

#### **2.4.7 Trustworthiness (Qualitative studies)**

The trustworthiness and usefulness of the study design has been proved by a similar study conducted in 2010 (Rousseau: *Noutetiese berading van persone met piëtistiese mistastings oor lewensheiligheid*). The empirical results achieved by Rousseau's study were satisfactory and instrumental towards the development of a Scripture-based pastoral model. A similar aim undergirds the research in this study.

#### **2.4.8 Role of the researcher and the appointed independent person**

The research design is not complex in nature and the researcher was responsible for the following:

- Identifying potential participants under the guidance of the promoters;
- Appointing an independent person under the guidance of the promoters;
- Retaining answers to the initial question on the Informed Consent Form;
- Distributing participant-specific-questionnaires, if necessary, and retaining completed questionnaires;

- Maintaining external anonymity of the participants by ensuring the consistent use of pseudonyms and the safekeeping of data, et cetera.

The appointed independent person was responsible for the following:

- E-mailing the initial request to potential participants;
- Obtaining Informed Consent Forms from all participants.

## **2.4.9 Ethical considerations/implications of the research**

### **2.4.9.1 Estimated risk level**

The research involves adult participants (pastoral counsellors) who were requested to complete questionnaires relating to their experience in pastoral counselling of believers (pastorants) who were/are involved with a “Prosperity Gospel” and where pastorants experienced consequences regarding faith and/or Christian faith to such an extent that they required pastoral guidance. The research did not involve or entail anything outside or foreign to a participant’s daily activity or experience – pastoral counsellors are regularly involved with pastoral guidance of pastorants and often need to assess a person’s life experiences and appropriately guide such people (refer 2.4.9.3 below for risk/precaution analysis).

There was no risk of trauma or other negative consequences for the participants identified, and, therefore, the estimated risk level of the research was accepted as **low-risk** (refer 2.4.9.3 and Addendum C).

### **2.4.9.2 Experience of the participants**

Pastoral counsellors’ daily face questions regarding religious beliefs in the execution of their pastoral tasks and typically they must evaluate and/or analyse the life experiences of people and the pastoral guidance they require (Osmer, 2008:49). Pastoral counsellors are also required to maintain confidentiality of their pastorant-clients in the execution of their tasks. No additional experience was considered necessary for those who participated in this study – the participants’ daily experience as pastoral counsellors was more than adequate.

### 2.4.9.3 Risks and precautions

**Table 2-1: Risk and precautions to the descriptive-empirical task**

| Risks                                                                                                                                                                    | Precautions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>A pastoral counsellor/participant was required to divulge information that had been shared with them in a confidential counselling context by their pastorant(s).</p> | <p>Participants in this study were required to obtain permission from the client-pastorant(s), whose life experiences regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” were used to answer the questionnaire. An informed consent letter was drawn up by the researcher for this purpose. This step was mandatory before the questionnaire was completed and feedback was given to the researcher.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p>The identity of the pastoral counsellor/participant and their pastorant(s) could be at risk.</p>                                                                      | <p>Pastorants were assured of anonymity, privacy and confidentiality in the completion of the questionnaires by the pastoral counsellor-participants and the researcher in the research report. Names of pastorants whose life experiences regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, are known only to a participating counsellor. The name and/or identity of the pastorant-client of the participant was not, under any circumstances, divulged to the researcher by participants (pastoral counsellors).</p> <p>Anonymity is <i>de rigueur</i> and the pastoral counsellor/participant’s name or anything that might reveal their identity in any aspect of formal documentation in the research findings was avoided at all costs. Privacy of both participant/pastoral counsellor and their pastorant was respected by identifying them with a neutral nom de plume (for instance, ‘Participant A’ and ‘Participant A’s pastorant’).</p> <p>Results obtained from participation were kept confidential by blocking any access to confidential research documents to anyone other than the involved participant and the promoters, where necessary. Research data obtained from the participants was disclosed to, and discussed with the promoters only to promote appropriate, adequate and relevant presentation of results of the research.</p> <p>Research findings were kept safe by keeping hard copies of questionnaires in locked cupboards in the researcher’s office,</p> |

| Risks | Precautions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|       | <p>and electronic data was password-protected. Data will be stored for five years after which it will be destroyed.</p> <p>If so required by the pastoral counsellor/participant or their pastorant, the results of the research were made available to them either in printed form or electronically via e-mail, upon completion of the documented research, to ensure anonymity, privacy and confidentiality in the final documented research findings.</p> |

#### 2.4.9.4 Benefits for participants

**Direct benefits** for participants: It is not uncommon for “Prosperity Gospel” adherents to feel confused, disappointed or concerned about their faith when their expectations of wealth and health are disillusioned, and as they are confronted with suffering in this life (cf. the discussion on the theodicy problem – Louw, 1982:2; Cooper-White, 2012:24; Louw, 2015:303). These are complex circumstances which require thoughtful and compassionate pastoral guidance (Osmer, 2008:129ff; Kruger 2016:1).

A brief survey of literature on a “Prosperity Gospel” (refer 1.1.1 and 1.1.2) revealed lacunae regarding substantial material to address pastoral aspects related to the consequences believers encounter. Available material is not only limited, but appears to be inadequate for pastoral guidance purposes. Participants were not only afforded the opportunity to contribute to a pastoral paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, but will also benefit from the final research findings of constructing such a pastoral paradigm by which pastorants can be guided and cared for.

**Indirect benefits** for society at large or for the researchers/institution: The church in its various denominations, and very often more specifically African communities, must contend with prosperity preachers and their teaching. Health and wealth are promised to those who have so-called sufficient faith and accept these prosperity teachings and exemplify their faith *cum* obedience by their financial support of a prosperity preacher’s ministry. Invariably, the financially strapped or poor and sickly communities suffer. When prosperity and health promises are not realised, it could lead to anxiety, distress, anger, bitterness, uncertainty of one’s faith, disappointment and even turning away from God.

The outcomes of the study could aid in equipping pastoral counsellors to guide their pastorants who are, or were influenced by a “Prosperity Gospel”.

#### **2.4.9.5 Risk/benefit ratio analysis**

Based on the risks and benefits analysis above, it is concluded that the benefits of this study outweigh the risks.

#### **2.4.10 Expertise, skills and legal competencies**

The researcher was assisted throughout the research by the promoters who are experienced in conducting similar research. The researcher and promoters also jointly attended a research seminar hosted at the NWU Potchefstroom campus in June 2016 to be equipped on the ethical requirements for research involving adult human participants (refer Addendum D).

#### **2.4.11 Facilities**

The study posed no danger of emergencies that could be directly linked to the research. Participants could complete the questionnaire in their own comfortable environment at a time convenient to them.

#### **2.4.12 Legal authorisation**

To the researcher’s knowledge, no legal authorisation was required for the study, other than approval by the appropriate Ethics Committee of the NWU.

#### **2.4.13 Goodwill permission/consent**

To the researcher’s knowledge, no interest group representatives needed to give permission for this project.

#### **2.4.14 Incentives and/or remuneration of participants**

Apart from the time offered, participants were not required to incur any directly related cost. There was, therefore, no need to offer participants any incentive or remuneration. Questionnaires were sent by e-mail and could be completed in the participant’s own comfortable environment at a time convenient to them.

#### **2.4.15 Announcement/dissemination of results to participants**

Upon completion of the documented research results, all participants were informed that the results would be available should they desire to receive a copy. Copies were offered either in printed form or electronically via e-mail, whichever the participant might prefer. These were only made available to those participants who requested copies of the documented research results. No such requests were made by the participants.

#### **2.4.16 Privacy and confidentiality**

**Privacy:** No names were used in any aspect of formal documentation in the research. Participants were identified with a neutral *nom de plume* (for instance, 'Participant A' and 'Participant A's pastorant'). Utmost care was taken not to divulge or include information that could disclose identity. Participants could verify this caution if they requested to examine the report on the empirical study and they could insist on removing or rephrasing anything that might be deemed a possible disclosure of identity. None of the participants put forward such a request.

**Confidentiality:** All information was treated as confidential by the researcher. No access was granted to confidential research documents to anyone other than the involved participants and the promoters, and in the latter, only where necessary. Data was disclosed and discussed with the promoters only to promote appropriate, adequate and relevant presentation of the research results.

#### **2.4.17 Management, storage and destruction of data**

**Data management:** The researcher managed all data storage. The following data was stored: the signed Informed Consent Forms of participants and the completed questionnaires of participants.

Electronic data was stored on the researcher's personal computer in password-protected files. Hard copies of these documents will remain stored in a locked cupboard in the researcher's private office. Only the researcher has access to the password-protected and stored files and only the researcher has keys to the office and cupboard.

Data was recorded on questionnaires.

Data was only shared between the researcher and the study promoters. Information was either shared/discussed in person or over the telephone and, if necessary, data was shared

with promoters for a limited period on password-protected copies of the files. Where a need arose for hard copies to be shared, these were scanned and saved electronically and shared via password-protected PDF files.

**Storage and destruction of data:** All physical data will be stored in a lock-up safe for a minimum of five years. All electronic copies will be stored on CDs and locked up in a safe for a minimum of five years. For the duration of the study, files were stored in password-protected documents on the researcher's personal computer.

#### **2.4.18 Data analysis and interpretation**

Due to the qualitative nature of the study and the qualification and experience of the promoter and co-promoter, an additional external consultant was not required for data analysis.

The data obtained from the questionnaires was analysed from a narrative analysis approach – one of Osmer's (2008:50-51) suggested approaches. The narrative analysis followed a categorical-content methodology (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998:16-17, 112) to focus on specific aspects (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998:16) namely the pastorants' concept of, and experiences with a "Prosperity Gospel" and resulting pastoral guidance offered.

The data obtained from the questionnaires was analysed and grouped into related themes and sub-themes that serve the research objectives. Throughout the process, the researcher ensured that the empirical study went strictly in accordance with NWU prescribed ethical norms.

Lieblich *et al.* (1998:112-120) provide sound guidelines for this type of content analysis and, accordingly, Rousseau (2010:201) proposes the following steps:

- In the reading of the data, identify all the information pertaining to the objectives (the pastorants' concept of, and experiences with a "Prosperity Gospel" and resulting pastoral guidance offered) to provide a new sub-text for analysis;
- Identify and formulate themes and sub-themes (categorical content);
- Group specific statements and answers from the participants' feedback and participant-specific questionnaires under themes and sub-themes. Include verbatim quotes where possible and relevant for elucidation. This process and its findings/results was completed with the guidance of the promoters;

- Finally, peruse the original data once again to decide whether the findings and results of the analysis rendered a true picture of the pastorants' concept of, and their experiences with a "Prosperity Gospel". More specifically, evaluate the pastoral guidance offered and proposed by the respondents with regard to adaptation in the development of a Bible-based paradigm or model for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel."

#### 2.4.19 Research findings

Research data delivered results in three areas, as guided by the outline on which participants' responses to the research question were based, namely:

- (a) to determine the problems pastorants experience who were/are influenced by a "Prosperity Gospel";
- (b) to determine how these pastorants were pastorally guided by pastoral counsellors;
- (c) to enquire of pastoral counsellors what additional remedial guidance could/ought to be included in a pastoral paradigm regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

The first area, relating to a) above, is treated in this chapter (chapter 2) to answer the descriptive-empirical question: 'What is going on?' (Osmer, 2008:4, 129ff). The aim in this regard was to determine if pastorants encountered problems with a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" and what the nature of those problems are. The second and third aspects, relating to b) and c) above, are incorporated into chapter 5 (refer 5.3) where a new praxis is proposed in the form of a pastoral paradigm outlining/relating to remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". Under each aspect, related themes and specific sub-themes emerged out of the empirical research findings.

With mentioning the relevant participant and/or the pastorant by means of their specific *nom de plume* (for instance, 'Participant A' and 'Participant A's pastorant'), where possible and applicable direct quotations are used to elucidate the respective themes and sub-themes. For the purpose of readability and clarity, the researcher inserted [...] brackets within quotes to bring in necessary detail. An attempt was made to allow all participants an equal contribution, but the nature of the answers of various participants made some answers more relevant than others and resulted in some participants being quoted more than others. Where participants made similar statements applicable to specific themes, only selected quotations were included to avoid unnecessary repetition.



#### **2.4.19.1 The nature of problems pastorants encounter with a “Prosperity Gospel”**

The empirical research aimed at establishing whether people encountered problems with a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” and what the nature of such problems are. In their responses, participants included problems that their pastorants uttered and the problems which were assessed from their (the participant-counsellor’s) own observation. Both sets of problems are included in the outlined themes and sub-themes below.

##### **Theme 1: Pastorants accept/follow a “Prosperity Gospel” without knowledge of the Bible’s teaching about the Gospel of Jesus Christ**

The main concern all the participants raised is that their pastorants were generally ignorant of the Biblical teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In some cases participants had to plainly state that some pastorants were not Christians when they first approached the participant for pastoral guidance. Participant C, for example, states: “I observed first that this man [his pastorant] was not converted ... because no one had clearly presented the Gospel of Jesus Christ to him.”

According to pastorants, crucial aspects of the Gospel are never preached about and vital theological concepts such as sin, salvation, the cross, grace, justification and sanctification are neglected in prosperity churches. Participant A’s pastorant, for example, revealed that the subject of sin was never spoken about in their prosperity church and they were always under the impression that personal salvation was achieved by good works – believers have to ‘work’ (particularly by financial contributions to their prosperity churches) to obtain forgiveness and blessings from God.

Participants also gave some insight regarding the explanation from ‘prosperity’ preachers when they were confronted by pastorants on why they did not teach them these crucial Gospel truths. Participant B states that prosperity preachers “ ... inoculate people from hearing the truth because they think they already know the Gospel” and Participant A shares that once the pastorant understood what the Bible truly teaches about the Gospel, the pastorant confronted the former prosperity pastor and received the following answer: “ ... he said that the Gospel was good for that context [the pastorant’s new non-prosperity church] but not for his context. He felt his people already knew the Gospel and didn’t need to hear it all the time.”

It can be concluded from the research data that people who attend prosperity churches could be under the false impression that they are Christian while they are possibly ignorant

of or do not even understand the Gospel message of what it means to be/become a Christian.

## **Theme 2: Pastorants have very little or no Scripture knowledge**

A significant problem raised by participants pertains to their pastorants' view of the Bible and their lack of understanding of basic important doctrines, soteriological and otherwise taught by the Bible. Participant C makes the strong statement that the pastorant's doctrinal views represented " ... bad theology in general" while participant D concluded after the first interactions with his pastorant that " ... apart from a few often-quoted Prosperity Gospel verses, the counsellor had a very shallow understanding of the basic teachings of Scripture".

Some specific sub-themes relating to the pastorants' lack of Scripture knowledge emerged from the research data and are now discussed.

### ***Sub-theme A: Hermeneutical inability***

As expected, considering the lack of sound doctrine, pastorants generally displayed very little knowledge, or even skill, to interpret/understand the Bible for themselves. The reasons for this inability stem from a few aspects: *Firstly*, the example of the pastorants' prosperity preachers during sermons gave pastorants little chance of acquiring even basic sound hermeneutical skills. The account and interpretation offered by Pastorant D best reflects on this problem: "The example [the pastorant] saw at church gatherings also didn't give him the impression that this [accurate Bible interpretation] is even necessary, for the Bible was rarely opened in church services, connected units of Scripture were never read in public meetings, and the sermons were not focussed on explaining the correct interpretation of a particular passage of the Bible and the applications of its meaning on the life of the believer. Rather, sermons were topically driven by proof texts which apparently support the belief of God's will for a successful, prosperous, pain-free life."

Participant A listed similar problems that were observed while questioning the pastorant over church experience at a prosperity church, including: " ... context and application of the Bible was undermined ... the Bible was read without context and without immediate application ... [the pastorant] has not been exposed to any systematic Bible teaching and the norm was quoting Scripture out of context ... the Bible was misquoted". Pastorant A conveys the pastorant's confusion over why the Bible was taken to church for it was never opened during services.

*Secondly*, the lack of encouragement toward personal Bible reading and studying contributed to the pastorants' inability to interpret their own Bible accurately. Participant D says the pastorant "... was never encouraged at his church or by his church leaders to read, never mind study, his own Bible." In such an environment there would be little motivation to obtain hermeneutical skill for it does not seem necessary to practice personal Bible reading and interpretation, and according to Participant D the pastorant was "... left at the mercy of his (prosperity) church-leaders to accept their word that what they were teaching is what the Bible actually says."

*Thirdly*, the absence of the Bible is replaced by other quasi-revelations from God, which claim to speak more directly to modern-day believers. Participant A reports, for example, that the pastorant stated that in their prosperity church members were "... mainly interested in a 'new' word from God" and thus they were "... exposed to a strong emphasis on what God is saying now in visions and prophetic words." This kind of 'preaching' created significant confusion and uncertainty for Participant A's pastorant who was urged to "... make decisions based on what God says in your heart rather than what the Bible teaches."

A question emerging from the research data would be: Why do people believe what they believe? This aspect would ideally require further investigation on a direct empirical interaction with pastorants coming out of a so-called "Prosperity Gospel." Where professing Christians' beliefs (in a prosperity church) are not founded on the accurate interpretation of the Bible, the critical question regarding what people consider authoritative information on which they base their faith and life as Christians must be raised. Where does the authority lie for one's beliefs and why is that considered a trustworthy source? These questions express the need to investigate what possible factors shape the views of prosperity adherents regarding their preachers and why they trust what these leaders teach and hold them in such high regard. These interpretive aspects are addressed in chapter 3 (refer 3.3.3.1 and 3.4.2).

### ***Sub-theme B: Distorted views of God***

A specific doctrine pastorants were confused about is their view of God. This was mentioned by three of the five participants. Doctrines such as God's sovereignty was 'foreign' to Participant D's pastorant, while Participant A makes the strong statement that the pastorant had "... a pagan view of God ... [as if He] is another ancestor designed to deliver blessing in response to certain rituals and rites – like speaking in tongues and giving money." This view created the idea that God acts like man's personal genie that

would provide all his heart's desires when 'rubbed the right way'. It is not surprising then that Participant C considered the pastorant to have a very low view of God, and as a result was " ... irreverent before God in his attitude ... " for he even believed that God can be manipulated as " ... man was big, and God was small".

### ***Sub-theme C: A lack of comprehension of the atoning work of Christ***

Consistent with Theme 1, which shows a lack of knowledge of the Gospel, a crucial aspect of the Gospel, namely the atoning work of Christ, is highlighted as a core doctrine which is probably misunderstood by members in prosperity churches. This is reflected in the data obtained from participants' pastorants. Aspects of the 'substitutionary atonement' of Christ is misunderstood, as affirmed by Participant A, and explained by Participant D in the following way: " ... the benefits of Christ's death mainly concerned material and physical benefits rather than forgiveness of sins and a heavenly inheritance ... the counsellor lacked a personal relationship with Jesus due to having a shallow understanding of the spiritual blessings provided in Christ through the Gospel."

### ***Sub-theme D: The prominence of wealth and health***

A third sub-theme resulting from the empirical data is the absolute prominence of wealth and health afforded in prosperity churches. Pastorants report that a love for money was encouraged by their prosperity leaders. Participant B's pastorant indicated, for example, that " ... his pastor told the church it was fine to love money". In fact, the abundance of money and possessions is considered a "Christian virtue" (Participant A) and a sign of God's blessing upon a believer as stated in the words of Participant C: "[the pastorant] had been assured that God was always ready to bless him by giving him all the desires of his heart ... he learnt that God had storehouses for blessing that are ready for the faithful children."

Wealth is especially considered to be an indicator of a person's level of spirituality. This doctrine resulted in an intense effort for Participant D's pastorant who struggled to 'keep up with the rest of the pack'. The story is recorded as follows: "The comparison between him (the pastorant) and other believers weighed the counsellor down. Even with whatever materialistic wealth the counsellor did acquire, he never felt fulfilled but dissatisfied. He explained that he bought himself a BMW ... but then another person in the church bought himself a Range Rover and he was no longer satisfied with the BMW. Within the Prosperity Gospel, whatever you have is never enough, because God wants you to have more." The damaging effect of this rigid pursuit of wealth is explained by Participant D's observation that: " ... the counsellor was frustrated and exhausted

because the pursuit never ends, and one can never rest and enjoy what you have because it's never enough, there is always 'something better' to obtain. This led the counsellor to become depressed – the more he was told to think positive thoughts the more depressed he became ... ” for he could not reach the level others seem to have reached.

The resulting problems with wealth promises which fail to materialise is further emphasised by Participant E when he states that the pastorant was “ ... defrauded financially ... ” and his “ ... situation only (went) from bad to worse ... ”. In an explanation of how bad the situation became for the pastorant, Participant E states: “ ... [the pastorant] needed money to take her husband for specialised treatment [and] gave it [the little money the pastorant did have] to the 'Prosperity Gospel' preacher as a seed for a miraculous healing, which never happened and her husband never went for specialised treatment because they had no money now.” The result was that the pastorant “ ... became bitter towards God ... ”.

As indicated in the account of Participant E's pastorant above, within prosperity churches, abundant giving is proclaimed as paving the way to receive the blessing of wealth and health, but this (sometimes irresponsible 'spending' on the church) often results in serious negative consequences. Participant C's pastorant shared during a consultation session that “ ... his church taught the multiplying effect as embraced by Gloria Copeland. You give 10 and you get a 1000, based on Mark 10:30. One is responsible for what they get based on this formula.” At times, this promised effect motivated Participant C's pastorant to “ ... sow the seed with 100% of his salary in pursuit of one hundred-fold blessings”.

The empirical data shows that the wealth and health promised in return for abundant giving did not materialise for any of the participants' pastorants. Participant D's pastorant stated that “ ... the Prosperity Gospel failed to deliver the wealth which was promised to him: Regardless of how 'hard the counsellor' tried to obey God and regardless of the extremity of his financial support of the ministries of his Prosperity Gospel preachers, it never seemed to deliver the promised returns.”

The problem that emerges when reciprocation for devout giving fails is that it causes further financial difficulty for pastorants – instead of obtaining more wealth it might result in a loss of wealth. Participant D's pastorant's story again is striking: “ ... the counsellor's business deteriorated and he could not understand why God was not blessing him in the ways promised to him by his prosperity preachers. He kept giving more money away to the church and in this way crippled his personal financial security in the hope that it would

deliver dividends and make his business successful.” When this downward spiral occurs and persists it results in internal conflict and questioning such as, ‘Why am I not blessed?’ or ‘What have I done wrong?’ which leads to bitterness and even anger towards God, as reported in the case of Participant D’s as well as Participant E’s pastorants.

### ***Sub-theme E: Confusion regarding Christian suffering***

A fourth sub-theme which relates to the pastorants’ lack of Scriptural knowledge concerns what the Bible teaches about Christian suffering. Participant B remarks that the pastorant was ignorant regarding the purposes of suffering such as “ ... conformity to Christ’s image [in] Romans 8:28-29” and Participant E observed in the pastorant a “ ... low level of Bible knowledge in terms of how much it has to say about the challenges of life and living.”

Simplistic views regarding suffering seem to be a problem among pastorants, as indicated by Participant A’s observation that the pastorant was under the impression that “ ... suffering equates to insufficient faith”, while Participant D’s pastorant was told by the prosperity church leaders that “ ... it is never God’s will for any of His children to suffer.”

Confusion amongst pastorants when suffering occurred is confirmed by the participants. Participant D’s pastorant is said to have been “ ... greatly distressed as he could not understand why God allowed him to suffer, while others were apparently blessed ... ” and it “ ... made him bitter and angry towards God.”

### ***Sub-theme F: Confusion regarding prayer and corporate worship***

Participants gave elaborate feedback regarding the confusion amongst their pastorants over spiritual disciplines such as prayer and corporate worship services. In prosperity teaching, prayer seems to be a method by which one can force God to respond at the flick of one’s fingers. Participant C states, for example, that the pastorant attended a few sessions at the “school of asking” in his prosperity church and had “ ... learned well the art of asking ... ” but by ‘asking’ the pastorant means ‘demanding’ as can be seen from the statement: “ ... in prayer [I] had developed [the formula] ‘God, right now I demand’ ...”. The unfulfilled ‘big dreams’ were ascribed to a ‘lack of asking or asking amiss’ by the prosperity leaders.

This is very similar to Participant D’s pastorant’s experience who shared that because his prayers were not answered, he decided to change his “prayer style” by “ ... avoiding phrases like ‘if it is your will’ and beginning to demand that God deliver on His promises to make him wealthy and successful.” Participant D’s assessment of the pastorant’s attitude in prayer is that he was “ ... extremely self-focussed in his thinking and conduct”. The

pastorant even acknowledged that he “ ... felt guilt for his arrogance towards God, but nonetheless this is what he was told to do if he wants God to act.”

Pastorants' experiences and views regarding worship services was another spiritual discipline over which participants raised concern. The concern is validated by Participant B's disclosure of the pastorant's words looking back at worship services in the former prosperity church: “ ... in some of these [services] ... [people] were adorned with flashy [outfits], [they drove] beautiful cars, [wore] immodest [clothing]; [while] money talks, counterfeit miracles, explosive praise and worship teams, and demon-centred sermons [ruled meetings] ... these churches are just like sangomas [witchdoctors]” and “ ... taught me to fear Satan and his demons [more than God]”.

Services are described by Participant A's pastorant as “ ... emotionally driven”, “[all] ... about the experience during singing”, “ ... flashy lights and polished worship bands” and “ ... focussed on the individual”. Participant D conveys that the pastorant was “ ... extremely self-focussed in his thinking and conduct regarding worship services and never went to church to serve others but rather in the pastorant's words: “ ... to get my motivation for the week and to ensure that God will bless me this week.”

This individualistic, self-centred promotion of the prosperity movement, as evident in the prosperity churches' views on prayer and worship services, fits the individualistic society of the twenty-first century like a proverbial glove. The level of effect that this has on people's attraction to a “Prosperity Gospel” is further discussed in chapter 3 (refer 3.3.2.2).

A significant question relating specifically to the aspect of worship services is why services at prosperity churches follow such a specific format. It is doubtful whether one can refer to that format as a liturgy, where intentional stirring of emotions and the use of lengthy times of singing and playing of music might give insight into why people are attracted to the prosperity movement and possibly manipulated to support these ministries. Would a focus on the supernatural and the message of prosperity make the movement so captivating? Further investigation into these interpretive aspects is also included in chapter 3 (refer 3.4).

### **Theme 3: Admiration and/or fear of prosperity preachers**

A third, prominent theme emerging from the empirical research data is an unhealthy admiration and/or fear of prosperity preachers. Participant B's pastorant's words are especially disturbing in this regard: “[r]epeatedly, I have witnessed in my former church, people falling on their knees to worship the pastor.” Participant A and Participant B

ascribe this admiration and fear to a 'problem of authority', i.e. prosperity preachers are considered by the church-goer as being in a position of absolute authority rather than as caring shepherds.

### ***Sub-theme A: Exemplified 'success'***

The first sub-theme is exemplified 'success' that relates prosperity church members to their prosperity preachers. Admiration for the preacher's apparent success causes church-goers to believe the positive possibilities of: 'If it works for them, it must work for me'. At face value, the prosperity preachers' image and possessions are accepted as proof positive that the prosperity message must be true. Participant D explains the logic: "His [the pastorant's] admiration for the men who told him that God promises prosperity and the apparent evidence that it was working for them, forced him to blindly follow their 'example' of demanding wealth from God – believing that if it worked for them, it could also work for him." The phrase "... blindly follow their 'example' of demanding wealth from God ..." gives an idea of the undiscerning way in which people fall into this trap – if this person critically questioned where the preachers' wealth came from, he might have concluded that it comes from the pockets of people like himself.

Participant A identified this image of successfulness portrayed by prosperity preachers as manipulative: "... because the PG ["Prosperity Gospel"] teachers are materially successful with much larger ministries than most Reformed Evangelical ministries, the question of legitimacy [about Reformed Evangelical ministries] arises." People influenced by a "Prosperity Gospel" are reluctant to move to churches, which do not present themselves as successful as the prosperity preachers' ministry – success being measured by the amount of material blessings they possess. Participant A's pastorant was, for example, "... persuaded by the cool, trendy, seeker-sensitive language of the leaders." This attractive, positive image makes it very difficult for people to leave their prosperity church to join a seemingly mundane or struggling ministry and minister. The fact is highlighted by Participant A whose pastorant was initially frustrated "... with 'ordinary' Christian living [at Participant A's church]: The mundanity of the Christian life is denied by the PG ["Prosperity Gospel"] and thus makes normal Christian disciplines look cheerless and boring: Bible reading, praying, meeting together, etc."

Participant C captures the problem of measuring a successful ministry by how much wealth the pastor possesses rather than by how the pastor cares for the church, in the following words: "I found that he [Participant C's pastorant] had lacked pastoral care. It



seemed to me that he was a proverbial “cash cow” [and] that those who milked him dry did not care for him.”

### ***Sub-theme B: Intimidation***

This sub-theme relates to the fear of prosperity preachers. Intimidating techniques keep people loyal (especially in their giving) to their prosperity preachers. Participant B’s pastorant’s particular experiences regarding the preacher’s intimidating tactics are striking: “[s]ometimes the pastor would stage a “bless the pastor” session where members had to come forward and throw money at his feet ... [the pastorant] mentioned to me repeatedly that she and many of her friends were or are filled with fear because the pastor teaches them that anyone who steps out from under the umbrella of his protection will be struck with tragedy in life from a car accident to a sudden death of a loved one to the loss of a job.”

Failure to tithe is reported by both Participant A and Participant B’s pastorants as unacceptable behaviour in prosperity churches and warnings of severe consequences are regularly uttered.

A question which emerges out of the empirical data on the intimidation and manipulation by prosperity preachers is to what role intimidation and manipulation play in terms of which leaders church-going people follow and what they are taught to believe. This important aspect is further investigated in chapter 3 (refer 3.4.2 and sub-divisions).

### **Theme 4: Personal problems as a result of a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

Some specific personal problems articulated by pastorants or observed by the participants emerged from the empirical data. These could serve as typical problems that others with a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” might also experience.

*Firstly*, the emotional attachment to a prosperity church can be hard to break, as evidenced in the experience of Participant A: “It takes a long time for some victims to come to terms with the fact that they need to leave the errant churches ... they may straddle two churches for a long time due to established relationships in the PG [Prosperity Gospel] church.” Participant A raises the problem a pastorant faced to leave behind loved ones (friends and family) who remain in the prosperity church as an emotionally difficult thing to do.

*Secondly*, after some pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, pastorants were reported to be upset with their former prosperity preachers. Participant B’s pastorant was in a state of shock when realising: “ ... I have nothing after 8 years. No

knowledge of the Bible. No salvation. No Nothing. Nothing.” Participant A’s pastorant “ ... felt deceived, cried a lot, [and] felt betrayed.” Participant D’s pastorant was angry with some of his former prosperity church leaders as he “ ... felt abused, misled and victimised [towards] their ... personal gain.” As a result, Participant D’s pastorant struggled “ ... to trust any church leader [and] he stopped going to church altogether” for a long time. This was also the result for Participant E’s pastorant who “ ... spent years without going to church or even allowing anyone to pray in her home”.

*Thirdly*, out of the participants’ responses it transpires that pastorants were even encouraged by their prosperity preachers to sin or make unwise decisions. Participant B posits that the “Prosperity Gospel” preached by his pastorant’s church leader encouraged him to “ ... commit idolatry ... ” for “ ... when a person attends a church because of what he thinks he will get, he is idolatrous”. Participant B further expresses concern that a “Prosperity Gospel” “ ... discourages work, planning, and logical thought”. Participant D’s pastorant’s experience is heart-breaking: after his business went bankrupt due to increased debt because he gave much more to his prosperity church, he felt embarrassed and especially “like a failure” compared to all the other people at church who seemed to prosper. Sadly, the pastorant began abusing alcohol to try and numb the pain of what he perceived as rejection and confusion over why God was judging him instead of blessing him for his extreme spending on the church. The confusion is understandable – he was misled to believe that one can make God your debtor.

*Fourthly*, one pastorant experienced severe family disruptions due to his giving practices at the prosperity church. Participant C explains it as follows: “ ... [the pastorant] almost lost his family ... his wife had felt neglected and was considering divorce ... his family was disintegrating.”

## **2.5 Summative descriptive-empirical perspectives on a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

Results from the empirical research data show that people with a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” can encounter a variety of problems. The hypothesis expressed in the research argument, that people might require remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, is substantiated by the empirical findings. The following findings summarise the descriptive-empirical task undertaken in this chapter:

- The modern-day version of a “Prosperity Gospel” amongst Evangelical Christian churches dates back to around the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and had its origin in the United States of America;
- The modern-day prosperity movement spread rapidly across the globe in the last fifty years and its roots are firmly planted on the African continent;
- Within the framework of a “Prosperity Gospel” faith is a ‘positive confession’ by which believers would force God to provide their hearts’ desires, and when these desires are not met, believers are considered to either lack faith, have insufficient faith or be living in sin;
- Within the framework of a “Prosperity Gospel” all believers have the right to abundant wealth, and when this wealth does not materialise, a believer is outside God’s will for their life;
- Within the framework of a “Prosperity Gospel” it is God’s will for every believer to be perfectly healthy at all times, and when believers are not healed from a disability or sickness, they must increase their faith otherwise they are outside God’s will for their lives;
- Due to a lack of understanding key aspects of the Gospel taught in the Scriptures, “Prosperity Gospel” adherents might not be in a personal saving relationship with Jesus Christ;
- Little (or no) skill is acquired in prosperity churches to interpret the Bible accurately and, therefore, prosperity teachers are rarely or never held accountable by their church members/followers;
- The lack of hermeneutical ability and the lack of sound Biblical teaching in prosperity churches result in:
  - ignorance among prosperity adherents regarding the sovereign control and supremacy of God, which could lead to unfounded expectations from God, arrogance towards and belittling of God;
  - a misunderstanding of the present results/benefits of the atoning work of Christ, which could lead to a shallow, unfulfilled Christian experience;

- the belief that the Scriptures encourage (even demand) believers to love money and possessions, which could lead to spiritual competition among believers, dissatisfaction with one's life circumstances and, if the wealth does not materialise, bitterness toward God;
- simplistic views regarding suffering, which could lead to confusion and bitterness when suffering is encountered;
- viewing prayer as a way of forcing God to work one's material and physical well-being and viewing corporate worship as a way of convincing God you deserve more blessing, which could lead to self-centredness rather than God-honouring worship and care for fellow-believers;
- "Prosperity Gospel" adherents have an unhealthy admiration for their prosperity preachers which could lead to a lack of accountability of prosperity preachers and a tendency toward being manipulated and misused;
- A belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" results in a variety of personal problems such as a lack of trusting all church leaders and other believers, isolation, sin, depression and broken/damaged relationships.

## 2.6 Conclusion

The problems listed under the summary (2.5) above, occur wholly as the result of beliefs (and concomitant 'religious' conduct) in a "Prosperity Gospel". Breaking away from a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" appears to be difficult considering the reverence prosperity adherents have for their leaders/preachers and the friends and family members who remain in the prosperity churches. A disillusioned pastorant with a belief/who once believed a "Prosperity Gospel" might need remedial pastoral care and mentoring for a significant period to become fully restored in faith.

The problems identified in the empirical research show the lack of pastoral guidance within prosperity churches and due to the nature of a "Prosperity Gospel's" belief of 'no-suffering' for all believers, prosperity adherents who become disillusioned due to encountering suffering, receive little (or no) pastoral care from their prosperity church leaders.

Considering the strong emphasis on hermeneutical inability and a lack of understanding of Biblical doctrine, it can be concluded that remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" requires strong emphasis on sound Biblical interpretation and teaching.

The next task in the research is to determine why a person would be inclined to express a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. The research results as reflected in this chapter (i.e. chapter 2) serve as the basis for the interpretive task in the following chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE INTERPRETIVE TASK: ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVES ON WHY PEOPLE BELIEVE IN A “PROSPERITY GOSPEL”

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the descriptive-empirical task treated in the previous chapter, a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” and some consequences of such beliefs in the life and faith of believers were described. *Firstly*, the popularity of a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” within an African context was established. *Secondly*, the results indicated that various theological, physical and spiritual problems can arise from a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” and *thirdly*, the dire need for pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” was confirmed.

In tandem with the descriptive-empirical results outlined in chapter 2, the crucial necessity to find answers to Osmer’s (2008:80) ‘why’ question is treated in this chapter.

The interpretive task is illustrated in diagram 3-1 and shows its relationship to Osmer’s (2008:11) other three tasks:

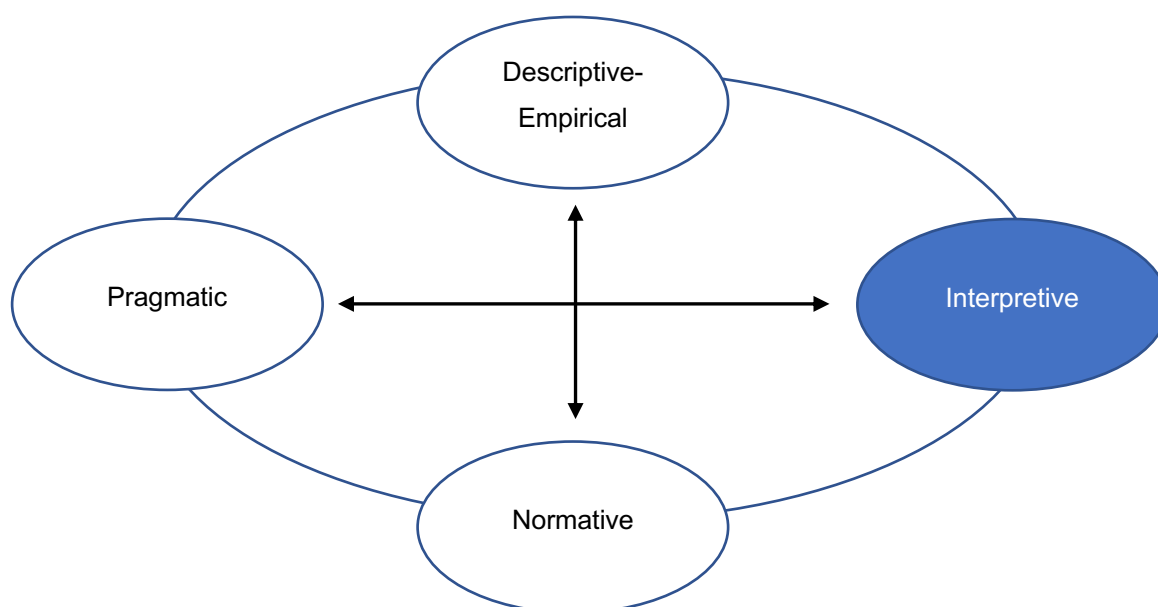


**Diagram 3-1: Osmer’s Interpretive task**

By means of an inter-disciplinary study (cf. also intra-disciplinary Van der Ven, 1993; Cartledge, 1999:98-104) it is sought to understand why people would accept/embrace a “Prosperity Gospel”. An understanding of the ‘issues people are struggling with’ (compare Osmer, 2008:80) would be imperative towards the aim of this research, namely to develop a

pastoral paradigm/model to render remedial guidance to people regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

### 3.2 Objectives

The application of sagely wisdom (to be wise interpreters) (Osmer’s, 2008:86; cf. also De Klerk & De Wet, 2013:293), require that a pastoral guide must know what is afoot. In the context of this study, pastoral counsellors require a clear and definite understanding of the factors which might influence someone towards a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Why do people fall for this ‘gospel’ that its preachers purport to proclaim?

The interpretive task for this study must then find probabilities that would assist in answering the ‘why’ question regarding people’s acceptance and consequent beliefs in a ‘gospel’ that might harm much more than sanctify. Breed’s (2013:240) explanation of the interpretive task perfectly summarises the purpose of this chapter: Along with the Word of God (refer chapter 4), the pastorate aims to study man, reality and other inter-disciplinary aspects that could assist a pastoral model with the aim of assisting believers growing in their faith and enabling them to handle the crises of life.

Based on the descriptive-empirical question and research findings outlined in chapter 2, the interpretive task is to find and understand relevant aspects within the social sciences which might:

- render understanding of factors that influence people’s belief regarding a “Prosperity Gospel”,
- contribute to the value people attach to prosperity,
- assist in understanding the problems people can experience with beliefs in a “Prosperity Gospel”, and
- contribute to pastoral guides’ accurate interpretation of a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” towards the goal of remedial pastoral guidance.

An interaction from an inter-disciplinary<sup>13</sup> approach with two Human Sciences, namely Sociology and Psychology, is first considered to gain an understanding of the aims listed in

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<sup>13</sup> Van der Ven (1993:100) suggests an intra-disciplinary approach due to the fact that social scientists are not interested in a discussion with theology. In the suggested intra-disciplinary methodology theologians must “ ... learn the handwork of the social sciences ... ” in light of their

the bullets above. Cartledge (1999:98-104) highlights that sociologists and religious educationalists identify the need to follow an inter-disciplinary approach in Practical Theology that engages in dialogue with two independent disciplines without elevating one over the other (cf. Cartledge, 2003:248). In this study, this task is performed by engaging in dialogue with Sociology (refer 3.3) and Psychology (refer 3.4) to gain an understanding of the interpretive task of this Practical Theology study regarding why people might embrace a “Prosperity Gospel”. Practical theologians agree that this inter-disciplinary description must begin the analysis of a praxis (Dingemans, 1996a:92).

Following the inter-disciplinary discourse with Sociology and Psychology, interaction with the theological sub-discipline, Missiology (refer 3.5), follows to form an understanding of what is happening in the Evangelical church (particularly in Africa) as it relates to a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, and more specifically, what insights might be gained on why it is happening. The necessity of a missiological perspective flows from the findings in the empirical-descriptive task. The possibility that adherents to the “Prosperity Gospel” might not even be Christians is a prominent aspect as many might have no, or very little, knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus (refer 2.4.19.1, Theme 1).

Directed and with aid from data obtained from the empirical research conducted in chapter 2, the interpretive task’s focus is on a literature study of relevant internet resources, books, articles, theses and dissertations.

### **3.3 Interpretive perspectives from sociology on a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

Sociology and Practical Theology can be considered good conversational partners. Practical Theology is concerned with communicative acts in the service of the Gospel within the context of modern society while Sociology’s focus is on analysing and explaining “important matters in our personal lives, our communities, and the world (cf. Pieterse, 2004:8) and “ ... to gather and analyse evidence about social life to develop and enrich our understanding of key social processes” (University of North Carolina, 2018?). From these definitions it can be gained that both Practical Theology and Sociology are concerned with

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own questions and aims (Dingemans, 1996a:91). Van der Ven (1993:98) considers the intra-discipline methodology a better approach due the limitations of a practical theologian (who most likely might hold a degree only in theology) to make adequate use of social sciences as an equal discipline in the practical theological conversation. So, Practical Theology remains primary while the social sciences act in a supportive or auxiliary role (cf. Cartledge, 2003:248). Practical Theology uses concepts, methods and techniques from other disciplines and integrate them into the practical theological discussion (cf. Cartledge, 1999:101). Dingemans (1996a:91), however, highlights that most practical theologians still operate with the inter-disciplinary approach.



understanding modern society, as it is, in fact, combined in the name *Sociology*: a compound noun derived from the Latin ‘*socios*’ (‘friend’), and the Greek ‘*-ology*’, meaning ‘a study of’, which can be simply defined as investigating people’s social lives (Scandalon, 2018). Practical Theology can then benefit from understanding the sociological factors which affect people’s lives, especially as it relates to personal religious beliefs.

Due to working with communicative acts to people within the discipline of Practical Theology, it is important to consider the present socio-cultural context in which the church finds itself. Hollinger’s (1988:146) striking observation that religious expressions are shaped by historical social settings, is especially relevant. Within the interpretive task, Osmer’s (2008:85) methodology recognises the need for pastoral guides to draw on various theories of sciences to adequately understand the social environment (cf. Osmer, 2008:12). The interpretive question for this study flowing from Osmer’s view mentioned above is then: *Which social-cultural factors contribute to the popularity of “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs?* One must know which social-cultural realities influence what people believe and regarding this study, more specifically, why people are inclined to embrace a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

Before specific socio-cultural themes which might influence people’s belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” are considered (refer 3.3.2 and 3.3.3), some space must first be afforded to the views of three ‘founding fathers’ of Sociology, namely Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. Their views continue to influence the Sociology of Religion to this day and are taken into account to get an understanding of how religion affects people’s social interaction (refer 3.3.1).

### **3.3.1 Sociological views on how religion affects people’s social interaction**

The intention of this section is not to offer an in-depth presentation of sociologist’s views on religion, nor is it a critique or defence of the theories. The brief discussion’s focus, from the perspective of three prominent sociologists regarding religion’s influence on society, is to understand in what way the religious movement, namely a “Prosperity Gospel”, has a possible positive or negative influence on society.

- **Karl Marx**

Marx did not write much about religion per se, but is mostly remembered for the remark that “... religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature ... the opium of the people” (Marx, 1964:42). According to Marx, religious beliefs result from the need created by misery and oppression and, therefore, religion is a phenomenon prevalent mostly among the poor (cf.

Stark, 2004:471). In Marx's socialist theories the (eventual) abolition of religion due to its negative effect on societies is advocated. Marx believed religion provides justification for the inequalities of wealth and power in society and, therefore, human liberation will ensue, logically, in the eradication of religion (cf. Bhadauria, 2012:19; Ypi, 2017:661).

Marx's view proposes that the material world is the primary reality (cf. Collinson, 1999:157) and religion is the result of people seeking to escape the suffering within society. This suffering is caused by a system which dehumanises the workers, and structures that enslave the people in cycles of oppression (cf. Townsley, 2004). Marx believed that religion is a reflection of society which is constrained by external oppressive factors – this reality of society creates the need for religion.

Marx's chagrin over religion stems from convictions that religion misleads people to accept unpleasant circumstances due to the emphasis on rewards in the life to come (Zgourides & Zgourides, 2000:184). Marx was of the conviction that religion's emphasis on future rewards prohibits social change as it advocates that oppression should not be resisted. Resultantly, this passivity avoids confronting the injustice of social inequalities of power and wealth for an elite few. The only benefit Marx saw in religion is that it offers afflicted people an escape from the cruelty of life (Zgourides & Zgourides, 2000:185).

From a critical perspective it might be said that as a religious entity, a "Prosperity Gospel" has, as such, no connection with Marx's perspectives on religion. It does, however, correspond with Marx's views that it might bring about social change for people who find themselves in dire, even devastating circumstances. Similar to Marx's views on religion, it might be averred that a "Prosperity Gospel" can have an 'opium' effect on its adherents – not in the sense of people accepting their circumstances as Marx proposed, but simply in denying that unpleasant circumstances are realities of daily life and occur under God's sovereign providence.

- **Emile Durkheim**

Durkheim dedicated much of his academic studies to exploring how religion has played a role in societies. Durkheim makes a case for the origin of religion stemming out of social, rather than divine, factors. Under Durkheim's (1995:44) original title *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912), the view of religion is stated as an adherence to sacred practices and beliefs which unites communities. In Durkheim's perspective the function of religion is two-fold: to create social solidarity among individuals and to ensure the moral behaviour of

societies (cf. Stark, 2004:468). Durkheim's assessment of religion is that it affirms the social nature of human beings and religion's ultimate object is society (cf. Collinson, 1999:160-161). Consequently, Durkheim strongly advocated the influence of religion on the thoughts and actions of society members (Zgourides & Zgourides, 2000:182).

Durkheim view specifically addresses the relationship between the individual and the community and argues that by religious rituals the ties between individuals and society are strengthened (cf. Cohen & Pope, 2011:4) because society fosters a sense of ongoing dependence and requires people to serve the community at the expense of selfish interest. To Durkheim, the essence of religion is not beliefs but rites and rituals which bond communities together. Durkheim was of the opinion that religion has little to do with a superior being (a god) (cf. Pickering, 2012:12) because religious rituals are conceived as 'sacred' ceremonies by societies and this is the core essence of religion (cf. Stark, 2004:469). Religious representations are considered symbols with a greater reality – the gods are only the apparent meaning of religion, while the real meaning is society (cf. Salazar, 2015:87-88).

Durkheim explained religious rituals of communities as 'emotional effervescence' with the purpose to bond individuals (Anderson, 2012:399). The egocentric individualism is considered a threat to society and religion assists in countering this threat (cf. Cohen & Pope, 2011:4, 7). Durkheim's social theory then posits that the core function of religion in society is to bring stability and a sense of unity between individuals in the community, binding people together by a sense of common 'sacred' values. Whatever is socially acceptable is considered 'sacred' and religion assists in separating the community from the 'profane' (cf. Greenwood, 2013:42).

Durkheim's belief that communities consider religious rites as sacred and that it separates them from the profane, identifies religion as a social mechanism which 'forces' individuals to act in accordance with society's moral values (cf. Cohen & Pope, 2011:8). The value of religion, therefore, is that it unifies people in a moral community and thus contributes to the health of societies. Durkheim saw religion as a positive way of reinforcing respect for the society with the individual and leads people to act in ways that benefit the community.

According to Durkheim's theory then, the (one might add 'competitive') individualism promoted by a "Prosperity Gospel" could be harmful towards social order and even moral behaviour regarding the benefit of the community. The emphasis on the personal wealth, health and success at the expense of others of a "Prosperity Gospel" could be detrimental to

the communal solidarity Durkheim considered religion to promote. An example of this potential harm of a “Prosperity Gospel” clearly came to the fore at a Benny Hinn gathering in 2016 in Polokwane, South Africa, attended by the researcher. Hinn urged the approximately 4000 attendees to claim a neighbour’s house as one’s own.

- **Max Weber**

The German sociologist Max Weber is known for his views on the impact of religion on societies and like other sociologists emphasises that religious beliefs provide people with meaning to life (cf. Bhaduarua, 2012:18). Weber argues that religion aids mankind by providing answers to the burning questions about the world in which man lives and these beliefs dictate peoples’ social behaviour (cf. Bhaduarua, 2012:19). To Weber, religion is important because of the role it plays in social change, particularly the impact it had on the development of the capitalistic system of the Western World.

In the work *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus (The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism)* (1904-1905), Weber discusses the influence of religion on the rise of a capitalistic society. In particular, Weber (1904-1905) attributes the Calvinistic beliefs of God’s predetermination of everything as a key driving force behind the origin of the modern-day capitalistic system. Due to Calvinists looking for an indication as to who has been predestined by God for salvation, success in the market place became an important indicator of ‘God’s approval.’ For this reason, Weber considers Calvinism the vehicle by which the natural inclination of man towards pursuing capitalism was set in motion or as Bhaduarua (2012:18) explains Weberian theory: combining with the technologies that facilitated capitalism it was the ascetic work ethic of Calvinists that promoted capitalism. To Calvinists, the success in the market place was a sign of God’s approval that they were living by God’s expectations and this made capitalism an honourable Christian pursuit.

Weber posits that all societies of humanity have an inherent desire to accumulate wealth and that pleasure, comfort, security and power have always been high on the list of what people value (cf. Bhaduarua, 2012:18). This desire fuelled increased productivity and greater accumulation of wealth (capital reinvestment producing greater wealth). Critically appraised, Weber’s posit may certainly hold water and logically one must include sound business savvy to the factors that promoted wealth, but contrary to only the accumulation of wealth it must be pointed out that the work ethic amongst Calvinists was not driven by the enjoyment of profits and to squander it on pomp and pleasure, but for Christian believers, hard work is motivated by the prime obligation to work for the glory of God.

Another important aspect of Weberian social theory is articulated in *Sociology of Religion* (1920), where it is posited that social change is brought about by religious beliefs and this can be seen in the magical beliefs of the early societies (cf. Townsley, 2004). Individuals claim magical abilities for tasks which benefit the society like healing and a prosperous harvest, and once the people confirm the existence of the 'magician's' claimed power, they endow the leader with 'symbolic representation'. In other words, the community recognises the 'magician's' acts as symbols which represent the ability to manipulate the gods to prosper the community (cf. Townsley, 2004). As the need for these 'symbolic acts' are ever-present in a suffering world, these religious charismatic figures will enjoy popularity among societies.

Weber's theory explains the influence of religion on economic life and how people find their meaning in religious beliefs. A "Prosperity Gospel" which promises – from a religious paradigm – exuberant economic wealth, could well be a modern-day example of Weber's theory of social change brought about by religious beliefs. A "Prosperity Gospel", however, has a mystical approach by promising wealth for little (or no) effort, while the Calvinists which Weber referred to increased their wealth by hard work ('ethics'). If Weber's theory is accepted, the impact of Calvinism on the economy was due to increased productivity (hard work). How would wealth increase by the little (or no) effort required by a "Prosperity Gospel" and would the impact of that religious message bring about a positive and effective social-economic change?

Along the lines of Weber's theory of charismatic figures who offer supernatural providence to communities with material needs, "Prosperity Gospel" preachers who claim the ability to manipulate 'God' into providing abundant wealth and excellent health for all with a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel", have captured the imagination of a vast number of modern-day people in many societies.

### **3.3.2 Socio-cultural themes with reference to the United States of America**

There are strong opinions from theologians (*inter alia* Hollinger, 1988:150; Kaiser 1988:169; Hunt 2000:74) that from a sociological viewpoint a "Prosperity Gospel" significantly appeals to the socio-cultural themes of the American society of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Considering that the modern-day version of a "Prosperity Gospel" originated in North America (cf. Beckford, 2001:15-16; Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:23), the socio-cultural themes of the American society could assist the interpretive task to understand why someone would be drawn to a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

Consideration of sociological themes of the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century American society and its possible influence on people being attracted to a “Prosperity Gospel” (refer 3.3.1) lends credibility to the hypothesis of answers to the ‘why’ question. These socio-cultural themes are brought in relation to Africa to test its possible influence on African people drawn to a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” (refer 3.3.2).

The focus in this section is on three socio-cultural themes, namely materialism, consumerism/individualism and globalisation. As it emerged specifically from the empirical research (chapter 2), the themes were selected as the most relevant to the research topic of a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

### **3.3.2.1 Materialism**

A “Prosperity Gospel” imitates the ‘American Dream’ ideology and is enthusiastically received by those who are taught by society from childhood to pursue prosperity (Morris & Lioy, 2012:98; cf. also Gbotoe, 2013:62). At the heart of the ‘American Dream’ lies the yearning for a better, richer and fuller life for all. This concept was originally formalised by Adams (1931) during the first half of the ‘Great Depression’ (1930s) with the aim of creating hope for a better and brighter future (Morris & Lioy, 2012:98). For people who feel like they are still caught in a personal ‘Great Depression’ due to financial misery, a “Prosperity Gospel” would purport to offer such hopes, moreover because it comes from a quasi-religious paradigm. Temporal prosperity is deeply rooted in the ‘American Dream’ mentality and Fee (2006:7) is convinced that a “Prosperity Gospel” fits the ‘American Dream’ far better than the teaching of Jesus who had nowhere to lay down His head.

A further significant influence on societies’ pursuit of materialism, is the era immediately following the industrial revolution and the mass production of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, the per capita income in America increased slowly but surely, and as the free market would have it, this growth created a greater demand from consumers. The result was that an increase in production led to an increase in alternatives that could satisfy the variety of personal preferences and choices of people. The end result is the materialistic American society of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (Nunez, 2014:28). Due to the demands of a materialistic society, wealth and prosperity are considered an even greater necessity and a “Prosperity Gospel” seemingly offers a way of proverbially ‘keeping up with the Joneses’ and acquiring all one’s ‘desired needs’. The materialistic social norm for people to feel good about themselves (and very often in competition with others) requires wealth, and obtaining wealth through religion is what is seemingly offered by the “Prosperity Gospel”. The reality

of this competitive drive amongst individuals in modern societies clearly manifested in Participant D's pastortant (refer 2.4.19.1, Theme 2, Sub-theme D) when the pastortant was frustrated and dissatisfied with his new BMW SUV when another church member turned up in a new Range Rover.

Although Hollinger (1988:147) does not offer official statistics, it is averred that the majority of "Prosperity Gospel" followers consist mainly of the working class. A "Prosperity Gospel" dangles an enticing invitation to this social group since it promises that God wants all His children to eat the best food, wear the best clothes, drive the best cars and dwell in elite neighbourhoods – believers should have and enjoy only the very best in all of life (Hagin, 2002:17). Ironically, the most prominent prosperity preachers are from a background of relative poverty and suffering which left them feeling powerless over their circumstances (Hollinger, 1988:147); and 'rags-to-riches' is considered almost compulsory towards becoming a prominent prosperity preacher (Peter, 2009:142). Coming from a low social class, it is understandable why a message of economic prosperity (that can also purchase physical wellbeing) is so enticing to these prominent leaders in the prosperity movement. It appears to offer hope to their thousands of followers who also seek deliverance from a struggling middle-class living – if God could do it for the preacher, He must do it for me.

The main reason why people so readily associate themselves with a religious prosperity message is because every human being has an element of desire for wealth and comfort in the heart (Jones, 2014:17). The success of a "Prosperity Gospel" can be linked directly to man's inherent acquisitiveness – everyone desires and is looking for a better, carefree, trouble-free life (Jones, 2014:17). Harrison's (2005:159) statement that a "Prosperity Gospel" provides Americans with a sense of empowerment to rise from their dire economic circumstances also applies to people elsewhere who strive to become free from an environment of struggling to keep one's 'head above water'.

It would be wrong to criticise a desire to improve one's circumstances, but if the religious/ 'gospel' shortcut by which 'prosperity' could materialise provides great returns for a small investment, promising much while requiring little, this person's ultimate motive is questionable. The fallen human condition seeks shortcuts to pander the flesh and get-rich-quick-schemes are a reflection of the laziness of man. Adeleye (2010) sees no solution in an ideology which destroys work ethic and seeks shortcuts to wealth.

### 3.3.2.2 Consumerism and individualism

Materialism underpins the consumerist culture that drives the capitalistic views of the present age, and contributes to the individualism prevalent in postmodern societies (Baer, 2014:23). This form of economic control has led to enormous wealth and significantly improved quality of life among particularly American societies. The capitalistic system does not only produce more wealth, but also creates the expectation of wealth based on the reasoning: If one person can get out on top, why can another individual not also reach such heights? (Baer, 2014:23). Gbotoe (2013:63) describes it as a high taste for consumption and within a consumerist culture, an obsession with immediate luxury is the rule. This obsession affects the way the modern world sees and understands God as (merely) a supplier and believers may desire material stuff, that which is created by men rather the Creator (cf. Gbotoe, 2013:63). From a religious perspective, the prospect of receiving material blessings from God has become far more valuable than having a personal relationship with God (Gbotoe, 2013:63). Rightly then, Gbotoe (2013:64) warns that those who are tricked by advertising gimmicks which promise satisfaction for the soul through material possessions run the risk of doing great harm to their spiritual life. Invariably, it also reminds us of Jesus' poignant question "[f]or what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mk 8:36).

Advertising, one of the most influential aspects of the present age, is aimed at convincing consumers that if one has enough money and possessions, one can be the ruler over one's own kingdom (Baer, 2014:23). The apparent 'logic' of a consumerist mentality drives the individual to desire more all the time and to convince people that obtaining more products and services (ostensibly) makes life more comfortable, and gives meaning to life (Baer, 2014:23). Within a consumerist milieu, people seek meaning to life by being " ... sexier, healthier, happier" (Baer, 2014:23).

From a sociological perspective, Dittmar (1992:379-391) explains the relevance of wealth among members of society and the influence it may have on how identity is socially perceived. Possessions can be a symbol of someone's personal abilities and qualities while at the same time act as an indicator of someone's social class or status (Dittmar, 1992:380; cf. also Dittmar & Pepper, 1992:41-42). The point is that wealth and possession can function as symbols of identity on a social level and, therefore, influence the way people think of themselves and other people. Material wealth may provide a frame of reference from which an individual's personal identity as well as social standing may be determined (Dittmar & Pepper, 1992:42). To illustrate the point, Dittmar and Pepper (1992:40) explain how a Rolls



Royce is a symbol of status, whereas a Porsche could be a reflection of someone's macho identity, and continue the thought by quoting Fromm (1978:78): " ... having acquired a new car, the owner has actually acquired a new piece of ego". It can be concluded that a person may find meaning in personal wealth or possessions as this is the means of perceived identity in society.

The psychological significance of material possessions is summarised in three categories (Dittmar & Pepper, 1992:40):

- Biological – The acquisitive instinct;
- Individual-centred: The functions possessions fulfil for the individual;
- Social constructionist: Possessions as material symbols of identity.

The 'social constructionist framework' is the primary reason for people's desire for wealth and possession for a person's socially constituted identity is viewed through the lenses of his possession or lack of material goods respectively (Dittmar & Pepper, 1992:41). On a cognitive level, material possessions, therefore, influence social psychological functioning and provide a framework for people's perception of themselves and others (Dittmar & Pepper, 1992:43).

This framework is exploited by the marketing industry and sentiments of entitlement let people to believe they deserve everything they desire (Nunez, 2014:27). In popular 'entitlement' rhetoric, people are led to believe they 'deserve' comfort and they 'deserve' pleasure (Nunez, 2014:27). Consequently (and one might add logically), when people believe the lie that wealth and comfort are what gives meaning to life, they will be devoted followers of spiritual leaders who tell them that God wants, even wills and, therefore, has destined them to be extremely rich and perfectly healthy (Nunez, 2014:27). This 'entitlement culture' (Nunez, 2014:27) would have people believe 'I am entitled to whatever my heart desires' and too much is never enough. If there is one thing which a consumerist culture does not promote, it is contentment – everything must be in abundance and it must be easy to acquire.

The obsession with material possession and the individualistic mark of society seems to be a fertile breeding ground for a "Prosperity Gospel". Prosperity preachers advertise a religion where 'self' stands at the centre of everything (Lioy, 2007:42) and where one's material possession is an indication of one's spiritual level in the religious community. Born

(2002:109), however, rightly warns that a quasi-gospel message which promotes only individual benefits such as personal health and wealth, almost invariably leads to selfishness rather than becoming self-sacrificial servants of others (cf. Mk 10:42-45).

### **3.3.2.3 Globalisation and Americanising of the world**

As capitalism gradually conquered its enemies, and communication and transport technology improved, a new market opened up for most American products to infiltrate the world (Baer, 2014:24). In the past, people heard about America, 'the land of plenty', and its prosperity and would go to observe it for themselves, but in modern times they do not have to travel there to experience it – television broadcasting brings it into their living rooms and encourages them to dream big. By this medium, mighty nations like America export their products, but on the same platform they also export their culture and religious convictions (Nunez, 2014:28). The "Prosperity Gospel" seems to be one of these exported 'products' which pounced on the opportunity to make a world-wide name for itself and globalisation made it possible for a "Prosperity Gospel" to spread to all corners of the world.

The extensive use of broadcasting media (television and radio) by prosperity preachers in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day was enunciated in the literature review (chapter 1, refer 1.2.1.2). Bower's (2004:4-5) comment in this regard is important, namely that most newcomers to the prosperity movement are not primarily 'recruited' to a "Prosperity Gospel" by their own/local church leaders, but the most significant influence in their lives is the religion television channels. The impact is far-reaching, evidenced in that Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), which has its base in Santa Ana, California, USA, broadcasts its programmes in over eleven different languages and in close to seventy-five different countries around the world (Morris & Liroy, 2012:95). This strong American influence results in Africans blindly accepting a prosperity message as typical American Christianity and is followed due to Africans looking up to and aspiring to be like modern western countries, with America as the prime example (Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:23).

The prosperity message went global and currently it is not only American televangelists who influence African believers, but from the same bandwagon African preachers parrot the same prosperity messages from the pulpits of their mega churches. One prominent African preacher from a megachurch in Lagos, Nigeria even claims that the baton of the prosperity message was transferred to him by the late Kenneth Hagin Sr., the founder of the modern-day prosperity movement. Furthermore, the Nigerian preacher claims to have received an anointing from another key prosperity figure, Kenneth Copeland, by sleeping in a bed which

Copeland also occupied before (Gifford, 2007:24). This 'spiritual connectedness' of prominent African prosperity preachers to founders of the phenomenon, contributes to the embracement of prosperity beliefs by Africans, as followers become convinced that their religious practices are in line with other prominent Christian practices around the world (Coleman, 2000:35; cf. also Gbotoe, 2013:63).

### **3.3.3 Socio-cultural themes with reference to Africa**

This section concentrates on certain local (African) socio-cultural aspects that could possibly explain why African believers (both of European and African descent) appear to be more inclined to embrace a message of prosperity. Four themes, namely dynamic leaders, obsession with the supernatural, poverty and political failures are concentrated upon as they emerged out of a combination of the empirical research findings (chapter 2) and a literature study, as the most relevant to the research topic.

#### **3.3.3.1 Dynamic leaders**

Africans generally tend to trust in dynamic leaders (Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:25). The proverbial 'Big Man mentality' with a charismatic personality is eagerly admired and blindly followed. In the religious realm, 'Big Men' such as prosperity preacher Pastor Michael Okonkwo of Nigeria, portrays the image of a successful tribe leader. Phiri & Maxwell (2007:25) picture the 'Big Men' scenario in Africa by referring to another prosperity preacher, David Oyedepo, in the following way: "Like a chief leading his followers toward better lives, Oyedepo is a larger-than-life figure whose largeness proves he is worth heeding."

These types of leaders, as referred to in the paragraph above, fit the African culture of humility and respect for ancestors, older generations and prominent tribe leaders. Similarly, religious 'superstars' are considered worthy of admiration and respect due to their proven success (Lioy, 2007:48). Magezi and Banda (2017:3) quote Uebert Angel, a Zimbabwean prosperity preacher, who states that the anointing of God upon His prophets is evident in 'what they have' and 'what achievements they possess'. Participants in the empirical research identified admiration of prosperity leaders without accountability as a problem amongst their pastorants (refer 2.4.19.1, Theme 3, Sub-theme A). It seems as though Africans have an obsession with those they consider to be successful leaders, on either political or religious fronts, who promise their devoted supporters that their lives will be changed for the better by their message of hope and their devoted support of the leader. According to Mbewe (2014), this 'Man of God' concept is tantamount to the African

traditional witchdoctor (cf. also Kalu, 2008:114) – like the witchdoctor, the prosperity preacher has the keys to unlock the mysterious spiritual world for ordinary people.

It is significant to consider that the emphasis in the modern-day “Prosperity Gospel” is placed on the ‘Man of God’ mentality (Gifford, 2007:21) and the authority of a dynamic leader must never be questioned. Gifford (2007:22) heard Oyedepo make the following statement to discourage any questioning of prophecies: “The moment you doubt prophetic utterances you are damned ... [w]hen you go against the prophet it is actually God you are rising up against”. Magezi and Banda (2017:1) discuss the extent to which some prosperity adherents are reliant on these ‘Big Men’ and argue that Africans are in such desperate need of their services that they pay no attention to the public charges such as fraud and rape against these supposed ‘prophets’. The self-acclaimed ‘anointing of God’ apparently grants the prosperity prophet super spiritual status which implies they are considered to be closer to God than other believers and are thus considered the mediators of God’s blessings to the prophet’s followers (Magezi & Banda, 2017:2).

### **3.3.3.2 Obsession with the supernatural**

In Africa, an obsession with the supernatural might prove to be a stronger draw towards a “Prosperity Gospel” than prosperity itself. The dominant African religion before Christianity reached its shores is known as African Traditional Religion. At the heart of African Traditional Religion lies ancestral worship by a mediator such as a priest or a traditional healer (Gbotoe, 2013:55), and by appeasing the ancestors through rituals, one can defeat the supernatural attacks of evil spirits. This is similar to the approach implemented by prosperity preachers in Africa. Phiri and Maxwell (2007:26) refer to the twelve pillars of prosperity preacher, Oyedepo’s ministry as an example (which is labelled ‘the world’s biggest Christian centre of worship’) and shows that one of the fundamental aspects concerns power over the supernatural.

Africans are traditionally known for their superstitious practices regarding the supernatural to prevent or counter curses as well as promote personal well-being. In African Traditional Religion it is believed that unhappy ancestors, demons or even Satan are responsible for all misery such as sickness and poverty (Sarles, 1986:336). In order to overcome these obstacles, a “Prosperity Gospel” offers an acceptable ‘Christian’ alternative to the African Traditional Religion’s approach.

“Prosperity Gospel” preachers refer to the Christian faith as having direct communication with God which is the key to being delivered from all curses (Phiri & Maxwell, 2007:26). In a “Prosperity Gospel”, God the Father replaces the ancestors in order to counter all curses and bring about blessings. With the assumption that demons are responsible for all sickness and financial woes, deliverance from evil forces is considered essential within Charismatic Pentecostal prosperity movements (Sarles, 1986:336).

Satan is considered by prosperity movements as the biggest enemy, who is either directly or indirectly responsible for all illness and poverty. According to prosperity preachers, Satan’s power can only be limited by the believer’s authority (Sarles, 1986:345). That which once belonged to Traditional Healers, is now transferred to the hands of every believer, as Copeland (1978:106) proposes in the teaching that the believer controls Satan by spoken words. The statement of prosperity preacher, Francis Hunter (1984:136), serves as example of this self-imposed authority over the supernatural: “I believe no demon in this world has as much power as I do.”

Africans are well acquainted with these practices, as was pointed out by Zambian preacher Mbewe at a ‘Strange Fire’ conference in America in 2014. Mbewe (2014 – insert added by researcher) states: “Often, back home [in reference to Africa] ... the man of God then takes on the role only equivalent to that of the village witch doctor” (cf. also Kalu, 2008:114). Regarding their worship services, Mbewe (2014) believes it is what takes place after the preaching which is actually the main component of a typical prosperity Pentecostal service in Africa. The audience is then invited to receive the anointing power and supernatural working gifts of their prosperity leaders. Mbewe (2014) points out that prayers are offered, for instance, for the healing of marital problems and careers’ stumbling blocks, but no moral questions are asked to those who seek help for their problems. The resemblances to the traditional African witchdoctor are pointed out as follows (Mbewe, 2014): *firstly*, like the witchdoctor, the prayer assumes that God communicates with the prosperity leader regarding a problem of which the prosperity leader carries no prior knowledge; *secondly*, like witchdoctors, the prosperity preacher in Africa regards conventional medication prescribed by a medical doctor as an enemy. After the anointed preacher prays for a person’s problems, a believer must not show a lack of faith by making use of the ‘white man’s’ medical treatment. The power lies in the anointed one’s authority over the supernatural and by means of repetitive phrases such as ‘in the Name of Jesus’ this authority is enforced upon Satan and his demons. Mbewe (2014) connects this practice to the repetitive phrases

also uttered by witchdoctors as mantras in their magical spells (refer 3.4.2.6 for a discussion on the use of language towards psychological manipulation).

### 3.3.3.3 Poverty

In the context of this study, *poverty* is well defined by Gbotoe (2013:60) as ‘social hardship typified by the absence of social services and poor standard of living’ (cf. also O’Connor, 1991:1). This is the sad reality of Third-World Africa as research indicates that in 2008 forty-seven percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa lived on less than 1.25 American Dollar a day. The stark reality of extreme poverty is startling for some 20,000 people in Africa die daily due to such poverty-related issues and at least one third of Africans suffer malnutrition to some degree (Rotimi, Nwadiolor & Ugwuja, 2016:16). Sad as this reality is, it is of even greater sadness that the extreme promises of a “Prosperity Gospel” seldom, if ever, materialise for desperate Africans whose lives are characterised by poverty, gangsterism, substandard education and continuous drug and alcohol abuse (Lioy, 2007: 48). The hope that is promised mostly leads to even greater despair when it disappoints.

The remarkable prosperity promised by a “Prosperity Gospel” to a group of people with massive economic challenges allowed the movement to take a firm hold on the African continent (Lioy, 2007:49). A religion that offers so much hope for the present life shines bright against the dark background of Africa’s poverty. According to anthropologists Rotimi, Nwadiolor and Ugwuja (2016:10), the prosperity message gained so much ground due to individuals looking for spiritual solutions to their physical problems. The popularity of a “Prosperity Gospel” in Nigeria is primarily due to the poverty situation in that country, and it is “... [an] appealing ideology to the poor” (Rotimi, Nwadiolor & Ugwuja 2016:16; compare also Bamgbose, 2001:17 as quoted by Ritmi, Nwadiolor & Ugwuja, 2016:16). Magezi and Banda (2017:2) likewise attribute the grasp of a “Prosperity Gospel” on Africans to the ‘prevailing poor socio-economic and political contexts’. Within such contexts, people suffering hardship will try just about anything and often, out of desperation, find themselves relying on the ‘miraculous intervention’ promised by prosperity prophets (Magezi & Banda [2017:2] refer to these attempts as a ‘coping mechanism’). Gifford (2007:24) summarises the appealing nature of a “Prosperity Gospel” to Africa’s socio-economic landscape of poverty and other related problems by stating that Africa’s ‘success motive’ is intrigued by a message which promises to address all pressing needs.

### 3.3.3.4 Political and economic failures

A final important socio-cultural aspect to consider in Africa, as it relates to the popularity of a “Prosperity Gospel”, is the political and economic failures where politicians are not held accountable and allow an elite group to control power and wealth at the expense of the masses. A “Prosperity Gospel” offers an appealing deliverance from this kind of oppression as it treats political and economic failures in Africa as water off a duck’s back for a believer in the prosperity fraternity. Gifford (2007:22-23) supports this hypothesis and refers to a certain Ghanaian prosperity preacher who was overheard saying that even if Ghana’s currency falls dramatically against the American dollar, followers of the prosperity message have nothing to worry about, for they can carry bags full of money with them if need be, but they will not be affected in the least.

Gbotoe (2013:60) is similarly of the opinion that the failures of the state to provide basic services are countered by the liberating promises of a “Prosperity Gospel”. The church which promises success seems to be the safe haven for those who are disappointed by government’s failures. Adeleye (2010) argues that in a milieu of social-economic and political instability, the time for people to look toward government to solve their social problems is fast moving past its sell-buy date and that more and more people might be looking towards the church for deliverance. As a result of the frustration with undelivered promises of government, Adeleye (2010) suggests three routes for African youth: *firstly*, the unfortunate option of suicide seems to be a viable one for many; *secondly*, greener pastures are sought in prosperous Western countries; *finally*, many people turn to prosperity preaching churches who present themselves more as social organisations ‘who worship God and mammon (the god of money) simultaneously’.

### 3.3.4 Preliminary conclusion on interpretive perspectives from Sociology on a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”

A “Prosperity Gospel” is “... without question the most attractive message being preached today or, for that matter, in the whole history of the church” (Farah, 1982:15) and possible reasons for this popularity were researched from a sociological vantage-point.

Sociologists affirm that religion influences societies and people’s interaction. In this perspective, a “Prosperity Gospel” might hold possibilities for bringing social change to communities that are facing numerous socio-economic challenges. The sociologist of religion, Peter Berger (2008), shows that to a “Prosperity Gospel’s” credit, it does not have

any sentimentality toward poverty and marginalisation – on New Testament terms the poor and oppressed should be cared for and, where possible, empowered towards betterment. However, Berger (2008) acknowledges that if a “Prosperity Gospel” is promoted as a way of “ ... material improvement of human condition ... ” due to devoted giving practices and it does not work towards such improvement, that ‘gospel’ is a distortion of the Christian message and, as such, must be rejected.

The researcher agrees that a “Prosperity Gospel” is a distorted Christian message, but would differ from Berger who proposes that a “Prosperity Gospel” ‘has a good chance of success’ for it will motivate poor individuals to work hard as per Weber’s theory on Protestant ethic described above (refer 3.3.1). Be that as it may for some who find motivation toward improving their economic circumstances through a “Prosperity Gospel”, the literature reviewed on the consequences of a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” (refer 1.1 and sub-divisions), as well as the empirical research conducted in chapter 2 (refer 2.4.19 and sub-divisions), contrarily indicates that people can encounter various problems (spiritual and physical) due to the unfulfilled promises of socio-economic betterment by a “Prosperity Gospel”. The social change promoted by a “Prosperity Gospel” (specifically the means of tithing by which wealth is supposedly appropriated) seems to be largely an illusion, except for the prosperity preachers who benefit financially from the ‘offering bags’ filled by followers already (and severely) strapped socio-economically.

The second part of the research on the popularity of a “Prosperity Gospel” from a sociological vantage-point focussed on specific socio-cultural and economical themes that play a role in people’s attraction to a “Prosperity Gospel” (refer 3.3.2 and sub-divisions; 3.3.3 and sub-divisions). The research findings indicate that a number of social aspects of modern societies seem to be exploited by the prosperity movement to make its message all the more attractive. Although the western capitalistic mentality, which has expanded across the borders of America, plays a major role in people’s attraction to a “Prosperity Gospel”, it must be noted that other socio-cultural aspects specifically relevant to local communities make an equal, if not greater, contribution to this attraction. From an African perspective, the political, economic as well as religious landscape is filled with instabilities and complexities which extend beyond the aim of this study to explore in greater depth, yet what is relevant for this research is that a “Prosperity Gospel” offers solutions to Africans’ frustration, disappointment and search for meaning on a continent where options for improved circumstances are scarce.



### 3.4 Interpretive perspectives from social psychology on a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”

Kruger (2016) highlights the importance of considering the field of cognition (knowing and trying to make sense of what is known and what is observed) within the discipline of Practical Theology. Practical theologians should identify cognitive distortions to assist people (cf. Fiske, 2004:123). Kruger (2016:11) stresses the need to consider the concept of cognition within Practical Theology by interacting with other disciplines such as Cognitive Psychology.

In the past, Psychology did not consider the mind sciences as important, but focussed mainly on behaviour – more recently, however, the examining of the brain and how it functions has received far more attention in the field of Psychology (Kolak *et al.*, 2006:40). Psychology is a wide-ranging discipline which incorporates thinking processes and behavioural patterns, and for the purpose of this study Cognitive Psychology, and particularly psychological manipulation, is explored.

Jean Piaget’s (e.g. 1952) contribution on cognitive development can be considered as ground-breaking within the field of Psychology. The role of *schemas* along with the accommodation and assimilation of information in cognitive development is emphasised in Piaget’s theory. A *schema* is defined as that which cognitively assists the process of organising and interpreting information (Cherry, 2018; cf. Piaget, 1952:7). In the process of cognitive development, *schemas* are stored as mental representations and applied as needed to process and organise information. When processed information correlates with a pre-existing *schema*, the information is assimilated into that relevant *schema*, or new information may be accommodated by either updating a pre-existing *schema* or creating a new category altogether (cf. Cherry, 2018). By this process, cognitive development occurs as a person’s knowledge is expanded and further understanding of their world is gained.

It is argued that ‘faith formation’ could be a result of a person’s *schemas* and Kim (2007:310) explains the reasoning that *schemas* play a critical role in ‘faith formation’. Although Kim (2007:311) denies the exclusivity of this theory as the single cause of ‘faith formation’, it can be argued that, at least in part, a person’s *schema* will affect their ‘faith formation’. The concern which should be raised in this regard is the logic that a skewed *schema* could lead to a skewed ‘faith formation’.

It is evident from Piaget's theory of cognitive development that *schemas* play a vital role in a person's understanding of their world, which includes their spiritual/religious world. Cherry (2018) makes the important observation that *schemas* could be a way of 'taking shortcuts' in information processing and Cherry (2018) highlights that these mental representations (*schemas*) can be applied incorrectly due to the tendency to focus on information which affirms "pre-existing beliefs and ideas" at the expense of other significant information which contradicts someone's presuppositions. Once *schemas* are established it can be difficult to change and adapt them when confronted by contradictory information (Cherry, 2018). If a person's pre-existing belief was bent towards a conviction that it is God's will for them to be financially wealthy, it would be tenable to deduce that their social *schema* can be skewed.

Considering what transpires above out of the study of the practices and claims (and the results) by a "Prosperity Gospel", it can be deducted from the research that psychological manipulation is a virtual reality in the methodology of religious phenomenon. Joybell's (2014) definition of psychological manipulation as seeking some benefit at the victims' expense actually validates this deduction in the context of this study. While it must be acknowledged that psychological influence amongst people is inevitable and can be considered healthy to shape someone's thought processes, psychological manipulation that has as its aim to distort someone else's thinking process in order to benefit at that person's expense, would be wicked.

Kruger (2016:3) mentions that apart from people's actual circumstances, their emotional experiences are also influenced by cognitive observation of that particular situation. The possibility exists that someone's cognitive observation, appraisal or interpretation can be manipulated. For example, Bowler and Reagen (2014:188) consider the emotionally-charged worship experience at prosperity churches to have the aim of doctrinally marketing optimism, reasoning that " ... music provided mechanistic and emotive tools for unleashing spiritual forces ... " and that music and singing is meant to " ... transform faith into action and belief into power" (Bowler & Reagen, 2014:208). The emotionally charged worship services (incorporating smoke screens, laser lights and rock bands – Bowler & Reagen, 2014:200) are used to market and cement the belief in the 'blessed, happier life' (Bowler & Reagen, 2014:211).

MacTavish (2014:17-171) adds his voice to this conversation on psychological manipulation within the prosperity movement, and refers to the medical sociologist Eric Shaw's (2001:220) research which reveals that prosperity churches use techniques to " ... reduce the cognitive dissonance of their parishioners" who are disillusioned due to the unfulfilled promises of a

“Prosperity Gospel” in their lives. Three such techniques are employed: *firstly*, the hour-long praise and worship sessions are used to emotionally manipulate attendees into giving money (tithing) (MacTavish, 2014:171); *secondly*, the minister/pastor is always portrayed, and portraying from the stage the visage of a loving pastor who cares deeply for congregants, yet the vast majority of the attendees have never had any face to face contact with the pastor; *thirdly*, congregants are confronted with frequent dramatic testimonies which attribute obtained blessings to the prosperity beliefs, which convinces those listening to the testimony that it really works and motivates them to believe that it can still ‘work for me’. *Finally*, the prosperity interpretation of a passage of Scripture is flamboyantly delivered with skilful persuasion and MacTavish (2014:171) articulates Shaw’s (2001:223) conclusion in the following striking way: “ ... once believers accept the prosperity interpretation of a passage of scripture, cognitive dissonance theory suggests they will close themselves off to any alternative information that might change their mind”.

Cognition can be distorted by mind manipulation which could result in skewed social *schemas* and from the empirical findings reported on in chapter 2 (refer 2.4.19.1 – for example, Theme 3) it became evident from former “Prosperity Gospel” adherents that they realised they were manipulated for the financial benefit of the prosperity preacher. For the purpose of the interpretative task (i.e. answering why someone adheres to a “Prosperity Gospel”), possible cognitive distortions as a result of psychological manipulation/mind control within a “Prosperity Gospel” are investigated.

### **3.4.1 Psychological manipulation/mind control**

This section relies mainly on the work of Robert Lifton in the book *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism* (1989), and two articles by Henke (s.a. a; s.a. b) in which Lifton’s principles are applied to Religious Cults.

Lifton’s (1989) research was conducted in Hong Kong in 1954-55 with twenty-five Westerners and fifteen Chinese subjects who were put through the Chinese Communist ‘thought reform’ programme during the Cold War. The term *brainwashing* is used by Lifton to describe the programme called *szu-hsiang* (‘thought reform’), and Lifton (1989:4) considers it one of the most powerful efforts of psychological manipulation undertaken. The process of thought reform is defined as the “ ... method of achieving total control over the human mind” (Lifton, 1989:4).

From Lifton's (1989:419-437) research, a set of eight psychological themes are composed which could be used as a set of criteria to judge whether someone, or a particular group of people, are being '*brainwashed*'. The eight principles are (and are described in more detail below – refer 3.4.2):

- Milieu control – Controlling the environment from undue information and associations or anything that promotes opposition.
- Mystical manipulation – Selling a 'higher goal' or greater purpose of which one can be a part.
- The demand for purity – The world is divided into two groups, namely the pure and the impure and in order to achieve the 'higher goal', one must continually conform to the pure group. Any failure to succeed shows impurity somewhere that needs to be identified and rectified.
- Confession – Confession is to be made for all evil/shortcomings and lack of success in the 'higher goal'. Even fabricated confession for wrongs never committed is considered necessary.
- Sacred science – Doctrine or practices of the group must never be questioned or doubted, as this is considered unacceptable practice and is the worst kind of offense.
- Loading the language – Common words or phrases are used repetitively and are given new meanings. This is used to discourage critical thinking.
- Doctrine over person – The doctrine of the group or the group leaders must never be questioned and whenever there is a conflict between what one feels one is experiencing and what the doctrine states, one should consider it evil to even question the doctrine. The doctrine is more real than a person's experience.
- Dispensing of existence – Any person outside the group is considered evil and when one betrays or questions the group, one is cut off from fellowship and considered to be evil.

The eight themes will be utilised to judge the level of manipulation and/or mind control that can occur within a "Prosperity Gospel" and which might indicate why people not only accept and adhere to, but also why they find it difficult to break away from a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

Lifton (1989:vii) explains that these thought reform principles could be applied to any 'totalistic' belief system, whether political or religious/religious cults. Although a "Prosperity Gospel" cannot clearly be identified as a Christian cult as it shares many similarities with Evangelical doctrines, nonetheless convincing evidence indicates that the roots of the modern-day "Prosperity Gospel" seem to lie, to a significant extent, in cultic doctrines and practices<sup>14</sup>.

When Lifton's (1989:vii) own three-point criteria for a cult is taken into account, a "Prosperity Gospel" could certainly be examined through the lens of Lifton's criteria of psychological manipulation. According to Lifton (1989:vii), a cult is identified *firstly* by a charismatic leader who becomes the object of worship, *secondly* by a pattern of 'thought reform' as per the eight thought reform principles listed above, and *thirdly* the process of manipulation with the intent to exploit (economically, sexually, or other) recruits/adherents.

From the empirical research data obtained in chapter 2 to determine the problems people encounter with a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel", Participant B's pastorant's statement is revealing: "[r]epeatedly, I have witnessed in my former church, people falling on their knees to worship the pastor." Furthermore, pastorants extensively elaborated on financial exploitation by prosperity preachers. For example, Participant C's pastorant expressed that he felt like a 'proverbial cash-cow' that was being financially milked for the benefit of his prosperity church leaders. MacTavish (2014:142) illustrates this shocking reality of pastors who assume to be demi-gods by referencing prosperity Pastor Adeboye who goes by the name "Daddy GO", where 'Daddy' is not understood as a familial reference, but as his direct link to God, and 'GO' denotes General Overseer. The point is that apparently Adeboye is the only go-to-man if one seeks a blessing from God, a clear indication of the 'charismatic leader becoming the object of worship'.

Evidenced in the empirical research data, Lifton's (1989) criteria for a 'cult' would match the experience of prosperity adherents on at least aspect one and three of what Lifton (1989:vii) classifies as a cult (the second aspect, as to what extent Liftons' pattern of 'thought reform' is present in a "Prosperity Gospel" is tested below - refer 3.4.2). This is not to say that for this reason a "Prosperity Gospel" should be classified as a Christian cult, but it does make

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<sup>14</sup> It is not the intention of this study to prove or disprove the classification of a "Prosperity Gospel" as a cult. For reference purposes and further study, the work of McConnell (1995) is recommended. McConnell's (1995:19) differentiation between cult and cultic is helpful towards understanding the debate – Mormonism is deemed a cult, but a "Prosperity Gospel" is merely cultic in that it aligns itself with certain practices which are historically cultic in nature (cf. also MacArthur, 1992; Hanegraaff, 2009; Van Emmeren, 2016:171-172).

Lifton's (1989:419-437) criteria fitting to test a "Prosperity Gospel" for psychological manipulation.

Henke (s.a. a) claims that Lifton's (1989) psychological manipulation principles can be identified in most cults but point to a number of significant differences which would also be applicable to a "Prosperity Gospel". *Firstly*, Henke (s.a. a) points to the Chinese Communist's approach of violence (severe punishment) as a form of bringing people to submission, whereas cults typically use a form of reward and punishment (far less severe) which people adhere to because they are made to believe it is for their benefit. Although the methods differ, the principle and desired outcome are nonetheless the same. *Secondly*, the subjects in Lifton's study saw their prison guards as enemies yet were still '*brainwashed*' by them, while those in a typical religious cult are won over by the friendly attitude of their recruiters (Henke, s.a. a). Henke (s.a. a) considers this quasi-befriending as an even greater advantage to the cult leader because one easily lets down your guard with a friend, whereas it is much more difficult to win someone over when you are perceived as an enemy. Henke (s.a. a) then prefers the term 'mind control' to be used instead of '*brainwashing*' in reference to the 'thought reform' which takes place in a cult, as communists imposed coerced methods, whereas most cult relationships begin with a persuasive friendship which turns into coercion only much later.

Despite the differences outlined in the previous paragraph, Henke (s.a.) is convinced that the process in 'thought reform' suggested by Lifton (1989) is equally applicable to cultic 'mind control'. For the purpose of this study, it would be valuable to test whether a "Prosperity Gospel" follows a similar psychological manipulation approach. Lifton's (1989) eight psychological themes of 'thought reform' are considered below (refer 3.4.2 and sub-divisions) to determine if a "Prosperity Gospel" sets up some of these psychological techniques. This could give an indication of the psychological manipulation to which adherents of a "Prosperity Gospel" might be exposed, and partially serve as an answer as to why people are inclined to accept and maintain a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

### **3.4.2 Lifton's eight psychological themes of 'thought reform' applied to a "Prosperity Gospel"**

#### **3.4.2.1 Milieu control**

'Milieu' refers to an environment in which a person finds themselves, and the people, interaction or communication to which they are exposed (Henke, s.a. a). Lifton (1989:420)

considers the control of human communication “ ... the most basic feature of the thought reform environment”. The awareness Lifton came to in the research is that milieu control not only concerns what a person sees, hears and reads from the outside, but it is also concerned with controlling personal communication with oneself (Lifton, 1989:420).

Within a “Prosperity Gospel” it is difficult to detect any extraordinary control against ‘outside’ communication, yet the control of “Prosperity Gospel” adherents’ communication with themselves is rather evident in the practice of ‘positive confession’ (refer 2.3.1.3). Within a “Prosperity Gospel” environment it is considered unacceptable to have any negative thoughts or speak any negative words because that which one speaks has creative power (cf. Osteen 2004:125, 129). In this way, the communication a person receives from the ‘outside world’, i.e. what one sees and hears and experiences in one’s life circumstances is to be denied and replaced by communicating positive things to oneself. This is a milder form of milieu control compared to what Lifton (1989) found amongst Chinese Communists, but by Lifton’s (1989:420) own admission, the Chinese Communist’s extreme practice of milieu control is unrivalled, and other milder forms of milieu control still classify as forms of psychological manipulation.

Lifton (1989:421) highlights a crucial aspect, namely the disruption that is caused to someone exposed to milieu control. This disruption is between what they tell themselves and the realities of the world around them. Internally, such a person ‘communicates’ a so-called ‘truth’ to themselves while externally they are exposed to a vastly different reality. Within the context of a “Prosperity Gospel”, the ‘positive confession’ of extreme wealth and excellent health invariably comes into conflict with the outside experience of what a person sees and experiences in their circumstances, yet by the tactic of ‘positive confession’ the outside information is to be denied.

#### **3.4.2.2 Mystical manipulation**

The second principle emerging from Lifton’s (1989) research is ‘mystical manipulation’. This principle refers to the personal manipulation of people by means of provoking someone’s emotions and behaviour in such a way that it is considered spontaneous conduct even though it has actually been cleverly orchestrated and manipulated (Lifton, 1989:422). It is significant to note that these behaviours and emotions experienced by a neophyte can assume a near-mystical quality. The ‘higher calling’ for which the group strives has a mystique about it (Lifton, 1989:422), destined by a ‘higher hand’ who chooses the recruits

through whom this 'utopian goal' can be reached or by whom it can be experienced. It can, however, only be achieved if a recruit sacrifices their all for this cause.

One can conclude that the 'higher calling' of a "Prosperity Gospel" boils down to the abundant wealth and excellent health promoted by its beliefs (refer 2.3.1.3) – this is the 'utopia' to which the elect adherents are called by God, and they express their faith and commitment tangibly by sacrificial giving to prosperity preachers (cf. Chilenje, 2014:7; Hood, 2004:57-65). The confidence in the 'higher calling' of a "Prosperity Gospel" for those who act in total obedience is well expressed by a prominent leader of the phenomenon, namely Gloria Copeland (and for which Copeland appropriates the Bible): "The laws of prosperity will work in the life of any believer who is obedient to His Word" (Copeland, 1978:20).

Lifton (1989:422) also indicates that anything, be it thought or action, that may be at loggerheads with the 'higher calling' is to be rejected outright. This is, in itself, an act of higher faith and within a "Prosperity Gospel" context, any thought of poverty or illness is similarly regarded as evil and contrary to the will of the 'higher hand', namely God, for a "Prosperity Gospel" adherent's life (cf. Copeland, 1974:41; Savelle, 1981:8).

A crucial component to the psychological response to this form of mystical manipulation is trust, and regardless of reality or logic a recruit must submit on the basis of 'ultimate trust' (Lifton, 1989:422). It is a requirement to welcome the mysteriousness of the 'higher purpose'. This trust, Lifton (1989:423) states, is difficult to maintain when a person is constantly manipulated, yet by what is referred to as 'the psychology of the pawn', Lifton notes that when trust turns to mistrust an individual might still feel unable to escape from the powerful forces of the movement and thus subordinates everything to adapting to them (Lifton, 1989:423). People will rather carry the scars of personal disappointment and force themselves to be in line with the group (Lifton, 1989:423) – sadly this results in the endless participation of manipulating others to convince them to join the cause of the 'higher purpose'. The leader typically becomes the centre of the mystical manipulation and in a follow-up article on his research, Lifton (2004:3) applies his principles to cults. Lifton's (2004:3) statement that the god-like reality of the cult leader boosts the attraction of cult members, gives an indication of how insidious such methods turn out to be. This is a deceptive tactic to legitimise the emphasis of raising funds 'for the cause'.

This mystical psychological manipulation could explain why an adherent of a "Prosperity Gospel" finds it difficult to remove himself from the movement even though the lavish life-style that is promised for devoted giving never materialises. Lifton (1989:423) articulates the



principle that due to exposure to constant manipulation the manipulated lose the ability to think for themselves.

### **3.4.2.3 The demand for purity**

Within a psychological manipulation milieu, the world is typically divided into two extreme groups, the pure (absolutely good) and the impure (absolutely evil) (Lifton, 1989:423). Those who can be classified as being part of the 'pure', devotedly share the ideological convictions of the 'thought reform' group (political or religious), while everyone who objects to, denies or even simply questions the ideologies are considered totally evil. Anything impure that still remains in someone who is a recruit to the 'pure-group' must be denounced and eliminated. This creates the deception that absolute purity is attainable (Lifton, 1989:423), and the ideal is placed in front of recruits to the 'thought reform' group and used as a manipulative tactic to urge recruits to continue to conform to the group's ideologies. Henke (s.a. a) gives good insight in this regard by indicating that these ideologies in religious contexts are called doctrine<sup>15</sup> and that the religious leaders are the ones who determine what doctrinal conformity requires. Followers in religious cults strive to attain to the standards set but sooner or later might succumb to the reality that they fail. Such failure is considered an example of impurity which still remains and recruits are emotionally manipulated by guilt and shame (Lifton, 2004:3).

From a "Prosperity Gospel" perspective, the doctrine requires unwavering faith towards abundant wealth and excellent health (refer 2.3.1.3). When a person fails to attain what is promised, the 'logical' conclusion is that the person lacks faith and/or is in a sinful disposition of remnant 'impurity' (Copeland, 1978:20; compare Sarles, 1986:229; Van Emmenes, 2016: 196). The proof of the 'absolute purity' referred to in the paragraph above lies in the examples of the extremely rich prosperity preachers of whom it should be concluded that they have an absolutely perfect faith and sinless life. Pastorants in the empirical study in chapter 2 articulated their attraction to the examples of their leaders of what can be attained if they continue to conform to prosperity beliefs (refer 2.4.19.1, Theme 3, Sub-theme A). The manipulative tactic, which could be applied to a "Prosperity Gospel", is well described in Henke's (s.a.) explanation that totalistic systems require adherents to purge themselves of all impurity and to conform to strict adherence to the rules of the movement. The 'rules' of a "Prosperity Gospel" system are plain, yet totally demanding: never doubt the anointed

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<sup>15</sup> Hendricks (2014:136) categorises a "Prosperity Gospel" as a kind of ideology of the Gospel.

leaders and their doctrine, support these preachers financially and expect health and wealth without doubting.

#### **3.4.2.4 Confession**

Personal confession is closely related to the previous psychological theme, namely the demand for purity. By confession, Lifton (1989:425) means something more than the Christian understanding of confessing to God for actual sin committed but argues that in a 'thought reform' environment, confession becomes a cult in itself for it is required that even wrongs not (yet) committed are to be confessed if it will in some way benefit the individual and/or group. By this enforced practice, recruits to the 'thought reform' group are exploited (Lifton, 1989:425). Henke (s.a. a) is of the opinion that it is man's internal sense of guilt due to original sin which makes a person vulnerable towards this tactic of psychological manipulators.

Due to the lack of wealth and health being attributed to a lack of faith and other personal sins in prosperity beliefs (compare Sarles, 1986:229), adherents to the movement are encouraged towards soul-searching to root out sins in their life which cause this lack of blessing. Unwarranted guilt was detected among pastorants of the participants in the empirical study (refer 2.4.19.1): Participant D and Participant E's pastorants indicated that they were continually required to ask themselves 'what they have done wrong' when they were not experiencing financial blessings. If suffering occurs not as a result of a specific sin in a person's life, confession of such imaginary sin is forced and fabricated.

The need for such confession is driven by psychological manipulation – Lifton (1989:426) explains the confession principle as something which promises meaningful psychological satisfaction for it relieves one from suppressed guilt. The suppressed guilt of a "Prosperity Gospel" adherent due to lack of wealth or health could force such a person to remain within the movement for so-called psychological satisfaction of confession.

#### **3.4.2.5 Sacred science**

According to Lifton's (1989:427-429) research findings, a person within a 'thought reform' environment can be psychologically manipulated through the principle known as 'sacred science'. With this concept, Lifton (1989:427) refers to the doctrine of the movement as having an 'aura of sacredness' around it for it postulates its beliefs as the " ... ultimate moral vision for the ordering of human existence." Although the doctrine will typically transcend ordinary logic, the 'mind control' movement claims its doctrines as the most logical scientific

absolute – this claim to the rich heritage of human sciences enhances the authority of the movements' beliefs among its recruits (Lifton, 1989:428). Due to the claim of 'scientific precision', questioning of the basic belief is also prohibited and reverence for the leaders of the doctrinal position is enforced, while such reasoning against the beliefs is considered 'unscientific'. This doctrine is the most basic natural law and is considered true for all people at all times (Lifton, 1989:428).

The psychological appeal of this principle rests in the security and comfort it provides. Lifton (1989:428) explains it as merging logical and mystical modes of experience which creates "... an intense feeling of truth". The convincing nature of this manipulation is so strong that when a person senses the contradiction between the irrational doctrine and the reality they experience, guilt and fear may prohibit someone to question the doctrine (Lifton, 1989:428).

Aspects of this form of psychological manipulation can be detected in a "Prosperity Gospel's" doctrine known as the 'law of compensation'. This principle argues that the more one is willing to give (especially by tithing to prosperity preachers), the more one can expect to receive in return (Copeland, 1974:79-80; Tilton, 1983:41). "Prosperity Gospel" preachers claim this principle as a universal and timeless 'law of the universe' that will work for anyone who gets into contact with this law (Hagin, 1974:2; Tilton, 1983; Hunter, 1984:39; compare Hollinger, 1988:134-135). It is a form of simplifying a world of complex suffering which brings comfort and security to adherents of a "Prosperity Gospel" who believe that this 'law' is scientifically verifiable. A fear of curses, if one fails to comply with this 'law of compensation', was detected amongst participants' pastorants (refer 2.4.19.1, Theme 3, Sub-theme B). Even when the 'law' did not come to fruition in the life a prosperity adherent, the tendency seems to never question it but rather be driven by guilt and fear to increase one's commitment to giving (refer 2.4.19.1, Theme 2, Sub-Theme D).

#### **3.4.2.6 Loading the language**

Research on communication within the discipline of Cognitive Science has indicated that language plays a significant role in the cognition of people. The 2013 edition of the *Journal of Pragmatics* was dedicated to understanding how communicated information is cognitively processed in argumentative, persuasive and manipulative contexts and determining which factors have an impact in successful manipulative communication (Maillat & Oswald, 2013:137). Although it remains difficult to differentiate between argumentation, persuasion and manipulation, a case can be made for manipulation when fallacious arguments are intentionally used by the communicator, or even when arguments are deceptively false or

deficient yet knowingly used to gain the listener's agreement or approval on a matter (Maillat & Oswald, 2013:137). Language can be applied to exploit cognitive processing of information (Maillat & Oswald, 2013:138) and manipulation can be successful due to the exploitation of cognitive biases (people's inclination to affirm their assumption about reality – cf. Oswald & Grosjean, 2004:79).

Two articles in the *Journal of Pragmatics* referred to in the previous paragraph, are specifically relevant to understanding the use of language in cognitive manipulation. *Firstly*, Maillat (2013:190) proposes a model that can potentially analyse how manipulative strategies place constraints on the context selection process. Manipulation is a “ ... dispersive use that results in an effective re-ordering of contextual assumptions that affect the accessibility in the cognitive environment of the hearer” (Maillat, 2013:193). By means of repetitive utterances, a particular context can be strengthened while inconsistent (or the absence of certain) utterances may weaken other contexts. Maillat (2013:193) further explains that this process of ‘context constraint selection’ is employed by manipulators to control the hearer's context selection process and interpretation of utterances. If the context selection can be limited, more control can be exercised over the hearer's interpretation. According to Sperber *et al.* (2010), cognitive processes of interpretation are error-prone due to cognitive optimism – i.e. looking for cognitive shortcuts (cf. Maillat, 2013:197).

Applied to a “Prosperity Gospel”, this ‘optimism’ is utilised by limiting the context selection and avoiding the difficult questions relating to God's goodness and the problem of suffering. By means of continuous verbalised one-sided propaganda of health and wealth as the will of God for all believers, other contexts such as the reality of poverty and sickness are increasingly eliminated for what they are – a reality (and God's will) even for some believers.

*Secondly*, De Saussure's (2013) article focusses on how a ‘pre-existing belief’ creates a ‘presuppositional bias’ (De Saussure, 2013:178) which could lead to superficial processing of new or additional information. Applied to a “Prosperity Gospel” for example, an adherent has a presupposition that God's will is for them to be rich – this is a ‘given’ (cf. De Saussure, 2013:178) for someone with a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. The information regarding tithing articulated by a prosperity preacher is presented in such a way that it will set the blessing of abundant riches in motion. So articulated, it might be accepted without critical evaluation due to presuppositional bias. In this way, presuppositions can be used to “ ... deceive, hide, or mislead the interlocutor, and ... some uses of the so-called emotive, loaded or slanted words can be extremely powerful instruments” (Macagno, 2012:248) in

manipulation. A significant feature in De Saussure's (2013:188) argument is the reference to Loftus and Palmer's (1974) 'labelling effects' – defined as follows:

*A labelling effect occurs when giving a wrong name to an object (for example talking of a 'stop' sign when the actual sign is a 'yield' sign) leads to believing in the longer term that the object was really the mislabeled (sic) one. A misinformation effect consists in different evaluations of a situation depending on the words used to describe it.*

These 'mislabeled' words or concepts could trigger existential presuppositions used in distorting cognitive processes towards successful manipulation.

A key element of the 'mind control' tactic is the repetitive use of loaded words and phrases easily memorised with a meaning peculiar to the group (Lifton, 1989:430). These 'thought-terminating clichés' then evolve into 'ultimate terms' that are designed and used to deplete the ability to think for oneself (Lifton, 1989:430). It is to be acknowledged that any organisational group has language unique to that group, but in ideological totalitarianism the language is more extreme (Lifton, 1989:430). If a person is thus trained to use the same language for a long period of time with a specific meaning attached to that language, it becomes a part of the person to such an extent that they are bound to it. Breaking from it can be extremely difficult, even when one begins to feel uneasy with the ideologies promoted by the language. Lifton (1989:430) indicates that " ... shout[ing] the jargon all the louder ... demonstrate[s] conformity, [but] hide[s] [the] dilemma of ... despair ...".

An example of a "Prosperity Gospel's" use of this manipulative tactic would be the repetitive use of, and definitions attributed to, words such as 'glory', 'anointing/anointed' and even prosperity mantras such as 'name-it-and-claim-it'. Bowler and Reagan (2014:189) illustrate the point when they refer to the use of songs in a "Prosperity Gospel" to cement certain concepts amongst followers – for example, reference is made to the Grammy-winning Clark Sister's song "Name it, Claim it." The lyrics repeat the words:

*If you just grasp with your mind,  
then you ought to be able to speak it with your mouth  
it's yours, it's yours...  
Just name it and claim it, it's yours, it's yours,  
yours for fire asking, yours, it's your blessing;  
Whatever you need from the Lord.*

Kakwata (2014:228) attributes the popularity of a “Prosperity Gospel” to using language from the Bible but with a twisted, so-called ‘deeper’ meaning. For example, a so-called additional ‘blessing’ is proclaimed as a necessity to live a consecrated life (compare Rousseau, 2010: 85). MacArthur (1992:209) refers to this kind of preaching as successive works of grace and this ‘grace’ would include the ‘anointing’ concept popular with prosperity preachers which is communicated as the power from God that enables a believer to, amongst other things, obtain healing, multiplication of an offering and debt-free living (Hinn, 2009:7; Hinn, s.a.). This understanding of anointing is at variance with the semantic meaning of the word (anointing) and especially the Biblical contexts in which the word is used. Louw and Nida (1993:484) list the meaning of ‘anointing’ under the semantic domain, ‘Control, Rule’ and sub-domain, ‘Assign to a Role or Function’ as “ ... to assign a person to a task”. For this reason, the priest and the king in the Old Testament are considered God’s ‘anointed’ servants (cf. for example Lv 4:3 and 1 Sm 10:1). Prosperity preachers turned the meaning of ‘anointing’ on its head, as in a Biblical context the word refers to God’s consecration of someone to be His servant in a specific task, whilst prosperity preachers use the word ‘anointing’ as a way by which God becomes man’s servant to provide temporal blessings.

#### **3.4.2.7 Doctrine over person**

With the principle of ‘doctrine over person’, Lifton (1989:430-432) refers to the contrast between what people feel they experience and what the doctrine of the ‘mind controlling’ movement says one should experience. When these two come into conflict with one another, the human experience must bow to the doctrine of the movement. If one questions the beliefs of the group or the leaders of the group then the problem lies with the person who is questioning, for there is something inherently wrong with simply asking questions (Lifton, 2004:5). Doubting the doctrine is considered a reflection of one’s evil and when one’s experience is different from what the doctrine states, it is associated with guilt (Lifton, 2004:5). The inevitable result of this psychological manipulation is that the doubting person’s experience of reality must be “ ... reshaped ... to fit the rigid contours of the doctrinal mould” (Lifton, 1989:431).

Henke (s.a. a) makes the crucial observation that Christianity is a religion which is consistent with reality or personal experience. Within a “Prosperity Gospel”, however, the doctrine which requires a complete denial of any form of physical suffering, whether from poverty or illness for all of God’s children, seems a far cry from the reality that these believers experience. Pretorius (2009) investigated the origins of the doctrinal stance on miraculous healing for all who exercise sufficient faith in the modern-day “Prosperity Gospel” known as

the Word-Faith Movement. Pretorius (2009:4) emphasises that within this prosperity movement it is required that one denies the symptoms of the disease (cf. Hagin, 1966:20). Pretorius (2009:4) comes to the conclusion that such logic leads to an inevitable denial of reality (cf. also Neuman, 1990:34). A “Prosperity Gospel” then requires exactly what Lifton’s (1989:430-432) criteria for psychological manipulation entails: to believe in the belief that one is not suffering even while the physical evidence confirms the opposite reality.

#### **3.4.2.8 Dispensing of existence**

The final principle in Lifton’s (1989) testing criteria for psychological manipulation is ‘dispensing of existence’. The elite status of those who are part of the group is emphasised within this principle. This elite status of group members is used as a manipulative tactic to prevent those who are a part of the group from departing, as well as to lure ‘outsiders’ into the group. Anybody who disagrees with the ideologies of the group is considered ‘outsiders’ who are unenlightened and bound up in evil and, therefore, without a right to exist (Lifton, 2004:5). In extreme ‘thought reform’ regimes, such people are considered ‘non-people’ (Lifton, 1989:433).

The only way a person’s status can change from ‘nothingness’ to ‘being’ (Lifton, 1989:434) is by becoming a part of the group and affirming the ideological doctrines of the group. For those who are a part of the group, any questioning of the doctrine or its leaders runs the risk of acquiring the status of an ‘outsider’ who needs to ‘reform’ or face severe consequences. Within Chinese Communism, these consequences included execution. This tactic could be labelled ‘fear manipulation’ (Lifton, 2004:5).

Within a “Prosperity Gospel” there seems to be no evidence of physical persecution of ‘outsiders’ or people who become ‘outsiders’ by questioning the doctrine and leaving the movement. Nevertheless, the fear of being labelled by other prosperity believers (friends and family members) as having a ‘lack of faith’ or ‘living in sin’ or even being ‘unsaved’ if one no longer expresses a belief in a ‘Prosperity Gospel’ makes it difficult for someone to leave a prosperity church. This difficulty was detected in the empirical study where Participant A indicated, for example (2.4.19.1, Theme 4), that the pastorant found it extremely difficult to leave his prosperity church due to the effect it would have on his relationship with his family members and friends. MacTavish (2014:143) illustrates how one prosperity preacher, Adeboye, applies the ‘dispensing of existence’ tactic by labelling all who fail to conform to the doctrine of reciprocation and who are unfaithful in tithing, ‘children of perdition’ who will go to hell.

### **3.4.3 Preliminary conclusion on interpretive perspectives from Psychology on a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

Lifton (1989:viii) states that the psychological manipulation principles in Lifton’s research are keenly applied by various groups to manipulate people. It cannot be stated with certainty that “Prosperity Gospel” leaders consciously acquaint themselves and apply these principles but considering the clear resemblance between the mind manipulation tactics of a “Prosperity Gospel” and Lifton’s ‘thought reform’ principles, the possibility of prosperity leaders intentionally employing these, or other similar psychological manipulation approaches cannot be excluded either.

The researcher acknowledges that the severity of Lifton’s (1989) eight principles cannot be attributed to the same level to a “Prosperity Gospel” on all accounts. However, the purpose was to utilise Lifton’s (1989) eight principles as criteria to determine whether psychological manipulation could, at least to some extent, answer the question why a person would express a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Although a more subtle pressure than what Lifton (1989) found amongst Chinese Communists is discernible, the influence that preachers in a “Prosperity Gospel” exercise on people is clearly a form of psychological manipulation.

### **3.5 Interpretive perspectives from missiology on a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

Missiology is concerned with advancing the kingdom of God by means of communication of the Gospel (Born, 2002:6; cf. also Escobar, 2001:54). By definition, a “Prosperity Gospel” claims to be ‘gospel’ and the spread of this American-rooted, quasi-message across its own borders is well documented (refer 2.3.2). Africa is a missiological continent and the question as to why it has been so receptive to the prosperity message has been thoroughly researched and documented in recent times by a number of scholars within the field of Missiology. The scholarly perspectives of three missiologists, namely Born (2002), Hendricks (2014) and MacTavish (2014) are briefly considered below.

#### **3.5.1 Missiologist’s view on the popularity of a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

The perspectives from three scholars provide a sample of scholarly literature on the missiological views on the popularity of a “Prosperity Gospel”. The rationale behind the choice of these three missiological views stems from the missiological perspectives it provides in relation to the interpretive research question, namely: What can an interpretive pastoral study highlight about why believers are attracted to/adhere to/express a belief in a



“Prosperity Gospel”? Born (2002), Hendricks (2014) and MacTavish (2014) provide relevant and sufficient insight into answering the interpretive research question stated above.

- **Jacob Born (2002)**

Insightful perspectives on the phenomenon of a “Prosperity Gospel” are presented by missiologist Jacob Born (2002) who discusses the contextualisation<sup>16</sup> and/or syncretism<sup>17</sup> of the Gospel message and how it relates to the ‘gospel’ message of a prosperity church in Botswana. Born’s research is not concerned with syncretism versus contextualisation, but rather focuses on the extent to which cultural forms “ ... become so dominant that they obscure the message” of the Biblical Gospel (Born, 2002:112).

Born’s research (2002:106) led to a crucial conclusion, namely that the context of social change in Botswana in the 1990s due to western influence (for example, the rapid urbanisation creating modern urbanites under significant western influence) was the ideal context for the New Pentecostal Movement with a prosperity message. Associated cultural aspects applicable to Botswana contributed to the prosperity phenomenon, for example, a preoccupation with power and the socio-economic challenges of poverty and HIV/AIDS (Born, 2002:38). The prosperity church in Born’s (2002) study has effectively utilised the rapidly changing world of the Batswanas. The message of the prosperity movement appeals to an African context along with “ ... the new realities introduced in urbanization, globalization and modernization” (Born, 2002:112) and it has an impact on Africans who show great interest in the developments of the Western World (Walls, 1996:5-6).

The socio-economic problems and changes due to western influence in Africa are considered to have played a significant role in the missiological development in Botswana, especially relating to a “Prosperity Gospel”. Due to people looking to take control of their lives and circumstances, they were searching for an authority and power which would enable them to both make sense of life and experience greater fulfilment (Born, 2002:106). A “Prosperity Gospel” with a charismatic leader and a relevant message offering a solution

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<sup>16</sup> Born (2002:7) explains contextualisation as considering the culture and social-historical realities and quotes Bevans’ (1992:1) definition of contextual theology as further explanation: “ ... a way of doing theology in which one takes into account: the spirit and message of the gospel; the tradition of the Christian people; the culture in which one is theologizing; and social change in that culture, whether brought about by western technological process or the grass-roots struggle for equality, justice and liberation.”

<sup>17</sup> The difference between syncretism and contextualisation can be explained as follows: Syncretism has often been viewed as the corruption of a ‘pure gospel’ by the culture into which it is introduced, whereas contextualisation is believed to be a faithful rendering of the true faith in a new setting (Born, 2002:112).

with a 'promise of power' to overcome difficulties, stands at the forefront of the solution opted for by many Batswanas. Born's (2002:107) research indicates that the use of 'power symbols' of modernity (money, technology, language) are utilised to offer a means of control over a rapidly changing world in Botswana and enable people to cope with the changes brought about with modern urban life (Born, 2002:107). Born (2002:114) warns against this approach of prosperity Pentecostal churches in Africa, as it is easy to fall into greed, materialism and a desire to dominate in the guise of modernisation and globalisation.

- **Carl Hendricks (2014)**

From a missiological perspective, Hendricks (2014:18-19) also attributes the massive impact of the prosperity movement to the social influence of the 'American Dream' (refer 3.3.2.1). The optimism accompanying this ideology has impacted the approaches of churches and their theology (Hendricks, 2014:18-19) and two specific observations must be considered. *Firstly*, in the land of origin of the "Prosperity Gospel", the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was characterised by far less significance being tied to denominational structures and this allowed groups espousing a prosperity theology to gain a foothold in the Christian landscape. Without denominational structures, less accountability of local gatherings/congregations regarding doctrine and practice was required – to use an Old Testament analogy one could say that 'each man did what was right in his own eyes' (cf. Jdg 21:25). It is dangerous for churches to be independent (without inter-dependence) and Hendricks (2014:136) rightly warns that human convictions cannot be made the ultimate norm in the church.

*Secondly*, the message of prosperity attracted not only the lower income class of American society, but the middle and upper classes were equally influenced by the prosperity teaching's pragmatic approach to wealth and health (Hendricks, 2014:19). A "Prosperity Gospel" caters to a large variety of social classes, assisting the influx into prosperity churches, and Hendricks (2014:135) poses the critical question whether luring people to church with promises of prosperity can be an acceptable missionary strategy. With the prosperity message flourishing in the context of global capitalism, which results in an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor (Hendricks, 2014:136), the real danger is that the church would fail in its true missionary task of social justice and the responsibility to the poor. Hendricks (2014:138) issues a stern warning that a 'gospel' which proclaims similar goals as the capitalistic system will ultimately lead to a 'survival of the fittest' mentality among believers. If globalised capitalism redesigns the Gospel, then the outcome in the

church will be that which the capitalistic system promotes, namely selfish individualism (Hendricks, 2014:140).

One of the causes of poverty in a capitalistic society is the selfish interest of people (Hendricks, 2014:140) and if a message that claims to be religious promotes similar selfish interests, it can hardly be considered a solution to the wide-spread problem of poverty. Schultz (2010:137), however, explains that those in despair are the most easily manipulated by a promise of a 'fantastic utopia'. It is this context of the desperate poor in Africa which Hendricks (2014:146) considers the reason a "Prosperity Gospel" has 'manipulated' large numbers of people. Hendricks (2014:147-148) then suggests that a "Prosperity Gospel" cannot solve, or even improve, Africa's poverty problems, but that the true missionary task of the church, inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is exemplified in/by service, justice, liberation, peace, evangelism, fellowship, et cetera (Hendricks, 2014:153; cf. also Kritzinger & Saayman, 2011:174-175). This example has a genuinely positive impact on a problem-stricken continent. Over against a "Prosperity Gospel's" message of extreme wealth for all believers, Hendricks (2014:158) contends that a compassionate heart combined with urgent prayer and deliberate action to care for those in need is the true, and truly effective missiological task of the church.

- **Ron MacTavish (2014)**

MacTavish (2014) conducted a study from a missiological perspective into the explosion of Pentecostalism in the Global South (the Pacific Rim, Latin America and Africa). MacTavish's (2014:5-6; cf. also Coleman, 1993:355) scrutiny of the methodologies for missions of famous prosperity pastors reveals that the global interconnectedness of religious communities was brought about by communication-technology and the ease of modern travel. In this regard, Coleman (2013:382 - italics original) later refers to the prosperity movement as a " ... religion made *to* travel but also a religion made *through* travel".

MacTavish (2014:iii) attributes the reasons for the global success of Pentecostalism to the prosperity message, and the attractiveness of such a message to the age-old religious impulses that precede[s] all of the world religions. This means that embedded cultural 'religious impulses' of a local community could provide insight into the unique attractiveness of a "Prosperity Gospel" to that specific community. In other words, the American brand of a "Prosperity Gospel" is not necessarily, or solely, the reason why the prosperity movement found a foothold in Africa (and other continents), but that local cultural and religious impulses contribute as much, if not more, to the popularity of a prosperity message.

MacTavish (2014:161-162) shows, for example, that Kenneth Hagin Sr., the so-called father of the modern-day version of a “Prosperity Gospel”, emphasised positive confession regarding wealth and health in an American context, but did not emphasise the supernatural/spiritual world (Satan and demons). However, from a sub-Saharan African perspective, the deliverance ministry from ancestral spirits is considered a key benefit which promotes a “Prosperity Gospel” (MacTavish, 2014:162). Mainline Christian churches in Africa place little emphasis on the spiritual realm while Pentecostal prosperity churches offer mechanisms with which the evil forces of the spiritual world can apparently be overcome (MacTavish, 2014:179). The point is that the inherent cultural religious obsession with the supernatural in Africa is effectively utilised by the ‘African-version’ of the prosperity phenomenon to attract people to the movement.

Another significant missiological conclusion from MacTavish’s (2014:168) research is that although it is clear that a “Prosperity Gospel” has been well received by the ‘aspiring poor’ in the Global South, there is also sufficient evidence that higher social classes are greatly attracted to the prosperity message. This is attributed to an attempt by the higher social classes to justify their elevated status within the context of a suffering continent (Hasu, 2006:682).

MacTavish (2014:172) discusses two models, namely the “hegemonic” and “glocal” to explain the rapid growth of a Pentecostal “Prosperity Gospel” in the Global South. The “hegemonic” model focuses on the Marxist capitalist framework and emphasises the western influence regarding aspects such as consumerism on communities in the Global South. The “glocal” model, on the other hand, adds to the international socio-cultural framework by additionally focussing on local traditions and institutions as key elements in the development of an attractive (prosperity) message (MacTavish, 2014:173). MacTavish (2014:6) concludes that the study of a “Prosperity Gospel” should include both international as well as local sociological, ideological and religious aspects, and to merely attribute the popularity of a “Prosperity Gospel” as a capitalistic import from the United States of America is not sufficient scholarly analysis of the phenomenon.

### **3.5.2 Preliminary conclusion on missiological perspectives on a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

The literature review of missiological perspectives on a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” indicates that various sociological aspects of the capitalistic society of the western world, where the modern day “Prosperity Gospel” originated and spread from, as well as specific

socio-cultural aspects of local (African) communities play a role in the successful mission of a 'gospel' of prosperity.

The researcher affirms the crucial need for consideration of both Western as well as local/ African socio-cultural aspects as possible indicators for the burgeoning of a "Prosperity Gospel" in Africa. Interpretive perspectives from Sociology on a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" from both socio-cultural themes concerning the United States of America and Africa are, therefore, addressed above (refer 3.3.2 and 3.3.3).

### **3.6 Summative interpretive perspectives on a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel"**

From the inter-disciplinary study conducted in this chapter, the available literature indicates that the social-cultural 'world' in which Africans find themselves in the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> centuries, as well as the psychological manipulation tactics that can be detected within the prosperity phenomenon, play a vital role in people's attraction to a "Prosperity Gospel". The following findings summarise the interpretive task undertaken in this chapter:

- Religion affects people's social interaction and can lead to either positive or negative social change;
- The aim of a "Prosperity Gospel" to bring about social change towards betterment is commendable, yet by simply claiming that suffering cannot and does not affect believers, is an ineffective methodology towards positive social change;
- The individualism promoted by a "Prosperity Gospel" could be harmful to social order and moral behaviour which benefit the community;
- Religious figures such as "Prosperity Gospel" preachers are welcomed in societies which encounter suffering;
- People find meaning in religious beliefs and promises of abundant wealth and excellent health resonate with societies who are in need of social-economic change;
- People are influenced by their social-cultural context and the prosperity movement seems to exploit people's social-cultural influence to attract them to a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel";
- The late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries are characterised by a materialistic mentality which influence societies' desires for immediate comfort and increased material prosperity.

The pressure to keep up with ‘the rest of the pack’ in a materialistic world seems to motivate people’s attraction to a “Prosperity Gospel”;

- The consumerist and individualistic culture of modern times create the expectation of wealth as a possibility for anyone. A “Prosperity Gospel” espouses the social-cultural norm that every individual is entitled to a better, more comfortable and wealthy lifestyle. In fact, as followers of Christ, it is considered their right;
- Possessions can be a social symbol of someone’s ability and qualities and an indicator of someone’s social standing and, therefore, people often find meaning and seek their identity in material wealth;
- Africans follow the Western World, particularly America, as world leaders and the American materialistic mentality has reached the borders of Africa with much receptivity. A “Prosperity Gospel” promotes itself as a global religious movement which is in line with acceptable Christian practices elsewhere in the world;
- African socio-cultural impulses play a significant role in the success of a “Prosperity Gospel” on African soil;
  - Africans’ admiration and respect for prominent tribal leaders and ancestors contribute to the ease with which Africans admire and submit to ‘successful’ dynamic prosperity leaders;
  - African Traditional Religion’s influence on African communities creates an obsession with the supernatural world of good versus evil and the dependence upon superstition-practices to overcome obstacles in life. A “Prosperity Gospel” ‘empowers’ a believer with the ability to obtain freedom from curses and instead experience abundant earthly blessings;
  - The dire state of poverty in Africa makes a “Prosperity Gospel” an appealing message for those who are desperate for some kind of intervention for their pressing needs;
  - A “Prosperity Gospel” is an acceptable alternative to the failure of African government to produce improved circumstances for suffering Africans;

- A skewed cognitive development can lead to a skewed religious conviction. If a person's pre-existing belief is skewed due to manipulation, it could lead to a skewed social *schema*;
- Psychological manipulation can result in cognitive distortion which influences people's understanding of other people and life circumstances. Certain beliefs and practices of a "Prosperity Gospel" result in psychological manipulation;
  - "Prosperity Gospel" adherents are required to block negative communication by refraining from any negative thoughts or words as a result of challenging circumstances and by speaking 'positive confessions' in line with prosperity doctrine, i.e. health and wealth. This requires a denial of reality;
  - A "Prosperity Gospel" promotes a 'higher calling' by espousing abundant wealth and perfect health as the ultimate goal of human existence. This goal is obtained by financially funding the ministry and lavish lifestyle of the prosperity leader who is the ultimate example of someone attaining to the 'higher calling'. "Prosperity Gospel" adherents must force themselves to trust their prosperity leaders and force themselves to live with their disappointment of unrealised promises, while holding prosperity leaders in high regard;
  - To doubt or question the doctrine or leaders of a "Prosperity Gospel" is symptomatic of someone's lack of faith or sin. As a result, it becomes impossible to enforce accountability upon prosperity leaders;
  - Continuous soul-searching for sins which do not exist is encouraged by a "Prosperity Gospel", especially in the event that someone is not experiencing a desired blessing. It is always the "Prosperity Gospel" adherent who is at fault when a blessing is not obtained and unwarranted guilt is used as a manipulative tactic by prosperity preachers;
  - A "Prosperity Gospel" claims that the 'law' which guarantees great returns on 'seeds planted in faith' (offerings towards prosperity preachers) is a universal principle which will succeed if applied by faith. The fear of curses if someone fails to live by this 'law' compels "Prosperity Gospel" adherents to maintain their practice of liberally donating to the ministry or to their preacher;

- Language has an important function in cognition and can be used to exploit the cognitive processing of information. Manipulation can be successful due to the exploitation of cognitive biases;
- By means of repetitive utterances, a “Prosperity Gospel” promotes the context of God’s will of health and wealth for all believers, while other contexts such as the reality of poverty and sickness are increasingly eliminated from one’s cognitive reasoning;
- Presuppositional biases regarding God’s will for abundant health and wealth can lead to the avoidance of critical evaluation of the prosperity ideology;
- Adherents to a “Prosperity Gospel” are exposed to the repetitive use of common words and phrases with a specific meaning which promotes a prosperity doctrine but which is different from the Biblical use of the words. In this way, Scripture is twisted to manipulate listeners;
- A person’s experience is subordinate to the doctrine of a “Prosperity Gospel”. A proponent of a “Prosperity Gospel” is required to deny suffering even if in reality one is facing suffering circumstances;
- Someone who denies or questions the ideological doctrines of a “Prosperity Gospel” is threatened by negative, or shaming labelling such as ‘living in sin’, ‘having a lack of faith’, ‘being unsaved’ or ‘going to hell’;
- Missiologists assert that the African religious environment has been greatly influenced by the Western World. A charismatic leader who proclaims that a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” can help one rise to the same elevated social level as Westerners is received with much enthusiasm by Africans who encounter numerous socio-economic challenges.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

An understanding of the possible factors which influence people’s belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” can assist pastoral guides to apply wisdom in their remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. The question which guided the interpretive task of this chapter (3) is: Why do people accept/embrace a “Prosperity Gospel”? This question is crucial considering the global popularity of a “Prosperity Gospel”, and its growing interest



among Africans, despite and amidst the reality and the financial, physical and spiritual consequences people can encounter with this phenomenon (as highlighted in chapter 2).

Various factors from the inter-disciplines of Sociology and Psychology, along with brief reflections upon the theological sub-discipline, Missiology, were analysed to obtain answers to the interpretive question. The cross-disciplinary dialogue (cf. Osmer, 2008:170-172) identified certain factors which affect people's attraction to a "Prosperity Gospel". These factors can provide pastoral guides with a better understanding of why someone is inclined to embrace a "Prosperity Gospel", and why pastorants can find it difficult to detach themselves from it.

The research findings confirm that people are greatly influenced by their socio-cultural environment and by psychological manipulation towards a religious ideology of abundant wealth and perfect health. The global materialistic mentality of the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century also affects African thinking and in the context of African social challenges and supernatural beliefs regarding the forces which govern social conditions, a "Prosperity Gospel" is an appealing option. People's social environment affects the way they understand their 'world' and dictates what is deemed valuable in life. Furthermore, people are influenced by "Prosperity Gospel" preachers who seem to identify people's craving for material blessings, and can psychologically manipulate followers accordingly.

Regarding a (potentially harmful) belief in a "Prosperity Gospel", pastoral guides would do well in considering Scripture's instruction to believers " ... not [to] be conformed to this world, but [to] be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rm 12:2 - Bible, 1995) (cf. Osmer, 2008:129-174). Pastoral guides who would render remedial guidance to persons that need to recover regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" must understand that a strong affinity towards the materialism and comfort of this 'world' is common to man.

In the event that pastorants were psychologically manipulated to believe material prosperity is God's will for their earthly lives, the Scriptural norm for believers must be communicated. The next task in the research is then to present normative perspectives towards a 'renewed mind and resulting transformation' (cf. Osmer, 2008:129-174). It could be suggested preliminarily that a transformation is necessary – where transformation concerns the pastorant's thinking processes away from social-cultural norms and the psychological manipulation which feed such norms, and to guide a person towards a Biblical understanding of what the will of God is for a believer. The next chapter's focus (chapter 4)

is on normative principles from 1 Peter towards remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

## CHAPTER 4

### NORMATIVE TASK: NORMATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON A BELIEF IN A “PROSPERITY GOSPEL”

#### 4.1 Introduction

The study's focus thus far is on believers' views and experiences regarding the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” (chapter 2) (compare Osmer's [2008:4, 31ff] question: What is going on?), and to understand, from an inter-disciplinary perspective, the contemporary socio-economic, social psychological and missiological factors that make these beliefs attractive (chapter 3) (Osmer's [2008:4, 79ff] question: Why is it going on?). The research has shown that beliefs in a “Prosperity Gospel” can have consequences for people who are experiencing the realities of problems and difficulties or suffering. These difficulties include, amongst other aspects, disappointment and disillusionment when pastorants who embraced the tenets and promises of this ‘gospel’ found out and had to face the consequences of their beliefs in something that is neither a ‘gospel’ (“Prosperity Gospel”), nor a ‘theology’ (In Afrikaans: “welvaartsteologie”) (Van Emmenes, Rousseau & Viljoen, 2017:9). These [negative] experiences and consequences in the relief people seek in what a “Prosperity Gospel” purports to offer, highlight the need for a normative situation for Christians to find meaning in God for life, and to live in hope amidst difficult situations, even suffering.

The focus of Osmer's (2008:4, 129ff) third task is to find the norm to answer the question: ‘What ought to be going on?’ Diagram 4-1 below submits Osmer's (2008:11) approach and shows the normative task in relation to the other three:

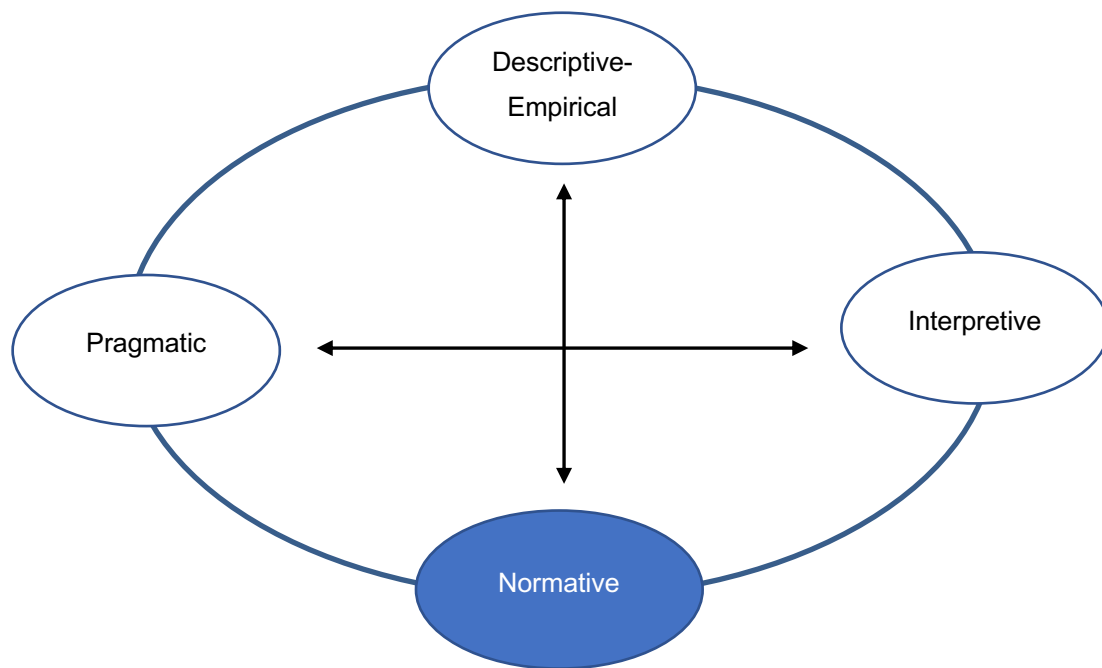


**Diagram 4-1: Osmer's Normative task**

In the context of this study, the question the normative task proposes an answer to (chapter 4), is: How should believers be pastorally guided regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”? Three approaches to normativity are suggested (Osmer, 2008:131-132), namely theological concepts, ethical norms and good practice. Osmer's theological concepts seem most fitting for this study, but this approach is not to be confused with Biblical studies (exegesis of a text) (Smith, 2011:53). Osmer's (2008) perspective on theological concepts is pointed out by Smith (2011:53) as “... simply a matter of selecting an important theological theme or motif ... and exploring its relationship to and implications for the situation”. The current research's emphasis is, however, on sound exegesis of Scripture to determine what is normative for the Christian life (cf. Smith, 2011:54; De Wet & Pieterse, 2013:4; Pieterse, 2013:55) as is done in research studies with a Reformed, conservative Evangelical approach (compare, for example, Rousseau, 2010:11; Strauss, 2012:6-7). For this reason, Osmer's (2008) methodology regarding the normative perspective will be supplemented with methodological insights from Dingemans (1996a; 1996b) who cautions that the actions of people must not be over-emphasised in normative perspectives, but that literary material en semantic analyses of texts remains crucial for this task (Dingemans, 1996b:45-46, 48). The Christian tradition, as revealed in the text of Scripture (Dingemans, 1996b:49), must be considered at some point for praxis in Practical Theology (Dingemans, 1996b:66).

The empirical experiences of human actions received attention in chapter 2 to determine what goes on, while an interaction with social sciences received attention in chapter 3 to determine why it is going on. For the normative task of this chapter (what the Bible states) the literary material of the sound theological reflections of theologians along with the exegetical analysis of the Biblical text (mainly in 1 Peter) is the focus. This is in line with Dingemans' (1996b:66-67) observation that modern-day practical theologians compare the normative perspectives obtained by exegesis of Scripture with the praxis obtained from empirical research of human actions.

The primary focus for the normative task is then on what the Bible teaches regarding Christians who are blessed with everything "pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Pt 1:3). Smith (2010:112) (cf. also Dingemans, 1996b:48) highlights the lack of emphasis on Biblical normative perspectives in Osmer's model and criticises it as a weakness. The approach followed for the normative work for this research is summarised in Smith's (2010:112) statement: "For anyone with a high view of Scripture, even practical theology must be exegetical theology". Wolters (2005:7) contends that Scripture is the measuring rod for normative compliance to God's standards and Dingemans (1996a:93) articulates the approach as '*Ausrichtung des Wortes Gottes an den Einzelnen*' (an application of the Word of God to individuals). In this study greater appeal is made upon Dingemans' methodological approach toward normative perspectives which aim at taking the normativity of the Bible more seriously (Dingemans, 1996b:48, 51) and comparing it with the praxis revealed by the descriptive-empirical findings (cf. chapter 5 where this 'comparison' is made towards a new praxis). Paul's dictum in 2 Timothy 3:16 that "(a)ll Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction (and) for training in righteousness" is both the paradigm and target for the normative task in this study. Scripture can then be beneficially directed to the proposed praxis of this study, namely the remedial pastoral guidance of pastorants who might require assistance regarding an erroneous belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

## 4.2 Objectives and normative perspective

The practical theological aspects for the intended pastoral guidance necessitate a clearly defined exegetical stance. As stated below, when an erroneous and damaging beliefs ensued with someone as the result of the misuse – actually the abuse – of Scripture, the only logical remedy is the correct application of Scripture (Rousseau, 2010:12). The paradigm and objective of this study, as described in the introduction above, is that the Word of God is the norm for correcting erroneous belief or misleading due to ignorance of the

problems suggested in this study. The objective of this study is then an exegetical analysis of the normative aspects of Peter's pastoral guidance of suffering disciples in 1 Peter. The choice of 1 Peter as the pastoral paradigm for the specific situation (i.e. What is going on? and Why is it going on? [Osmer, 2008]) regarding belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" is explained further on (refer 4.4.1 and sub-divisions).

Regarding the normative task, the typical elements are clearly stated in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: error is corrected by training in the truth of the Word and erroneous belief regarding 'prosperity' is rectified to promote and guide in the right/Biblical understanding of God's blessing (compare Rousseau, 2010:12). Over and above the evident elements of setting the norm, these verses (2 Tm 3:16-17) also encapsulate the core of *nouthetic* counselling: it is the basis for Christian counselling and the basis for counselling of the Christian (Adams, 1986:xiii). In the context of 2 Timothy, Paul's imperative in verse 15 then purposefully dovetails with 2 Timothy 3:16-17. In the former, Paul admonishes 'workers' with God's Word to be diligent, approved to God, who do not need to be ashamed, but " ... rightly divide the word of truth" (Bible, 1995) (*ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας*).

In *nouthetic* teaching/counseling the verb *ὀρθοτομέω* (*proclaim*) is specifically important, for semantically it is connected to *νουθετέω* (right teaching – see description below). The communication aspect of *νουθετέω* is clear from Louw and Nida's (1993:389) placement thereof under the same heading in the semantic domain 'Communication' and sub-domain 'Teaching'. While *ὀρθοτομέω* (*proclaim*) primarily entails *correct exegesis* (Louw & Nida, 1993:415, which logically presupposes correct/responsible hermeneutics), the verb *νουθετέω* (correct teaching/counseling – Louw & Nida, 1993:415) is vitally important in this study simply because erroneous beliefs in a "Prosperity Gospel" are due to erroneous, even false preaching, possibly due to the lack of exegesis (compare Rousseau, 2010:12). Sound treatment of the Word is then the indispensable imperative to rectify the erroneous and, therefore, the research for the normative facet of this study is conducted within the Reformed tradition and from a *Sola Scriptura* paradigm (compare De Wet & Pieterse, 2013:4; Pieterse, 2013:55).

According to Dingemans (1996b:68) the normative aspects are crucial for the hermeneutical interaction toward reflection on a problematic praxis. Therefore, the crux of this chapter (4) relies on normative perspectives from sound theological reflection of theologians and exegesis of Scriptural passages in 1 Peter to address the research problem of how pastoral guidance could be applied to persons that are or were adversely influenced by a "Prosperity

Gospel” belief. Where necessary or applicable, relevant textual support will be sought from 2 Peter. Regarding this methodology, Silva’s (1983:44) stance that when one works with a Bible author’s text, the context for interpretation is not only the Scripture portion of which exegesis is underway, but would also entail the author’s other works to clarify or develop the exegesis. Silva’s perspective might, therefore, (as regards the Apostle Peter) also apply to the Gospel of Mark – New Testament scholars (compare Van Bruggen, 1988:15; Gundry, 1993:29 *inter alia*) hold the opinion that the second Gospel is probably Mark’s version of restating Peter’s teachings. The objective for exegesis is then to formulate theological principles based on God’s revelation in 1 Peter (aided by 2 Peter and Mark’s Gospel) whereby wrong views of “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs regarding suffering (primarily with regard to poverty and illness) can be corrected (compare Niebuhr, 1942:630-633).

Due to their relevance to pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” the following Petrine values were selected for exegetical analysis:

- An introduction to Peter’s value system (4.4.1 and sub-divisions);
  - The value of imperishable over perishable;
  - The value of positive desire over negative desire;
  - The value of what is precious;
- The value of God’s control and compassion (4.4.3 and sub-divisions);
- The value of Christ and being in Christ (4.4.4 and sub-divisions);
- The value of belonging to the new people of God (4.4.5 and sub-divisions);
- The value of the leadership God provided to the people of God (4.4.6 and sub-divisions).

The Biblical normative principles obtained from the exegesis on various passages from 1 Peter which relate to the Petrine values listed above, will be incorporated in a pastoral paradigm that can be applied to offer remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” (chapter 5).

## 4.3 Normative approach

### 4.3.1 Grammatical-Historical exegesis

Responsible, hermeneutic treatment of Scripture is impossible without a pastors' reliance on the Holy Spirit. Rousseau (2010:31 – cf. also Louw, 1999:298) describes this reliance as God speaking via Scripture – the pastor/counsellor proclaims God's Word by the Spirit. Simultaneously and fundamentally, the solid foundation of hermeneutic skill is imperative for 'working' with Scripture (cf. 2 Tm 2:15) and all modern theology rests on this *de rigueur* underpinning (Backeberg, 2002:10). Where such scholarly skills are lacking, every form of 'exegesis' where preachers rely on their own comprehension can indeed be legitimately questioned (Rousseau, 2010:31). Thiselton (1992:8) aptly describes the outcome of these kinds of exegeses by highlighting the notion of preachers to force the text to say what they already determined to say in order to simply maintain unified belief.

When Thiselton's position is applied to a "Prosperity Gospel" dogma, it would probably prove that much of what is publicly proclaimed from their pulpits and podiums or distributed far and wide in the books of their popular authors and orators, is very often nothing less than a distortion of Scripture. Therefore, to sufficiently obtain the sound theological principles for Bible based pastoral assistance to needy pastorants, the preferred New Testament text must be treated properly to ensure in-depth study based on a responsible methodology. The exegetical approach for this study is, therefore, based on the grammatical-historical (or syntactical-theological) method (Silva, 2007:21, 34-35 cf. also Zuck, 1991:76ff; De Klerk & Janse van Rensburg, 2005; Kaiser, 2007:34-35).

The hermeneutical elements and the process is summarised by Rousseau (2010:33-34 – freely translated) as in table 4-1 below:

**Table 4-1: Basic but essential aspects for grammatical-historical exegesis**

| Book of the Bible                       | Specific text                                     |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Author                               | 4. What is written?                               |
| 2. Original audience                    | 5. What did it mean to the original audience?     |
| 3. Why was the text written (exigency)? | 6. What is the message and application for today? |

Rousseau (2010:33-34) considers aspects 3 and 4 as crucial in the exegetical process. A thorough analysis of the text is thwarted, and the exegesis could fail should the exegete not



probe the historical circumstantial aspects of the author and/or the original audience. A proper understanding of the historical is *de rigueur* and a responsible hermeneutic thus requires a grammatical-historical exegesis where the original language and the socio-historical setting of the original audience is accounted for (compare Deist & Burden, 1980:111; De Klerk & Janse van Rensburg, 2005:51).

The aim of exegesis in grammatical-historical approach is to determine what the text says and conveyed/meant to the original audience (compare 'intention' – Pieterse [1979:71]) to prevent reading something foreign into the text (*eisegesis* – Zuck, 1991:58) that actually falsifies what God communicated in His Word. Krabbendam (1990:74) simplifies this exegetical approach in stating that exegesis should do nothing different from what is done when other (non-Biblical) literature is read and understood. Deist and Burden (1980:111) and Silva (2007:21) concur regarding this hermeneutical importance when they refer to aspects such as considering the original language, the grammatical rules of the language and the specific historical culture of the author and first readers of the original text. The hermeneutical approach is thus supplemented by a social-scientific enriched socio-historic hermeneutic (compare Rousseau, 2010:22) where the *Sitz im Leben* (life context) of the first audience is accounted for in the hermeneutical process. De Klerk and Janse van Rensburg (2005:54-55) call this paradigm an 'emic' approach where data and phenomena are described in terms of their functions within the society of the particular period. This process leads to sound answers to aspects 5 and 6 in Table 4-1 above.

The objective in the present study is not to analyse or critique various hermeneutical/exegetical approaches toward interpretation of the Biblical text. However, to validate the choice of the grammatical-historical exegetical approach, it must be affirmed that other, non-reformatory hermeneutical approaches such as allegorical, rationalistic, subjective (refer Zuck, 1991:27-58), proof-text, historical-critical and readers-response methods (Kaiser, 2007:33-34) are inadequate to provide a paradigm for pastoral guidance based on a Biblical normative situation. 'Paradigm' would here refer to a point of departure (compare Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006:40) and these methods may essentially prove to be unsuitable. Kaiser (2007:28) fittingly summarises the point in the position that the value of the grammatical-historical exegesis lies in its holistic approach of involving both historical and practical applications. This approach determines the theological relevance – both with respect to the rest of Scripture and with respect to its contemporary application (Kaiser, 2007:35). Grammatical-historical application remains true to the 'intention' of the Word (Pieterse,

1979:71) to the original audience and guards against some spurious quasi-application that misrepresents Scripture for some obscure purpose to a present-day audience.

#### **4.3.2 Hermeneutical approach of a “Prosperity Gospel”**

Hypothetically, the possibility can be put forward that a “Prosperity Gospel” as an entity in this study may result from irresponsible or even faulty ‘exegesis’. One might say – as it becomes clear in the exegetical study below (refer 4.3.3) – that “Prosperity Gospel” authors’ and preachers’ approach to Scripture and its application may even be ‘non-exegetical’ due to either ignorance or a plain disregard for sound exegesis. As such then, a ‘hermeneutical’ approach to Scripture in “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs as suggested in the sub-heading above (4.3.2) might be misleading.

In consideration of a possibility that the researcher may appear biased against and, therefore, prone to a condemnatory treatment of a “Prosperity Gospel” regarding its approaches to and usage of Scripture, it is shown that findings to this effect are not scarce (cf. *inter alia* Sarles, 1986:337-350; Hollifield, 2011:30-37; Adu, 2014:32). This aspect was researched, and the situation was presented in a previous study by the researcher (Van Emmenes, 2016) as well as an article that was published in *In Die Skriflig* (Van Emmenes, Rousseau & Viljoen, 2017).

The necessity for exegeses based on a grammatical-historical hermeneutical approach for implementation in this study is highlighted by the critical scholarly analysis and critique of the hermeneutical approach of “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs. Considering grammatical-historical exegesis, much that stands contrary to sound exegesis in the (absence of) hermeneutical approach and (lack of) exegetical treatment of Scripture in “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs can be put forward (Van Emmenes, 2016:179-183; Compare also Sarles, 1986:338; Evans G., 2000:55; Holifield, 2011:32-33; Morris & Liroy, 2012:98).

As a precursor to the sound exegetical treatment of Scripture to remedy the effects of a “Prosperity Gospel” that is presented below, a critical observation must first be made at how proponents of this ‘gospel’ treat Scripture.

#### **4.3.3 Aspects of a “Prosperity Gospel’s” exegesis**

Considering the ‘hermeneutical’ approach of a “Prosperity Gospel” from the perspectives of grammatical-historical exegesis, the following selected findings are briefly discussed (compare Van Emmenes, 2016:179-183):

- **The meaning of words is loosely ‘interpreted’ with a disregard to their literary and historical context:**

Evans G. (2000:55) identified this shortcoming with reference to a revealing example. In the book *Prepare to Prosper*, Meyer (1997:8) uses the word ‘prosper’ (הַצְלִיחַ) (*hitslich*) in Isaiah 55:11 to guarantee financial growth if a believer proclaims this ‘word’ over their finances. However, in application of grammatical-historical hermeneutics – when the literary context of the text is considered – Meyer’s proclamation is un-Biblical/misleading.

In its context (Is 55), the word ‘prosper’ has no connotation to financial prosperity. Contrarily, it distinctly refers to the Word of God bringing about spiritual prosperity of the ‘soul’ of God’s people. In its literary and historical context, this verse refers to God’s promises of compassion and forgiveness for those who repent (Motyer, 1999:346). Evans G. (2000:55) fittingly cross-references the application of this principle to Hebrews 4:12 (the ‘word’ judging the thoughts and intents of man’s heart) and Acts 20:32 (the ‘word’ building up believers) as examples of the type of spiritual prosperity that God’s Word accomplishes.

- **Hermeneutical irresponsibility not to distinguish between Israel under the Old Covenant and New Testament believers under the New Covenant:**

Duvall and Hays (2012:42-43) highlight this common exegetical flaw and when Meyers’ interpretation above (on Is 55:11) is considered against this shortcoming, its awkwardness is clear for the promise in Isaiah was made within a specific historical context to a specific group of people (Israel) for a specific period and not as a mantra for financial prosperity to all people everywhere at any given time.

When Meyer’s interpretation of Isaiah 55:11 is assessed against various non-reformatory hermeneutical approaches to exegesis (as listed above 4.2.1) the only possible conclusion is that Meyer’s approach to the ‘interpretation’ of Scripture is foreign to any exegetical method.

Consider the following:

- It could not be said to be allegorical for Meyer is not considering financial prosperity to be the hidden/secret meaning of the word ‘prosper’ (הַצְלִיחַ) (*hitslich*) (compare Zuck, 1991:29 for the explanation of the allegorical method).

- Neither is Meyer studying this text merely for its historical value due to determining what is true and false by human reason, as per the rationalistic approach (compare Zuck, 1991:51 for an explanation of the rationalistic method).
- Meyer does not deny dogmas or a system of morals due to the premise that the Bible is not authoritative, and that feeling/emotion should be prominent in religious belief and practice, as per the subjective approach (compare Zuck, 1991:51-52 for an explanation of the subjective approach).
- The proof-text method might be the closest semblance to any exegetical method in Meyers' interpretation. This quasi-'method' seeks to find texts that seemingly support a topical theme. Kaiser (2007:33) explains: "[t]he scriptural texts are valued more for their short, epigrammatic use of several key words that coincide with the topic or contemporary subject chosen than for the evidence that they actually bring from their own context." The conclusion that this method is 'completely inadequate' (Kaiser, 2007:33) and void of divine authority due to ignoring the context, grammar and historical background, would mean that it can hardly be accepted as a trustworthy exegetical approach.
- Meyer's interpretation of Isaiah 55:11 can also not claim the historical-critical method as an approach to interpretation, for the interpretation is not driven by determining the impact of different sources which contributed to the present text (cf. Kaiser, 2007:33 – also refer for a further explanation of the historical critical method Kaiser, 2007:33-34).
- When evaluating Meyer's interpretation against the reader-response method it simply fails. The reader-response method requires a grammatical-historical underpinning as essential for interpretation (Kaiser, 2007:34) coupled to change/altering the meaning for a contemporary audience within a different context than that of the original audience. Meyers' treatment of the text gives no evidence of consideration for the original meaning of the text to the original audience within its literary context. Meyer simply misrepresented and convoluted the text to coerce non-Biblical responses of contemporary readers within their context.

Considering the 'way' in which a prominent prosperity preacher like Meyer approaches Scripture (and the same would apply regarding the references to Prosperity preachers like Osteen in the bullet-points below), a "Prosperity Gospel's" exegetical method (or lack thereof) juts out like the proverbial sore thumb and leaves much to be desired.

- **Little, or no hermeneutical sensitivity to the various genres of Scripture:**

All details in the different genres appear to be deemed as directly applicable to contemporary believers by “Prosperity Gospel” preachers (Hollifield, 2011:32-33). Duvall and Hays (2012:281) observe that narratives teach theological principles and truth that can be applied to any contemporary audience but warns that every instruction and promise in Scripture should not be taken as directly applicable for all believers in all times. The larger context of the narrative must always be considered, for example: “Saying that Jesus has power over hostile forces does not guarantee that he will **always** deliver us from cancer or car wrecks or other disasters” (Duvall & Hays, 2012:281 – emphasis by researcher). The deliverance in the narrative-specific situation might be healing, but such deliverance described by the narrative is not an open, all-inclusive promise to believers everywhere and always. From other passages of Scripture deliverance is explained, for example, in the form of final resurrection (2 Tm 4:18) (cf. Duvall & Hays, 2012:281).

While dogma has traditionally not been based solely on historical narrative portions of Scripture (dogma that is formulated from narrative texts must be supported by didactic texts – compare Moo, 1988:194; MacArthur & Mayhue, 2017:356), a “Prosperity Gospel” is formulated predominantly from and based on narrative sections in the Bible (e.g. miraculous healings in the Gospels and Acts, of which there is very little in the didactic letters of the New Testament). In hermeneutics, one must differentiate between descriptive and prescriptive texts in Scripture as Fee and Stuart (2003:118-119) (cf. also MacArthur & Mayhue, 2017: 356) assert (*italics original*): “[u]nless Scripture explicitly tells us we must do something, what is only narrated or described does not function in a normative ... way”. Especially in narrative passages, it is vital to understand that everything described in the Bible is not a priori normative for all believers of all times (cf. Zuck, 1991:285). McQuilkin (1983:240) rightly warns along these lines by arguing that the Biblical recording of a historical event does not make it a definite revelation of God’s universal will for all people.

- **Historical narrative is read normatively by “Prosperity Gospel” adherents as the modus in which God will normatively treat all believers of all times:**

Osteen (2004:179) is an example of this shortcoming in claiming that Genesis 50:20 is a perpetual promise for all believers that God will deliver them from any obstacle in life. With hermeneutical responsibility towards the narrative genre (as required by the grammatical-historical method) the lesson taught in this text focuses on God’s faithfulness to His revealed plan so that His people can trust He will do what He purposed even amidst human suffering

(cf. Sailhamer, 1990:283). Here again, a “Prosperity Gospel” approach seems to miss the mark of any discernible exegetical method.

- **The literary context of verses used as ‘proof-texts’ to support “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs, appears to be neglected as a rule:**

This flawed treatment of Scripture is consistent with the proof-text treatment emphasised above (cf. Kaiser, 1988:169; refer also Kaiser, 2007:33). A telling example of proof-texting is Osteen’s (2004:13) disregard of the literary context in referencing Colossians 3:2 (“Set your mind on things above”) and emphatically claims that believers must “ ... program your mind for success ... [and expect] good things to happen to you”. Osteen’s (2004:13) glaring omission of the second part of the verse which states that believers must not set their mind “ ... on the things that are on earth”, is then immediately clear. One must give him credit for that – because considering the verse in its context (as grammatical-historical exegesis requires), Paul warns the Colossian church against precisely what Osteen encourages. Osteen then, for obvious reasons, convolutes Scripture and deceptively excludes that part of the verse which repudiates what Osteen wants to convey. Using verses, or to pervert phrases within verses without consideration for their literary context inevitably results in quasi-interpretations which have no bearing on the meaning intended by both the Holy Spirit as the *Auctor Primarius* of Scripture (compare Hollifield, 2011:31) and the human author.

- **“Prosperity Gospel” adherents appear to mostly interpret Biblical texts in an allegorical-mystical fashion:**

Allegorical-mystical ‘interpretation’ stands opposed to the exegetical responsibility that grammatical-historical exegesis, considering its roots, specifically wishes to defend (cf. Krabbendam, 1990:74). Zuck’s (1991:44) position that the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was basically intent on a hermeneutical reformation, is not only vitally important for the exegetical paradigm of this study, but would oppose a “Prosperity Gospel’s” manner of (mis)treating/abusing Scripture for its purposes.

Osteen’s (2004:124) explanation and application of Mark 11:22-24 exhibits the mistreatment of Scripture for a specific purpose, something which Kaiser (1988:168) recalls “ ... dangerous spiritualisation and crude allegorising of the text”: “The Bible clearly tells us to speak to our mountain ... Whatever your mountain is, you must do more than think about it, more than pray about it; you must speak to that obstacle” (Osteen, 2004:124). At first glance Osteen’s treatment might appear like an acceptable application of the text (Mk 11:22-24) and

which audiences, unaware of exegetical norms, might enthusiastically support lock, stock and barrel. Scholars Morris and Lioy (2012:13) dispel any doubts when they call it out for what it is, namely flawed exegesis and a blatant misinterpretation.

- **Contemporary cultural and social presuppositions strongly persuade a “Prosperity Gospel”:**

Sarles (1986:338) (also compare Kaiser, 1988:160-161) shows that “Prosperity Gospel” preachers apply contemporary socio-cultural ideologies as Scriptural and comments that prosperity preachers approach interpretation and proclamation of the Biblical text from the ‘American middle-class experience’ (while the original context is neglected) to purposefully misinterpret and abuse the text.

It is commonly expressed by “Prosperity Gospel” preachers that poverty is a curse and material prosperity a blessing. As proof, Copeland (1974:41) refers to Galatians 3:13-14 which states that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law ... in order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles” (Bible, 1995). Copeland’s ‘interpretation’ replicates the ‘American Dream’ which is instilled into people from an early age (refer 3.3.2.1) – those with much material possessions are the favoured, happy and blessed people in the world (compare Morris & Lioy, 2012:98) and, logically, the opposite are not blessed. Contrary to Copeland, when one carefully and responsibly engages an exegetical approach such as the grammatical-historical approach, Galatians 3:13-14 has a radically different meaning from what is proposed by a “Prosperity Gospel”. These verses refer to the spiritual blessings of Abraham, as the context indicates in the final phrase “ ... so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Bible, 1995). The contemporary cultural dictations guiding a “Prosperity Gospel” interpretation of Scripture essentially result in misinterpretation (Morris & Lioy, 2012:98).

What is more, the cultural and social realities within which Scripture is embedded are vital historical aspects to be considered in responsible exegesis. This responsibility appears to be ignored as a rule by “Prosperity Gospel” preachers and authors. It might even be that a complete unawareness about the cultural-social-anthropological ‘world’ of the Bible is part and parcel of a “Prosperity Gospel’s” (mal)treatment of Scripture. Van Emmeren (2016:72-78) cogently pointed out this limiting factor in the treatment of the ‘limited good agrarian societies’ of the first century.

#### **4.3.4 Preliminary conclusion on hermeneutical approach and a “Prosperity Gospel” ‘hermeneutic’**

The questionable, if not absent, ‘hermeneutical’ approach and methodology with Scripture that seems to support belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” requires a sound antipode. The traditional Reformed grammatical-historical hermeneutical approach, from which normative theological concepts can be attained, is a sound antipode. These theological concepts can assist the process of proposing a Scriptural paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Stated differently, if a belief/faith problem ensued with a pastorant as a result of the convolution and misrepresentation of Scripture by a “Prosperity Gospel” or the leaders’ ‘dogma’, the only way to remedy or rectify such a problem is by the normative, exegetically sound treatment and application of Scripture (Rousseau, 2010:12). In this regard, Adams’ position (1970:51) that Scripture is *nouthetically* inspired is especially relevant.

#### **4.4 Introductory exegetical aspects**

Corresponding with the basic aspects for a grammatical-historical exegesis (refer Table 4-1), the following are addressed for the exegesis to follow:

##### **4.4.1 Author**

Although some scholars contend that 1 Peter was authored between AD 75 and 95 under a pseudonym (Peter) by someone close to the Apostle Peter (e.g. Achtemeier, 1996:1-14; Elliott, 2000:127-30), the prevalent view among scholars is that the Apostle Peter wrote this letter in the first half of AD 60 (Cedar, 1984:104; Grudem, 1988:21; Clowney, 1988:19-21; Guthrie, 1990:781; Schreiner, 2003:21-36; Elwell & Yarbrough, 2005:362; Gardner, 2013:11; et cetera).

The view of a pseudonymous writer depends mainly on three major arguments, namely:

- the quality of the Greek in the letter seems too eloquent for a Galilean fisherman like Peter;
- the seemingly heavy influence of Pauline theology (which was only formulated later in Paul’s letters) on 1 Peter;
- the *Sitz im Leben* of the recipients possibly reflects a time later after Peter’s death (traditional date for Peter’s martyrdom is AD 64 – Davids, 1990:8).



These are, however, not compelling arguments, as Peter could have simply used an amanuensis better skilled in Greek (Silvanus as mentioned in 1 Pt 5:12).<sup>18</sup> Jobes (2005:7) highlights that the good quality of the Greek is in any case not a foregone conclusion among scholars. As for the influence of Pauline theology on 1 Peter, counter arguments suggest that if the letter was so influenced then the pseudo-author would logically have attributed the letter to Paul and not to Peter. The arguments surrounding the persecutions after Peter's death (that some authors argue as the *Sitz im Leben* of the recipients of 1 Peter) are brought in question by the probability of localised persecution rather than an empire wide persecution (for a detailed discussion, refer Davids, 1990:32).

The arguments for a pseudo-author must be answered by those advocates, however, because the letter itself claims to be authored by the Apostle Peter (1:1). This obvious internal evidence must be accepted unless clear evidence to the contrary can be delivered (Schreiner, 2003:22). Furthermore, evidence from antiquity that the letter was pseudonymous is non-existent (Schreiner, 2003:26) and to the contrary, the early church affirmed a Petrine authorship (Gardner, 2013:11). The researcher, therefore, accepts that the Apostle Peter authored 1 Peter in the early AD 60's.

#### **4.4.1.1 Peter the disciple before the death and resurrection of Christ**

From the Gospel reports (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) Peter clearly had a prominent place among Jesus' twelve apostles. He features frequently in the Gospel writings where he, along with the brothers James and John, is identified as forming a type of closer inner circle among the group of apostles (cf. Mk 9:2, 14:33, et cetera). Of the four apostolic lists given in Scripture (Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:13-16; Ac 1:13), Peter is always mentioned first which would indicate prominence among the group (cf. MacArthur, 2002:29).

The apostles are not depicted as model disciples in the Gospel writings, and Peter maybe least of all. Mark's Gospel serves as a case in point as the failures of the Twelve are emphasised particularly strongly (Weeden, 1968:145-158; France, 2002:28-29; Wilkins, 2004:59). It is also a significant document in the context of Peter's background, as scholars (e.g. van Bruggen, 1988:15; Gundry, 1993:29 *inter alia*) argue that the second Gospel is probably Mark's version of restating Peter's teachings. This is significant, as Mark depicts Peter as a poor follower whose character, based on the Gospel documents, is summarised

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<sup>18</sup> It should be acknowledged that no concrete evidence exists to suggest that Silvanus would have been skilled in Greek.

by MacArthur (2002:32) as “ ... eager, aggressive, bold and outspoken”, and, therefore, referred to as the disciple with the ‘foot-shaped mouth’.

One of Peter’s key failures pointed out by Mark is his rebuke of Jesus after the first passion prediction (Mk 8:32). In the context leading up to this event, Peter, as spokesman for the Twelve (France, 2002:329; Stein, 2008:398), declared Jesus as the Christ (ὁ χριστός) (Mk 8:29). Jesus affirmed that Peter’s answer was correct (Mt 16:17); He was indeed the promised Messiah, yet based on Jesus’ rebuke of Peter (Mk 8:33) there seems to be reason to believe that Peter (and the other apostles) was confused about the true meaning of ὁ χριστός (the Christ) (Edwards, 2002:252). This might indeed be possible, as there was no universal concept of the Messiah in the Judaism of Jesus’ day (Wright, 1999:482). It is nevertheless worth considering that there was a general expectation amongst the Jews that a royal descendant of David would come to fulfil God’s purposes for Israel, and give them victory over the enemies (Evans C.A., 2000:15; Edwards, 2002:250).

The Jews were thus expecting the coming of the Christ to include some prosperity and bring with it improved living conditions. There was, for example, an expectation that riches (and other forms of prosperity) would mark those blessed of the Lord (Peacock, 1978:561). This could explain the apostles’ confusion when Jesus explained that riches could be a stumbling block for entering the Kingdom of God (Mk 9:24). Their expectation of a kingdom filled with such earthly blessings would grow on the way to Jerusalem (Evans C.A., 2000:20).

Peter possibly expected power, glory and prosperity for the nation from Jesus upon entrance into Jerusalem (Martin, 1972:152; Telford, 1995:36) – yet Jesus predicts humiliation and suffering (Mk 8:31). While Peter accepted Jesus as χριστός, he did not accept the concept of a suffering χριστός, but rather had an expectation of benefits and privileges for him and the other followers of Jesus. Based on this hypothesis, Culpepper (2007:286) describes Peter as “tinged with self-interest” – a fitting description in the light of Jesus’ statement that Peter was ‘setting his mind on man’s interest, rather than God’s’ (Mk 8:33).

It could be concluded that Peter, at this point in Mark’s account, could have contemplated some form of personal prosperity expectations, similar to a modern-day “Prosperity Gospel”. It can be acknowledged that Peter’s expectations were not completely unfounded, as the Old Testament promises a restoration of David’s kingdom with national (earthly) benefits for Israel like land security (Gn 12:1, Dt 30:1-10), perpetual righteous governance (2 Sm 7:8) and permanent rest from enemies (2 Sm 7:9-11). Although scholars disagree over the literal nature versus spiritual nature of these promises, as well as the timing of fulfilment of these

Old Testament covenants<sup>19</sup>, one could reasonably conclude that Peter had a wrong expectation of the immediate literal fulfilment of these Old Testament promises for disciples of Jesus.

This faulty expectation created a platform for Jesus to reveal to Peter (and all disciples) that God's will/plan for followers of Christ could include suffering during the present church dispensation, expressed in the two imperatives ἀπαρνησάσθω ('deny self') and ἀράτω ('take up cross') (Mk 8:34). 'Self-denial' is to submit to God's will at the expense of one's own preferences, even if it is costly, painful and/or dangerous (Brooks, 1991:137). France (2002:340) explains self-denial as a refusal to allow one's own interest to reign supreme. On a practical level, the sacrificing of one's resources, as mentioned in Mark 10:17-31, could be an unavoidable result of following Christ.

The imperative 'to take up one's cross' (Mk 8:34) could on the one hand be interpreted literally to indicate a possible martyrdom as the most extreme form of self-denial, but the possibility on the other hand of a metaphorical connotation is widely proposed (cf. Schneider, 1971:279; Best, 1981:37,39; Brooks, 1991:137; France, 2002:340; etc.). The possibility that Jesus is informing the disciples concerning the cost of persecution that comes with following Him seems clear enough, yet in taking history as an indicator, one can conclude that it is not God's will for every follower of Jesus to lose their life as a martyr. Hence, the application of 'cross-bearing' discipleship could include " ... any loss of status or wealth or power ... " (Viljoen, 2002:471) from following Jesus.

This argument makes sense, based on Jesus' subsequent statement that it profits a man nothing to 'gain the world, yet forfeit his soul' (Mk 8:36). Ephemeral earthly riches/possessions pale into insignificance compared to the eternal destiny of one's soul, and there is no comparison. Mark uses Peter as an example to extend a solemn warning to his original audience of infidelity amid their persecution/suffering under Nero in Rome<sup>20</sup>, but it also gives encouragement that those who failed, could repent and be restored (Adams, 1978:3; Stein, 2008:693). Peter indeed showed remorse (cf. Mk 14:72) and was restored by Jesus after the resurrection (cf. Mk 16:7).

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<sup>19</sup> A detailed discussion on premillennial, postmillennial and a-millennial eschatological views falls outside the scope of this study – for a detailed discussion on the fulfilment of the Abrahamic, Davidic and New covenants see Benware (1995:46-50, 60-67,69-73).

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion on Mark's original audience and their circumstances see Van Emmenes (2016:35-48).

#### 4.4.1.2 Peter, the post-Pentecost apostle

The objective of this study is to propose a Petrine paradigm for pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. The exegetical analysis of Peter’s pastoral guidance in 1 Peter could well be appropriate as Peter himself once entertained prosperity expectations but he was guided by the Master on the road of probable suffering (refer 4.4.1.1). Jesus’ guidance was indeed *nouthetic* (compare Rousseau, 2010:12) and included the following: Peter was *informed* of his error (Mk 8:33 “... you are not setting your mind on God’s interest, but man’s”); he was *confronted* with correct teaching (Mk 8:34 “If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me”) and he was *warned* (Mk 8:35-37 “... for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?”).

John’s Gospel recounts Peter’s restoration in more detail when the resurrected Jesus instructs Peter to “... shepherd My sheep” (Jh 21:16). The instruction ποιμαίνω (to shepherd) concerns taking care of sheep (cf. Louw & Nida, 1993:518) and “... to lead with the implication of providing for” (Louw & Nida, 1993:466). The noun form of the verb ποιμαίνω (to shepherd) is ποιμήν (a pastor) defined as “... one who is responsible for the care and guidance of a Christian congregation – ‘pastor, minister’” (Louw & Nida, 1993:542). Shepherding is an important metaphoric description of the pastoral task (compare Louw, 1999:61-63) and this metaphorical imperative in John 21:16 commissions Peter to give pastoral guidance to Jesus’ disciples as he had been pastorally guided by the Chief Shepherd Himself (refer 4.4.1.1) (cf. also 1 Pt 5:1-4).

Peter could give such pastoral guidance only if his spiritual and pastoral paradigm corresponded with that of the Chief Shepherd. The historical details in the Book of Acts indicate that Peter was a transformed disciple after the resurrection of Jesus and the Pentecost experience of receiving the Holy Spirit (cf. Ac 2). In Acts, Peter was one who embraced suffering rather than recoil from it (cf. Ac 4:1-31; 5:17-42 and 12:1-5) and he clearly underwent a transformation in his ‘value-system’. No longer did he value personal benefit in the form of material blessings, but he deemed wholeness/restoration in Christ or a saved soul of far greater value. The statement Peter made to the lame beggar in Acts 3:6 when he said “I do not possess silver and gold” would suggest how little value Peter attached to such possessions and indicates his understanding that “... what the man thought he needed (*silver and gold*) is contrasted with what he really needed (*what I have*)” (Peterson, 2009:169 – italics original). Peter’s message of ‘repentance and faith’ towards

forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (e.g. Ac 2:38, 3:19; 5:31; 10:43, et cetera) then features prominently in his ministry to the poor, broken and downcast of society.

The proclamation of this message sometimes held dire consequences for him and cost him a great deal. He was imprisoned (Ac 4:3; 5:18; 12:4), threatened (Ac 4:17-18), at risk of losing his life (Ac 5:33; 12:4), beaten (Ac 5:40) and eventually, according to church historians (e.g. Houghton, 1980:16 – compare Davids, 1990:8) he was martyred. Indeed then, for him it was more important/valuable, even at any expense to himself, to “ ... obey God rather than man” (Ac 5:29).

Based on the abovementioned references from Acts, it could be concluded that Peter had first-hand experience of suffering in this world, and thus he could identify with the ministry context of his audience in 1 Peter, a group of believers who were doubting and confused (Jobes, 2005:4) due to their suffering circumstances (Kümmel, 1975:418; Grudem, 1988:40; Davids, 1990:30; Schreiner 2003:45; Carson & Moo, 2005:636; 638, et cetera) (refer 4.4.3). Although it might be considered somewhat proleptic, based on Peter’s own experience one could suggest that Peter’s pastoral guidance to the followers of Christ in 1 Peter is then an appropriate choice for modelling a pastoral paradigm regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

#### **4.4.1.3 Peter’s first epistle as pastoral matrix**

Peter’s first epistle is considered a significant contribution to the New Testament due to the pastoral care expressed/offered in it (Adams, 1978:4; Blum, 1981:215; Cedar, 1984:103; Clowney, 1988:15; Davids, 1990:3; Elliot, 2000:151). The pastoral aspects of the epistle are described differently such as *words of guidance* (Guthrie, 1990:781; Jobes, 2005:1), *practical counsel* (Cedar, 1984:103) and *model of a ‘pastoral letter’* (Clowney, 1988:15). In real terms then, in 1 Peter the Apostle gave to the church a documented example of how he fulfilled Jesus’ command to ‘shepherd [His] sheep’ (Jn 21:16) (Groenewald, 1977:16; compare Cedar, 1984:103).

A probability might be posed then that in his first epistle Peter himself was seeking to shepherd the troubled and suffering flock of God by means of his teaching on what to value in the face of adversity. As a fellow elder (συμπρεσβύτερος 1 Pt 5:1), his religious activities (compare Louw & Nida, 1993:543 – domain ‘Religious Activities’ and sub-domain ‘Roles and Functions’) by writing his epistle in a certain, even definite sense, correspond with Jesus’ appointing him to be a ποιμήν (pastor) (compare the verb ποιμαίνω to shepherd) in John

21:16. In the epistle, Peter fittingly explains the task of a πρεσβύτερος (elder) (1 Pt 5:1) as one on who the responsibility rests to ποιμαίνω (to shepherd) (1 Pt 5.2) God's flock.

Due to the value of 1 Peter's theological implications (Blum, 1981:214) Peter's teaching is exegetically analysed to draw out theological principles for Osmer's normative task (2008:139ff). This task requires that leaders must be *sympathetic* to offer words of grace and hope to those who are suffering (Osmer, 2008:137). This *sympathy* entails *inter alia* to "... identify ... with God's suffering over the sin, pain, and evil of creation" (Osmer, 2008:137). Peter's teaching could be considered an excellent source upon which a pastoral paradigm regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" can be proposed – was he not a first-hand witness of the sufferings of Jesus (1 Pt 5:1), who personally received the teaching of Jesus on suffering (Mk 8:34-38), and personally experienced suffering for the sake of following Jesus (refer references to the book of Acts above)? The research aim is then to find out how Peter's teachings can serve as a paradigm for contemporary pastors to guide (pastor) Christian believers regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

#### 4.4.2 Historical audience of 1 Peter

Peter's historical/original audience is identified as people who are " ... aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God" (1 Pt 1:1-2) and later in the epistle as 'temporary residents' (1 Pt 1:17) and 'aliens and strangers' (1 Pt 2:11). By designating them as 'chosen' (1:1) the conclusion that the addressees were Christians (Elliot, 2000:8; Schreiner, 2003:37; Jobes, 2005:19) would be justifiable.

The ethnic identity of Peter's audience is a rather more disputed topic, and the debate is about Peter's use of the words παρεπίδημος ('aliens') and πάροικος ('strangers') to refer to his audience. Louw and Nida (1993:133) treat both words under the domain 'Groups and classes of persons and members of such groups and classes' and the sub-domain 'Socio-political' and it refers to someone taken from his normal place of residence or the idea of a 'temporary resident' – which is the exact idea of the word παροικία (temporary resident) (1 Pt 1:17). The question is, however, whether this 'temporary residency' is a literal reference to people who are staying in the Roman provinces of Asia Minor where they do not have local citizenship (Elliot, 2000:84, 94) – in which case the audience would be considered almost exclusively Jewish – or whether this is a spiritual reference to Christians who live on earth but have heavenly citizenship (Schreiner, 2003:41). In the latter instance, it would establish the possibility of both Jews and Gentiles.

Scholars posit different arguments for each of the above views. On the one hand, those who insist on an exclusive (or at least predominant) Jewish audience, for example, refer to the use of *διασπορά* ('scattered' 1 Pt 1:1). This word serves as a technical term for the Jews of the dispersion (cf. Adams, 1978:4). Jobes (2005:23) includes in favour of a Jewish audience the references to concepts from Jewish Old Testament Scriptures (e.g. 1 Pt 1:19; 2:9 et cetera). On the other hand, scholars who maintain that Peter's audience included a noteworthy Gentile presence refer to statements that they were 'formerly ignorant' (1 Pt 1:14) and the fact that they had been rescued from their 'futile way of life inherited from their forefathers' (1 Pt 1:18) as an indication of their idolatrous past (compare Davids, 1990:8; Schreiner, 2003:38).

The prevailing conclusion, however, is that although Peter wrote to a predominantly Gentile audience (Kümmel, 1975:418; Groenewald, 1977:10; Cedar, 1984:104; Clowney, 1988:18), his audience was most likely a combination of Jewish and Gentile congregations (Grudem, 1988:39; Guthrie, 1990:785). They resided in the northern parts of Asia Minor, in which case Peter's reference to 'strangers and aliens' (1 Pt 1:1, 2:11) has both a literal and spiritual meaning (refer above) (compare Ferreira, 2016:67).

#### **4.4.3 The audience's immediate situation**

Consideration of the identity and circumstances of the original audience is an exegetical necessity (Rousseau, 2010:33-34) and also helps to understand why, for instance, the epistle was written. Regarding time, the modern interpreter of the Petrine text is separated from the original audience by nearly two thousand years and, therefore, it is obvious that definite historical, cultural and sociological aspects existed of which the author as well as the original audience would have been aware. The commonly shared knowledge between author and audience of those aspects (compare 'high' and 'low context' below) logically influenced how the original audience understood and interpreted what was written to them.

Present-day interpreters must consider those aspects for exegesis – if they do not, it poses a clear and present danger that neglect of these details can and will lead to failed exegesis (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:13). In this regard, brief reference needs to be made to what cultural anthropologists call *high-* and *low-context* scenarios for understanding (Malina, 2002:624). Ancient audiences shared the same 'world' (social-cultural context) as the authors of the Biblical text (Rousseau, 2010:28) and *high-context* means that the written contents were not foreign or vague to the original audience, and thus the author did not need to clarify everything in a comprehensive way. Regarding Peter's audience, his first epistle

could have been written to people who found themselves in such a *high-context* situation of suffering. It is the task of the modern exegete to familiarise himself with such socio-historical circumstances of the original audience so that context of the modern world is not retro-read into the text (and, therefore, an anachronistic *eisegesis*) but that the meaning is extracted from the text (*exegesis*) through understanding it from the perspective of the original audience.

#### **4.4.3.1 Persecution, poverty and physical suffering**

There is general scholarly consensus that the exigency for Peter's first epistle was to address the circumstances of suffering that his audience found themselves in (Kümmel, 1975:418; Adams, 1978:4; Grudem, 1988:40; Davids, 1990:30; Schreiner 2003:45; Carson & Moo, 2005:636, 638) (cf. 1 Pt 1:6-7; 2:4; 2:12; 2:19-20; 3:13-17; 4:12-19; 5:6-10). It is acknowledged (compare e.g. Davids, 1990:37; Schreiner, 2003:38; Jobes, 2005:4) that the circumstances of suffering of Peter's audience concerned their persecution for being Christians (cf. 1 Pt 2:19-20; 3:13-17; 4:14-16), but the details of the exact nature and extent of such suffering are not described in the epistle. This absence of detail has led to rather wide ranging scholarly debate regarding the nature of the persecution and the contemporary application of Peter's teaching on suffering.

In the context of this study a relevant question would be whether the principles for Peter's audience's suffering – because they were Christians (cf. 1 Pt 4:16) – could be applied more widely to other forms of suffering for believers such as poverty, sickness, bereavement, natural disaster, et cetera, and in the context of this study, more specifically regarding a "Prosperity Gospel" teaching on not being prosperous and struggling/having to cope with physical problems.

In an excursus on suffering in 1 Peter, Davids (1990:30-44) proposes that the Greek vocabulary for 'suffering' in 1 Peter is limited to external persecution and does not include general suffering like illness et cetera. Davids (1990:39) specifically sets New Testament suffering against illness and appears to maintain that the New Testament treats illness and suffering in completely different ways – suffering must be embraced and expected, while illness must be prayed for and deliverance expected. Davids (1990:38), however, rejects the extreme "Prosperity Gospel" notion that prayers in that vein must or should result in a one hundred percent success rate or, alternatively, that no Christian is ever supposed to be ill (as posited by "Prosperity Gospel" preachers [compare Savelle, 1981:8; Hagin, 1983b:16 among others]).



When it comes to suffering in the context of the New Testament, Moo (1988:200-201) allows for a much more inclusive view regarding a similar purpose and value of suffering, be it persecution, an illness or any other personal problem like poverty. Based on the contexts in which the New Testament word for ‘suffering’ (πάσχω) is used, Moo (1988:200-201) points to the broadness of the concept which likely includes any difficulty a believer might encounter. For example, in Romans 8:18 the sufferings at least include ‘nakedness, famine and peril’ and in 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 the best description of Paul’s affliction (v6) is a physical illness (v9-10) (Moo, 1988:201).

Reformed theologians, in general, although acknowledging the nature of persecution in 1 Peter’s concept of suffering, include in the expectation aspects such as sickness, financial lack, emotional trauma/pain, fear/anxiety, and subject to natural disasters et cetera for Christians. Grudem (1988:67), for example, regarding Peter’s use of ‘various trials’ (ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς) (1 Pt 1:6), advises interpreters not to look for one specific kind of persecution or suffering as the sole historical background for the letter and recommends “[s]ince no one kind of trial or testing is in view, Peter’s words have their application to **all the trials** which Christians experience (cf. Js 1:2)” (emphasis added by researcher) (compare also Gardner, 2013:33). Guthrie (1990:773 – emphasis added) makes a similar contribution when commenting that the πύρωσις (fiery trial) (1 Pt 4:12) may be used metaphorically to extend further than persecution to “ ... **any trial** which has the refining effect of fire”. Adams (1978:19) comments correspondingly on 1 Peter 1:6-7 that the ‘trials’ referred to could quite possibly amount to a loss of possessions. Adams (1978:5 – emphasis added) further argues that the reference to refugees suggests that Peter’s audience already suffered hardship and “ ... the word refugees clearly strikes the note of suffering **loss and deprivation**”. It is probable that the persecution Peter’s audience was facing had other secondary effects such as a lack of basic life necessities like shelter and food. Jobes (2005:1 – emphasis added) adds relevant insight to the conversation and describes the suffering of Peter’s audience as “... being marginalized by their society, alienated in their relationships, and threatened with – if not experiencing – a **loss of honor and socioeconomic standing** (and possibly worse).” Such an argument is compelling considering Williams’ (2012:133) observation that persecution within the Roman Anatolia resulted in economic oppression where property of those imprisoned was looted.

It is essential to note that within the first century Mediterranean<sup>21</sup> societies, honour was the pivotal social value (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:369). All other social aspects were directly or indirectly linked to an 'honour-shame' value system. Osiek's (1992:27) comment that even wealth was subordinate to honour shows the nature of this system. Rousseau (2004:99) supports this opinion in the conclusion that virtue had a higher value than wealth.

Sickness/illness then must also be interpreted through the lens of the honour-shame value system in the Mediterranean culture where the Bible in its entirety was written. In these perspectives, the focus regarding sickness was not to restore the ability to function, as is in the contemporary world, but on restoring a sick or disabled person to " ... a valued state of being" (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:368). A person with a disease would have been ostracised from society and would have no (honourably) reputable public position. The most unbearable aspect of a sick person's suffering was the shame they had to endure for their abnormal socio-cultural human condition (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:368). Deliverance was then not so much about being able *to do something* again, but being able *to be someone* again, or as Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:368) state: "(a) refocusing of one's meaning in life (metanoia) is thus essential to healing illnesses."

Seeing that a "Prosperity Gospel's" message claims to be theological – after all, the Bible is utilised as 'proof' for what proponents claim to be God's will regarding its seemingly unlimited value on wealth and health – those claims must justifiably be gauged with the value that 'honour' had within first century Mediterranean societies. A definition of this 'honour', as seen through the eyes of a first century Mediterranean collective personality, was a public recognition of someone's social value (Malina & Neyrey, 1991:26). The public opinion of someone was more important than an individual's opinion of himself (cf. Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:370). Peter's audience seems to possess no public recognition due to their association with the name of Christ (1 Pt 2:12, 3:16, et cetera) and thus they suffered the loss of the most prized social value, namely honour.

The nonexistence of social honour which Peter's original audience had to endure, is highlighted by the statement that due to their non-participating in common social activities of the day such as " ... sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries" (1 Pt 4:3) these believers were 'maligned' (βλασφημέω) (1 Pt 4:4) – an action described by Louw and Nida (1993:434) as " ... speak(ing) against someone in such a

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<sup>21</sup> The cultural system of the world in the region of the Mediterranean Sea is known as the Mediterranean Societies (Rousseau, 2004:62).

way as to harm or injure his or her reputation.” Such was the cross that Peter’s audience probably had to bear (refer Mk 8:34) – sacrificing that which was most highly valued by society.

A further relevant consideration that results from the debate regarding the nature of suffering in 1 Peter forces the research to look beyond the primary nature of the suffering (i.e. persecution) toward the potential result of secondary sufferings such as bad health, physical injury, death, financial loss, emotional trauma, et cetera. From the book of Hebrews, it can be gleaned that persecution leads to the probable financial disadvantage of Christians – the Hebrews’ audience had their ‘properties taken away from them’ (Heb 10:33) as a direct result of their persecution. Williams (2012:133) indicates that property of persecuted Christians in Roman Anatolia was indeed looted which led to severe economic calamity. In chapter 11, the Hebrews’ author refers to Moses, by way of example, who “ ... considered the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt” to encourage suffering believers not to waver in their faith, regardless of the cost. The Apostle Paul likewise indicates that persecution may result in a lack of earthly wealth (or even the most basic necessities) (cf. 1 Cor 4:11-13).

Adams (1978:20) expresses the possibility that Peter’s audience, who were at risk of losing their lives, were also already enduring consequences of maimed and disfigured bodies due to the persecution they were facing – one can hardly consider them to have been in the kind of ‘good health’ as demanded by a “Prosperity Gospel”. This aspect of secondary suffering resulting from persecution is highly relevant to the research objective in this study as it reveals the theological flaws in a “Prosperity Gospel” that Christian suffering entails only persecution and temptation toward sin<sup>22</sup> (as per example Hagin, 1982:4; Osteen, 2004:205-

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<sup>22</sup> Very little could be found on the topic of suffering within “Prosperity Gospel” literature. It seems to be a subject that is either largely avoided or plainly considered irrelevant, due to “Prosperity Gospel” ‘theology’ of ‘non-suffering’ (compare Horton, 2008:96; MacArthur, 2011:95). An early paperback *Must Christians suffer* (1982) by Kenneth Hagin, the so-called ‘father’ of the modern-day “Prosperity Gospel” movement (cf. McConnell, 1988:3; Hollinger, 1988:137; Hollifield, 2011:30), is one of the few resources that addresses the subject. Hagin limits Christian suffering to only persecution but seems to be silent on the potential effects of such persecution on a person’s health, wealth or success in general.

Another “Prosperity Gospel” preacher that very briefly raises aspects of suffering is Benny Hinn (2004:111-125). In commenting on the concept of ‘taking up one’s cross’, Hinn (2004:115) believes this is limited to the suffering of dying to self/living a holy life. By embracing this ‘cross’ of holy living one has obtained the key to unlocking a life of abundance. Such an interpretation of the command to ‘take up your cross’ then becomes the means to abundance rather than sacrifice/suffering loss. Joel Osteen (2004:205-212) limits the trials of Christians to temptation to sin.

Hagin (1982:3) quotes 1 Peter 2:9-23 and avers that a Christian has no business to suffer sickness and disease. According to Hagin’s (1982:4) interpretation of Scripture, the only form of

212) (compare also Moo, 1988:200 who highlights this notion among “Prosperity Gospel” adherents). It is irreconcilable with a glamorous life of abundant wealth and perfect health as God’s will for believers on the one side, and persecution as God’s will for believers on the other side (cf. 1 Pt 4:19).

Some logical questions regarding the suffering of 1 Peter addressed by this research are: Even accepting that the suffering in 1 Peter is focussed mainly on persecution, can a “Prosperity Gospel” fit in a context of extreme persecution and all its potential accompanying effects on the socio-economic status of believers? What rights and privileges would a believer have where being a Christian makes one an outcast, synonymous to a criminal? Can such an outcast citizen claim any right or gain access to abundant wealth and perfect health? How can health and wealth even be envisaged where intense persecution exists?

Conclusively, it is accepted that the nature of suffering of Peter’s original audience is primarily persecuted for bearing the name Christian (1 Pt 4:16), but this persecution is considered to have affected the social status, family relationships and possibly livelihood of these suffering disciples of Christ (compare Jobes, 2005:42).

#### **4.4.3.2 Socio-historical circumstances**

The socio-historical circumstances of Biblical times are essential to the historical component of exegesis. The importance of grasping the sociological value-system of Peter’s original audience’s cultural-historical ‘world’ was alluded to above (4.4.3.1). It is necessary to

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suffering for a Christian is persecution/being reviled and the temptation to sin. Hagin (1982:15) equates these persecutions to people who question or criticise his wealth/possession of property and for preaching that God wants all Christians to be healthy and healed (Hagin, 1982:23). Hagin (1982:6) attempts to ‘theologise’ the provided arguments for which the Book of Acts is cited and while Hagin admits that Paul was persecuted for the name of Jesus, it is maintained that Paul never suffered any physical ailment or illness.

The decisive question must then be raised regarding Paul’s disclosure in Galatians 4:13 where he refers to his “bodily illness” (ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκός). The phrase could literally be translated as “weakness of the flesh” but ἀσθένει (illness) is clearly categorised by Louw and Nida (1993:270) under the subdomain ‘sickness, decease, weakness’ and described as “the state of being ill and thus incapacitated in some manner - ‘illness, disability, weakness’”. Commentators support this classification with popular views attributing Paul’s condition to diseases such as malaria, epilepsy and/or ophthalmia (an eye-condition) (Cole, 1989:168; George, 1994:321). The latter (i.e. ophthalmia) being especially appealing as Paul in the same letter praises the Galatians for being willing to pluck out their eyes and give it to him (Gl 4:15) and a reference to the large letters in which he writes (Gl 6:11).

Paul’s instruction to Timothy to use wine for his frequent ailments (ἀσθένει) (1 Tm 5:23) seems to further indicate that Paul was not expecting that believers must never suffer any form of illness/bodily ailment.

elaborate on important socio-historical aspects of Peter's audience to gain a more precise understanding of what kind of suffering they possibly had to endure.

Elliott's (1981) arguments on the socio-economic status of Peter's audience were somewhat of a ground-breaking work on the nature of suffering in 1 Peter. Elliott's extensive study on the literal interpretation of *παρεπίδημος* (aliens/strangers) in 1 Peter 1:1 leads him to conclude that the term refers to Christians who migrated from agricultural to urban areas and which relegated them to a lower social status (Elliott, 1981:48).

Elliot (1981:68-69) describes the suffering of these communities as essentially economically depressed and poverty-stricken as a result of, amongst other reasons referred to above (4.4.3.1), the political discrimination they faced. Janse van Rensburg (1998) supports Elliott's arguments by emphasising that due to political pressures these readers were tempted to " ... take the law into their own hands and to avenge their suffering" (Janse van Rensburg, 1998:580). Based on such arguments, it seems that some of the consequences of the persecution Peter's audience faced included a level of economic suffering.

Williams' (2010) research also focuses on analysing the nature of suffering in 1 Peter. Williams (2010:92-97) criticises Elliott's (1981) conclusions on the social status of Peter's audience as exclusively economically oppressed and poverty-stricken. In Williams' application of passages in 1 Peter, which might give insight into the socio-economic status of the first audience, an economic taxonomy of urban areas of the first-century Asia Minor is compiled (cf. Williams, 2010:109). For the sake of argumentation, Williams (2010:109) refers to Peter's address to the slaves in 1 Peter 2:18ff and concludes that most of the slaves addressed in 1 Peter 2:18ff would be in the lowest economic category, a category which Williams (2010:109) labels as those with 'no surplus' – equal to the status of unattached widows, orphans, beggars, disabled and unskilled day labourers.

A second passage, however, leads Williams (2010:113) to the opposite end of the scale to conclude that there were some among Peter's audience who could have been 'substantially wealthy'. This is concluded from 1 Peter 3:3 which addresses wives on adorning themselves, amongst other things with 'gold jewellery'. Whereas Elliott (1981:564) argues that this does not indicate the economic status of these wives but is simply a form of stereotypical warning by Peter, Williams (2010:112-113) maintains that one cannot, for this reason, exclude the possibility that the literal wearing of such expensive jewellery was inaccessible to all the women addressed by Peter. These two passages (1 Pt 2:18ff and 1 Pt 3:3) serve as

examples of Williams' approach toward the conclusion that Peter's first audience was of a mixed socio-economic background (Williams, 2010:120).

Despite Williams' contention with Elliott's approach, their conclusions seem to be similar, that a large majority of the readers would have found themselves in an unstable and precarious financial situation (Williams, 2010:121; cf. also Williams, 2012:322-323). This precariousness held for them the potential of serious economic crisis (Williams, 2010:122) due to the persecution they were facing. In expanding on the economic effects of the persecution of Peter's first audience, Williams (2010:308; 2012:134) mentions the life-threatening situation faced by some due to losing business customers for those who owned businesses, and even worse, labourers losing out on job opportunities and thus income due to employers' agitation by their new religion.

In comments on 1 Peter's audience, Achtemeier (1996:55-57) also posits a broad and diverse social background and specifically highlights the possibility that Peter was not only addressing a lower social-economic group, i.e. the poor (Achtemeier, 1996:55). This could also be taken as a critique on Elliot's conclusion above, but for this study, however, it should be noted that, by implication, Achtemeier acknowledges that amongst Peter's audience there could have been Christians who were from a lower social-economic class.

Malina and Rohrbaugh's (2003:3-5) argument for *agrarian* societies as the context in which the New Testament Scriptures originated would support a hypothesis of lower social economic class believers among Peter's audience. The use of *agrarian* is not a reference to farm workers (rural) as opposed to factory workers (urban), but rather refers to the complete differences in lifestyle between now and then (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:2). Those who read/interpret the Bible in an industrialised society without considering the social and economic first century *agrarian* context, run the risk of missing the significant differences in living conditions between the 'now' of contemporary readers and the 'then' of original audiences and it creates a high probability of misinterpretation of the Biblical text (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:13).

Agrarian societies were divided in social strata of '*haves*' and '*have nots*' and this gap between the rich and poor people caused what is labelled a 'limited good' society (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:400). All goods were in limited supply and the situation differs completely from the typical norm in an industrialised society where food, clothes and money are freely available. The *agrarian* world of 'rich, poor and limited good' meant that the majority in those societies could have been extremely poor (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:400-401) where a

strong middle class did not exist (Gundry, 1981:27). The relevant aspects of an ancient *agrarian* society and present day social conditions, which support Elliot's (1981) hypothesis of Peter's audience as economically oppressed and poverty-stricken believers above, include *inter alia*:

- A relatively low life expectancy for males in Rome of twenty years at birth (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:7); if an infant survived the first few years the life expectancy would rise to only around forty;
- Many widows and orphans (low economic class) in society due to this short life expectancy (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:7);
- Only one to three percent of the population normally owned one- to two-thirds of the arable land (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:7), so the likely scenario was that it was almost impossible for a poor man to become rich irrespective of how hard he worked.

In a responsible exegesis of the New Testament text insofar as it applies to all the New Testament books (and not only 1 Peter in the context of this study) it is essential to consider the level of poverty that touched the greatest percentage of societies. Malina and Rohrbaugh's (2003:400) explanation of 'limited good' puts one in that picture: "[I]n ancient Palestine ... all goods existed in finite, limited supply and were already distributed ... [b]ecause the pie could not grow larger, a larger piece for anyone automatically meant a smaller piece for someone else ... ". This general shortage of almost everything resulted in a situation where one person's increase necessarily led to another's loss, and such increase would, therefore, have been considered theft – the rich were, therefore, considered greedy. The definitive question was not 'How did he do it?' but 'At whose expense did it come?' (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:400).

In view of the claims made by a "Prosperity Gospel" that God wants believers to be abundantly rich, one can truly doubt whether the historical socio-economic circumstances of the people to whom New Testament documents were addressed are (even remotely) considered. Conclusions and resultant preaching that the Bible teaches for every believer to be rich and healthy is apparently done sans proper exegesis wherein the circumstances of the original audience of the New Testament Biblical text are seemingly ignored.

#### **4.4.3.3 Application of the Petrine principles for his suffering audience to a contemporary audience**

An essential hermeneutical principle that must be deliberated in this study is the legitimacy of applying the theological principles obtained from 1 Peter regarding the first readers' suffering (i.e. persecution) to suffering in general of a contemporary society (e.g. poverty, illness, danger, natural disaster, et cetera). Suffering is something the entire creation is subject to (cf. Rm 8:18-21), but is specifically a 'human problem', and it ranges from disease, to financial crisis, to anxiety over the apparent meaninglessness of life (Louw, 1982:1).

It must be critically considered whether the principles that Peter gave regarding the circumstances of the suffering of his historical audience can be responsibly applied in an exegetical contemplation of the (radically) different circumstances faced by contemporary church members in our time. This consideration is crucial regarding the legitimacy of an application of a Petrine paradigm for remedial pastoral intervention to help people who were or are influenced by a "Prosperity Gospel's" perspectives. The reality of the modern world is that although life threatening persecution is an ongoing reality for many Christians, ultimately most 'Western' and 'Westernised' believers do not suffer as literal refugees under physical persecution (cf. Adams, 1978:11). Adams (1978:5-6), however, maintains that the Spirit intends an application of the text of 1 Peter to the contemporary audience who also face some form of suffering.

In referring to the question suffering believers often ask, namely 'Why has the Lord allowed these things to happen?', Adams (1978:6 – insert added) proposes an answer: "[v]ital preaching of the principles, practices and promises of this book (1 Peter) demands contemporary analysis of each congregation, so that God's message through Peter may be proclaimed to it with surgical precision." Adams (1978:6) contends in favour of the application of these Petrine principles for all forms of suffering, be it literal persecution or any of the other many problems that must be faced by earthly 'refugees' whose citizenship is in heaven.

Jobes (2005:2) is also convinced that the principles of 1 Peter are applicable to all Christians over all times because even if persecution is not a factor during a specific period or in a specific place, all Christians must always engage in self-denial which could suggest aspects of 'suffering' (Jobes, 2005:5). This self-denial is not detached from Jesus' teaching in Mark 8:34 where loss of worldly possessions is a possible or even probable result of following Him (cf. Mk 8:35-37) (compare Schweizer, 1978:176) (refer 4.4.1.1). Jobes (2005:45)



emphasises suffering 'self-denial' in the examples of practical application to those who suffer bereavement, illness, the physical and mental changes brought on by aging and even the consequences of sin. Based on Jobes' scholarly opinion above, it seems that although the immediate form of suffering for Peter's audience was likely persecution (i.e. rejection of the society they lived in) the application of Peter's theological principles would be much in scope for believers who need comfort and guidance in the reality of various forms of suffering and pain.

In a general discussion of the power of suffering, MacArthur (2011:7) analyses the concept of suffering in its Biblical context and indicates that pain and difficulty form an inevitable part of suffering and repudiates proponents of any notion that hardships of any kind should not even cross a Christian's path. Persecution is a definite form of suffering for Christians, but it does not limit the difficulties Christians face in everyday life to persecution only (MacArthur, 2011:10). One must not lose sight of the fact that human beings live in a fallen world and believers should also not be surprised that they are exposed to the same dangers and tragedies as the rest of humanity. Without doubt, the main form of suffering that Peter addresses is persecution (MacArthur, 2011:123) but every Christian can in a general sense expect various trials to occur in life which may include monetary matters and health problems, the latter especially as age advances (compare MacArthur, 2011:123). In addressing passages from 1 Peter, MacArthur (2011:95) alludes to Jesus' example for suffering followers and indicates that a 'theology' which suggests that personal sin is the cause of all Christian suffering is to be rejected based on the notion that Jesus suffered and yet was without sin. MacArthur (2011:95) does not beat around the bush when labelling such a theology of 'non-suffering' as downright heretical.

In the same vein as MacArthur, Piper (2010) warns "Prosperity Gospel" preachers not to preach a so-called 'gospel' that obverts or conceals the necessity of suffering (Piper, 2010:26). Piper (2010:26) makes a connecting reference to Luke 14:33 where Jesus said: "... anyone of you who does not renounce all he has cannot be My disciple". Throughout Piper's (2010) book, in the scope of suffering, aspects of life's realities such as illness and lack and loss of wealth as a sacrifice of following Christ are included.

In a transcript of an interview, Piper (Piper & Powlison, 2006:216) applies the suffering of persecution to the suffering endured with cancer. The comparison focuses on the result of the suffering, i.e. in both cases a believer is presented with an opportunity to bear witness that Christ is 'infinitely worthy' no matter what earthly loss must be endured. The conclusion is then that the purpose of God amid suffering, regardless of the nature of it, could be the

same: to show that Jesus is more valuable than the temporal and material. The Gospel advances through persecution, but through other forms of suffering the Gospel also advances (Piper, 2006:12).

A further significant aspect of suffering in the context of the current research is highlighted by Powlison (2006:156) in a discussion on the 'double-pain' potential of suffering. By this concept, Polison (2006:156) shows that people do not generally respond well to sufferers and tend to avoid them and accuse them of being responsible for their suffering. Powlison (2006:156) takes Job as an example: amid Job's intense suffering that included the loss of his children, financial disaster and severe physical ailments, his wife and friends accuse him of a lack of faith and pointed to his apparent disobedience (Powlison, 2006:156). Could it be postulated that a similar 'double-pain' is inflicted on suffering believers from the hands and mouths of other "Prosperity Gospel" adherents?

#### **4.4.3.4 Preliminary conclusion on the historical audience's immediate situation**

From the sample of literature on the nature of suffering in 1 Peter and the extent to which it can be applied to contemporary readers, it can be avowed that there are clear discrepancies between a "Prosperity Gospel" and its resultant preaching that God wills no suffering other than persecution for believers. These discrepancies also touch on Peter's pastoral guidance to Christians who are experiencing suffering in ordinary life. It is even more striking if the persecution Peter refers to implied secondary forms of suffering, and if the application of Peter's teaching could be applied to various forms of suffering for contemporary audiences.

The occasion (Why was the text written?) of 1 Peter was discussed above. Grudem (1988:40) posits that Peter's audience's circumstances where suffering was an 'unasked for' reality, probably gave rise to the pastoral guidance offered in 1 Peter. In 1 Peter's context, this could be considered as the *ongoing situation* (Osmer, 2008:12) which required pastoral guidance. As part of the exegetical process towards prophetic discernment (the normative task [cf. Osmer, 2008:129ff]) it is imperative not only to consider the socio-historical setting of Peter's audience in the exegetical process, but also to consider the extent to which the principles could be applied to a contemporary audience. These steps serve the objective to extract theological principles from Peter's teaching to establish some norm for suffering followers of Christ. The research aims at learning from 1 Peter how to render pastoral guidance to a suffering community and consequently, to propose a paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". As it was indicated, this

paradigm can be implemented to help persons who were in some way affected by a “Prosperity Gospel’s” claims or imperatives and seek pastoral guidance.

#### **4.5 Peter’s pastoral guidance regarding suffering**

##### **4.5.1 Introduction: Peter’s value system**

The pastoral paradigm for this study can be followed only with consideration of the values that define the system in which the pastor/counsellor and the counsellee find themselves. A value system entails “ ... a set of qualities or standards that one considers important to his/her well-being” (Hanekom, 2015:2). Values demand a certain integrity of loyalty and as such, they operate from one’s commitment to pursue and support certain directions or types of actions (Pilch & Malina, 1993:xii). One’s value system is, amongst other factors, based on one’s beliefs (Hanekom, 2015:30). Where ‘belief’ (in the religious sense of the word) is at loggerheads with God’s Word even in a religious setting such as the preaching of a certain dogma, confusion and even loss of hope can and would prevail. Regarding this prevalence, a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, that believers’ well-being lies in abundant material wealth and excellent physical health, could and does cause confusion for many a suffering believer (compare Jobes, 2005:4), who, like Peter’s audience, were likely lacking in social, material and possibly also physical ‘well-being’.

Peter counsels his suffering community by posing a value system which is radically different from the popular social system of his audience (Achte-meier, 1996:80; Jobes, 2005:210). At the time, the Greco-Roman worldview was concerned only with the pragmatic benefits of social stability (Jobes, 2005:210). Similarly, Peter’s value system seems to differ radically from modern day “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs which also strive for similar ‘pragmatic benefits of social stability’.

In 1 Peter, three concepts appear repetitively, and which essentially summarise Peter’s value system:

- that which is perishable versus that which is imperishable (1 Pt 1:4, 7, 18, 23; 3:4),
- positive desire versus negative desire (1 Pt 1:12, 14; 2:2, 11; 4:2, 3), and
- what should be considered precious or valuable (1 Pt 1:7, 19; 2:4, 6, 7; 3:4).

These concepts are now discussed.

#### 4.5.1.1 φθαρτός (perishable) versus ἄφθαρτος (imperishable)

Throughout the New Testament the word ἄφθαρτος (imperishable) refers to eternal heavenly realities (Grudem, 1988:148) and those realities are the valued possessions of the believer. Peter's usage of this word (ἄφθαρτος) emphasises that the lifespan of earthly possessions can be short and, therefore, considered to be vain, empty and meaningless. It concurs with Louw and Nida's placement (1993:248) of the antonyms ἄφθαρτος (imperishable) and φθαρτός (perishable) in the semantic domain of 'Physiological processes and states' and in the sub-domain 'Live, die' (Louw & Nida, 1993:261). The concepts pertain to that which is "not ... subject to decay and death" and "that which is bound to disintegrate and die" (Louw & Nida, 1993:268) respectively. By using opposites, Peter constitutes a clear contrast and his counsel to his suffering audience is to value that which has everlasting value, rather than that which is of a temporal nature and, compared to things eternal, of little value. It is a lesson learnt well from Jesus' admonition in Mark 8:36-37, which Peter now conveys to the people he wants to encourage.

- **1 Peter 1:4, 7, 18**

In the first pericope after his greeting (1 Pt 1:3-5), Peter's usage of ἄφθαρτος (imperishable) reminds the 'born again' believers of their living hope " ... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is **imperishable**" (ἄφθαρτος). From the outset, Peter draws his suffering audience's attention to their heavenly inheritance and its eternal, imperishable value. This value is in stark contrast to all the examples of how earthly inheritances suffer from a sort of destruction and, therefore, provides no real hope for suffering believers (Adams, 1978:13).

The value of this heavenly 'inheritance' is not only its permanence, but above all its security, and Peter glowingly describes it by adjectival concepts such as 'undefiled/never spoil' (ἀμίαντος) and 'reserved/protected' (τηρέω) (1 Pt 1:4). According to Peter's counsel, believers not only have a secure inheritance, but they are also kept by the power of God to ensure that they will possess what is promised by God (1 Pt 1:5). Although this inheritance will only be " ... revealed in the last time ... " (1 Pt 1:5), the language assures believers of the absolute certainty that they will obtain it (Schreiner, 2003:63-64). Despite this being a future reality, for the believer it is also a present benefit<sup>23</sup>, the certainty of what the Biblical term

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<sup>23</sup> The concept of 'already-but-not-yet' is not implicitly stated by Peter but scholars highlight that this concept is maintained throughout his first epistle (e.g. Selwyn, 1956:394-401; Tite, 1997:77;

‘hope’ (ἐλπίς) refers to – in Christ believers do not have a possibility, but a certainty (Adams, 1978:12, Davids, 1990:52; Louw & Nida, 1993:296; Schreiner, 2003:62).

Considering the backdrop of Peter’s audience possibly finding themselves in conflict with the values and priorities of the society in which they live (Jobes, 2005:79), the present value of their assurance in Christ is enhanced. Compared to the living (ζάω) hope (1 Pt 1:3) they have in Christ, the futile things men crave for are dead (Jobes, 2005:84). The examples of those futile things are “gold which is perishable” (ἀπόλλυμι) (1 Pt 1:7) and in 1 Peter 1:18 Peter reiterates that things like silver and gold are perishable (φθαρτός). In the New Covenant, God’s blessings are much less material, physical and earthly (Grudem, 1988:64) and the believer’s hope is not in empty and vain possessions. The pastoral relevance of the value Peter attach to this imperishable inheritance is that it can be utilised to provide hope in times of despair (Davids, 1990:52)

Peter’s intention to remind his audience of such a secure hope for the future is not to act as a numbing drug for the present but, as one who was not rich and comfortable himself in this world (Schreiner, 2003:63), Peter reminds them that a perishable worldly paradise offers nothing of true value. Believers ought not to be disheartened due to a lack of material possessions or physical well-being, for their imperishable heavenly inheritance and its spiritual rewards are infinitely greater (Grudem, 1988:64).

- **1 Peter 1:23**

In 1 Peter 1:23, Peter again uses the word ἀφθαρτος (imperishable). Here, it refers to the divine ‘seed’ of God’s Word by which believers have been born again. In this case, Peter values the new spiritual life of the believer which “ ... once activated will never cease” (Schreiner, 2003:95) above the transitory nature of present glories – which Adams (1978:51 – italics original) defines as “ ... the *best* this life has to offer of fame, power, wealth, etc.”. Unlike people without Christ who exist merely from perishable human seed and who will fade away like the grass (1 Pt 1:24), believers have been born of a seed which is imperishable, i.e. a divine ‘sperm’ (Davids, 1990:79).

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Hollifield, 2011:41; Mbugua, 2015c:74). The hope Peter refers to is an eschatological/future hope but at the same time something believers already participate in through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Practical theologians (e.g. Louw, 1982:33) consider this ‘already-not-yet’ motif in the New Testament as essential, for the provisional nature of all things indicates the temporary nature of pain, illness, destruction and death.

By his quotation from Isaiah 40 in 1 Peter 1:24-25, Peter contrasts new spiritual life, with mortal life. The reference within the context of Isaiah 40 is the nation of Israel, during the Babylonian exile, who required comfort (Is 40:1) in the midst of their despairing circumstances (Schreiner, 2003:96; Jobes, 2005:126). This quotation from Isaiah 40 also perfectly fits the context of Peter's audience – the contrast highlighted by both authors (Isaiah and Peter) is that perishable things have little value compared to the imperishable inheritance and hope of the believer (Selwyn, 1958:152).

Peter indicates that whatever earthly glories a person might achieve or possess, it must eventually perish. Supportive of such a conclusion, Isaiah's picture of fading grass is utilised by James (1:10) to describe the rich man who will pass away. Believers are not comforted (*παρακαλέω*) (1 Pt 2:11) in persecution with perishable things like earthly possessions and physical well-being; instead, the believer should value God's Word which results in new life (Jobes, 2005:125) for God will fulfil His eternal promises given to His New Covenant people through Jesus Christ.

- **1 Peter 3:4**

Peter's last reference to *ἄφθαρτος* (imperishable) (1 Pt 3:4) specifically addresses women on what they ought to value, namely a contrast between inner and outer beauty. The instruction concerns suffering women, probably due to being married to an unbelieving husband (Adams, 1978:94). In context of the research topic, it must be taken into account that in the first century Greco-Roman culture, prosperity and well-being were considered dependent on religious forces (Jobes, 2005:203). Thus, Christian women who did not serve the idols of a husband were considered a threat to the well-being of the family. As such, they were almost certainly in danger of facing antagonism not only from the husband but also the community (Jobes, 2005:203).

In 1 Peter 3:3, Peter certainly does not prohibit the wearing of gold jewellery, but he emphasises the meaninglessness of external adornment (Groenewald, 1977:54; Grudem, 1988:148). Possessions – to possess – are of a passing nature, but the imperishable (*ἄφθαρτος*) quality of a gentle and quiet spirit (1 Pt 3:4) never diminishes. By labelling such qualities 'imperishable', Peter would convince his audience that unlike clothing, jewellery and braided hair, a godly character has eternal value (Grudem, 1988:148) and godly wives should value who they are in relationship to God (Schreiner, 2003:154) more than what they have and how they dress.

From the contrast between perishable and imperishable, it is evident that Peter's value-system is radically different from that of the first audience's socio-historical preferences, and the same could be said of the socio-economic preferences posited by a "Prosperity Gospel".

#### 4.5.1.2 Positive desire (ἐπιθυμέω and ἐπιποθέω) versus negative desire (ἐπιθυμία and βούλημα)

The concept of desire/lust frequently occurs in 1 Peter. Peter brings it to bear on things like the kingdom of Christ (1 Pt 1:10-12), grace (1 Pt 1:12) and God's Word (1 Pt 2:2) instead of worldly/fleshly desires (1 Pt 1:14; 2:11; 4:2, 3) and as such it is clearly a facet of Peter's value-system. Semantically, ἐπιθυμέω, ἐπιποθέω, ἐπιθυμία and βούλημα do not differ in meaning, but appear to accentuate different aspects or facets of desire/lust. Louw and Nida (1993:288) place the words in the domain 'Attitudes and emotions' and sub-domain 'Desire strongly'; βούλημα is in the related sub-domain 'Desire, want, wish'.

Peter's usage of the words can be summarised as outlined in Table 4-2 below:

**Table 4-2: 'Desire/lust' in 1 Peter**

| Passage      | Greek word | Meaning                                                                                     | Positive/Negative | Pertaining to                                                                     |
|--------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Peter 1:12 | ἐπιθυμέω   | "to greatly desire to do or have something" (Louw & Nida, 1993:290)                         | Positive          | Angels' desire to grasp salvation by the gospel of grace                          |
| 1 Peter 1:14 | ἐπιθυμία   | "to greatly desire to do or have something" (Louw & Nida, 1993:290)                         | Negative          | Avoid being conformed to former desires of ignorance                              |
| 1 Peter 2:2  | ἐπιποθέω   | "to long for something, with the implication of recognizing a lack" (Louw & Nida, 1993:291) | Positive          | Longing for the pure milk of the Word which brings growth in respect to salvation |
| 1 Peter 2:11 | ἐπιθυμία   | "to greatly desire to do or have something" (Louw & Nida, 1993:290)                         | Negative          | Abstaining from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul                     |
| 1 Peter 4:2  | ἐπιθυμία   | "to greatly desire to do or have something" (Louw & Nida, 1993:290)                         | Negative          | Avoiding lusts of men and submitting to the will of God                           |

| Passage     | Greek word | Meaning                                                                                                 | Positive/Negative | Pertaining to                                                           |
|-------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Peter 4:3 | βούλημα    | “that which is desired, with the implication of accompanying planning and will” (Louw & Nida, 1993:289) | Negative          | Avoiding that which characterises the lifestyle of a Gentile/unbeliever |
| 1 Peter 4:3 | ἐπιθυμία   | “to greatly desire to do or have something” (Louw & Nida, 1993:290)                                     | Negative          | Avoiding this characteristic of the lifestyle of a Gentile/unbeliever   |

As can be seen in Table 4-2, the words ἐπιθυμία and βούλημα denote a negative connotation to desire, while ἐπιθυμέω and ἐπιποθέω denote the positive. Peter’s counsel contains instructions regarding both the positive and negative, whereby he articulates both worthy and vain desires.

Examples of both the positive and negative are briefly discussed below.

- **1 Peter 1:12**

Ἐπιθυμέω in 1 Peter 1:12 is a unique reference as it does not pertain to human desire or lust, but angelic desires which logically would present something pure/sinless. This reference should have been significant to Peter’s audience, for the kingdom of Christ to which believers gained access by grace (1 Pt 1:10) is highly valued by angels and which, by implication, should be of the highest value to Peter’s audience too. This angelic longing (ἐπιθυμέω) is in the present tense and something that Black (2009:31) mentions about tense in the New Testament would be significant here: “[t]he aoristic is the normal or “unmarked” aspect in Greek ... a deviation from the aoristic to another aspect is generally exegetically significant”. Peter’s usage would, therefore, not indicate the desire to know more of the Gospel at a time before Christ suffered, but they still long to delight more in the glories of Christ’s kingdom even now after He suffered (Grudem, 1988:78). This church age, in which believers partake, is a grace period (1 Pt 1:10), a time of glories (1 Pt 1:11) and of the Holy Spirit (1 Pt 1:12).

Christians, although they must at times be prepared to face despairing circumstances in this world, find life meaningful due to who they are in Christ, and how they fit in the eternal plan



of God. They have the privilege to enjoy present aspects of and anticipated final salvation (Schreiner, 2003:76). Not even angels enjoy that privileged position in God's plan.

- **1 Peter 2:2**

Another positive desire Peter seeks to instil in his audience is articulated in 1 Peter 2:2. Peter encourages suffering believers to “... long (*ἐπιποθέω*) for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation ...”. “Milk” in this verse as a metaphorical reference relates to the desire of “new-born babies” (1 Pt 2:2) and Peter's purpose with the metaphor is to support believers' growth in their spiritual lives (Schreiner, 2003:99). Thus, Peter's counsel to believers is to crave spiritually significant things that would add spiritual value to their lives. As is clear from the direct statement of the verse, the “milk” Peter refers to is the word of God<sup>24</sup> (Grudem, 1988:85; Davids, 1990:83; Achtemeier, 1996:147; Schreiner, 2003:100) which is God's instrument in the believer's progress towards spiritual maturity. Believers' desire must be focussed on spiritual growth, and they must value the word of God they already received, to give vitality to the new life they have in Christ (Jobes, 2005:130).

- **1 Peter 1:14; 2:11; 4:2-3**

Peter, however, also warns believers against desires that are detrimental to their spiritual growth. The word *ἐπιθυμία* (desire) appears no less than four times in the epistle (refer Table 4-2 above). In the New Testament, *ἐπιθυμία* denotes a negative desire for something and would infer the unsanctified longings of fallen humanity, i.e. it is synonymous with the unbelieving (Jew and Gentile) world (cf. Rm 1:24, 6:12; Ga 5:16; Eph 2:3; Tt 2:12; 1 Jn 2:16-17). In the context of the research topic, Davids (1990:68) considers ‘desire’ as negative when “... the goods of this age become the goals one seeks rather than the means to the goal of serving God ...”.

Peter indicts this ‘slipping back’ by adding the descriptive words ‘former’ (*πρότερος*) (1 Pt 1:14), ‘fleshly’ (*σαρκικός*) (1 Pt 2:11), ‘of men’ (*ἄνθρωπος*) (1 Pt 4:2), and ‘of the Gentiles’ (*ἔθνος*)

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<sup>24</sup> The NIV translates *λογικός* as ‘spiritual’. Although some scholars support this translation (e.g. Best, 1971:98), Schreiner (2003:100) argues that usually the term refers to that which is reasonable or rational (refer also Louw & Nida, 1993:675). Context seems to be the determining factor in translating *λογικός* as the word of God, as the use of *λόγος* (word) in 1 Peter 1:23 provides a cognate relationship to *λογικός*. The context of 1 Peter 1:23-25 states that it is by the Word of God, which was preached to them, that these believers were ‘spiritually’ born (Schreiner, 2003:100; Jobes, 2005:132), and therefore the milk to be longed for is the pure milk of the word – referring to both the apostolic preaching and the written words of Scripture (Jobes, 2005:132).

(1 Pt 4:3). These are the kind of ‘desires’ which characterise unbelievers and in the context of this study, ἐπιθυμία in 2 Peter 2:14-18 appropriately describe the practices of false teachers. *Inter alia*, greed (2 Pt 2:14) and a love for the wages of unrighteousness (2 Pt 2:15) are mentioned which scholars interpret as an interest in financial reward like Balaam (cf. Nm 21:15-20) (Schreiner, 2003:353) (refer 4.5.6.2 below). Logically and of necessity then, Peter counsels his suffering audience to refrain from craving satisfaction by means of things material as a goal in and of itself, for that is something which characterises the lifestyle of unbelievers.

#### **4.5.1.3 Precious/valuable (τίμιος, ἔντιμος, τιμή, πολυτελής)**

A noteworthy aspect of Peter’s ‘value system’ is what he identifies as ‘precious’ or ‘valuable’ from God’s perspective. The Greek words πολύτιμος (1 Pt 1:7), τίμιος (1 Pt 1:19), ἔντιμος (1 Pt 2:4, 6), τιμή (1 Pt 2:7) and πολυτελής (1 Pt 3:4) function in the semantic domain ‘Value’ and sub-domain ‘Valuable, lacking in value’ (Louw & Nida, 1993:620), defining things ‘pertaining to an object’s great/considerable value or worth’. Although Peter emphasises the value from God’s perspective, the contextual implications of such values serve to counsel Peter’s suffering audience toward valuing who they are in Christ.

- **1 Peter 1:7**

In the first instance, Peter draws a contrast between ‘genuine faith’ and ‘gold’, and he labels the former as more precious (πολύτιμος) than the latter (1 Pt 1:7). Contextually, Peter identifies the purpose of the ‘various trials’ (1 Pt 1:6) believers encounter in the present life as revealing a person’s faith to be genuine – something more valuable in the sight of God than earthly treasures like gold (Davids, 1990:57; Schreiner, 2003:68; Gardner, 2013:33). Peter does not want his audience to interpret their suffering as a result of inadequate faith or even a lack of faith (Jobes, 2005:94) but rather that which refines their faith.

The analogy of gold would have been familiar to Peter’s audience who was aware of the practice of burning off the impurities in metals by means of fire (Davids, 1990:57). In similar fashion then, present trials which cause pain and suffering is a cleansing process which distinguishes between false faith and genuine faith. Those who go on believing and trusting in God amidst the suffering of this world have the security of partaking in ‘the praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ’ (1 Pt 1:7).

New Testament scholars (cf. Davids, 1990:58; Schreiner, 2003:68; Jobes, 2005:94; Gardner, 2013:34, et cetera) question whether the glory referred to in 1 Peter 1:7 is what

believers will receive from Jesus or whether it is the glory Jesus will receive from believers. In Peter's context, a dualistic understanding makes the better sense: the glory belongs to Christ, but believers will partake in it with Christ (Davids, 1990:58). In the social-historical context of Peter's audience they might have lacked glory and honour in their society (1 Pt 3:6, 4:4) (refer 4.3.3.1) but those with a genuine faith were assured of future participation in Jesus' praise, glory and honour. Gold, desirable as it may be, is perishable (1 Pt 1:7) and it will not survive the final fiery judgment, unlike those with a genuine faith. In this sense, Christian faith is infinitely more valuable than anything the world can offer – even a valuable commodity such as gold – for it is genuine faith that God will approve of on the day of judgement (Schreiner, 2003:68).

Aforementioned faith is described as being in Jesus (1 Pt 1:8) who, although not seen in the present, is loved and is trusted to fulfil all His promises (Gardner, 2013:35). The main point Peter conveys with 1 Pt 1:7-8, is that suffering believers are not 'dashed to the ground by their troubles', but instead they possess inexpressible joy (Schreiner, 2003:70). The certainty of their eschatological salvation in Christ whom they will one day see and enjoy forever (1 Pt 1:8-9) transcends the glory of all earthly things (Schreiner, 2003:70).

- **1 Peter 1:19**

Secondly, Peter observes that the blood of Christ as the ransom price for sinners (1 Pt 1:19), has the highest value with God. This value lies in the fact that it is the blood of God's Son, which alone is the sufficient ransom for the price owed to God by sinners. Peter then rightly holds the accomplishment of this ransom in highest esteem, as nothing else is sufficient to allow sinners to be drawn to the holiness of God (Clowney, 1988:69). Understandably then, the ransom price is contrasted with perishable things like gold and silver (1 Pt 1:18-19). While those precious metals have intrinsic value, Peter points out that God required far more than such perishable things to rescue sinners from their futile (μάταιος) way of life (1 Pt 1:18). God Himself had to make this blood-payment (Clowney, 1988:69), which far exceeds all other value, for the vanity of earthly possessions is clearly evident in its incapacity to provide security (Cedar, 1984:126).

The only conclusion in the context of this study is that the blood of Christ, which was sacrificed for all believers, is worth infinitely more than gold and silver. This is the value believers must cherish above all – they are in Christ, they are the ransomed possessions of God through Jesus' blood – rather than earthly things they might expect to gain (cf. Vorster, 2011:7). Believers must know that this priceless blood of Jesus is for them a guarantee of

God's love (Clowney, 1988:69), a God-given sacrifice able to rescue believers from the clutches of their former meaningless, even futile (μάταιος – 1 Pt 1:18) lives.

This 'futile' concept characterises the book of Ecclesiastes where the preacher concludes that the things greatly valued by human beings (such as wealth/possessions) end up being vain and useless (Schreiner, 2003:84) and can never satisfy or give meaning to this life (Ec 2:1-11) (cf. Cedar, 1984:126). Contrariwise, amongst other spiritual values, the compassion of God gives meaning to life, for it provides hope to those who are suffering (Louw, 1982:1; Louw, 2015:13, 273, 294) and this compassion can be known by the precious blood of Christ by which believers are ransomed. It is through the renewed humanity in Christ that the faith community with Christ becomes people who are meant to 'be' again, i.e. they have value and meaning by means of who they are in Christ (cf. Vorster, 2011:7).

- **1 Peter 2:4, 6, 7**

*Thirdly*, Peter develops his value paradigm by his usage of the word ἄντιμος (precious). He does it twice (1 Pt 2:4, 6) to describe the great value God attaches to his Son and, based on these verses, Adams (1978:63) counsels believers to 'take God's side' and prize this 'precious living stone'. Despite how things may appear during a trial or tribulation, Christ will never let them down and their hope will not disappoint them (Adams, 1978:63).

The contrast Peter draws in this instance (1 Pt 2:4) is between men's rejection of the 'living stone' (Jesus) and God's acceptance/choice/approval (ἐκλεκτός) of Him. Believers' conversion and growth towards maturity is described as 'coming to' (προσέρχονται) this precious living stone, and they should not be surprised that Jesus' fate of suffering and rejection will also be the fate of those who belong to Him (Grudem, 1988:104; Davids, 1990:86). The paramount fact is that Messiah's suffering does not abolish His value in God's perspective and believers, therefore, are comforted that their value in Christ cannot be nullified by their suffering either. A believer's suffering is never an indication of God's rejection or disapproval. Believers are part of God's grand building by nature of their union with the precious corner stone (Jobes, 2005:145), so that Peter can say that " ... this precious (τιμὴ) value, then, is for you who believe ... " (1 Pt 2:7).

Peter develops the 'building'-metaphor in the verses which follow (1 Pt 2:5-10) to counsel his suffering audience with the comfort that they are part of a 'new community' (Jobes, 2005:148). Believers are a 'chosen race', 'royal priesthood', 'a people for God's own possession' (1 Pt 2:9) for they are the objects of His mercy (1 Pt 2:10). All of this happens in

the community of believers, where they are bound together in love through a collectivism that hinges on every individual's living relationship with Christ, the Head of the body of believers (cf. Col 1:18) (Rousseau, 2010:139).

The collectivism that Peter emphasises entails their solidarity as a group of people in Christ (cf. Malina, 2001:62), and the value of community and 'belonging' is completely foreign to the individualism that (even) in today's church can idolise personal benefit and affluence (Gardner, 2013:64). For this reason, Gardner's (2013:63) labelling of this section (1 Pt 2:4-10) as "a great treasure for the church" seems fitting – what is to be greatly valued by believers is that they are no longer a people in darkness but are a community of God's people (in His marvellous light), and *that* solely by His mercy (1 Pt 2:9-10). Although aliens and strangers in this world (1 Pt 1:1, 2:11), believers are a secure part of the household of God, and it is this group who were called with the purpose of inheriting a blessing at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pt 3:9).

Peter's counsel to his suffering community regarding these 'inestimable blessings' is then to " ... proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you ... " (1 Pt 2:9). Gardner's (2013:70 – emphasis added) observation that " ... the goal of the church and the Christian life ... **is not centred in us or on our well-being** ... " is relevant in the context of the research question for the normative task.

The world of Peter's audience was hostile to, but also watching them, and for Peter the believer's lifestyle should be different than, yet attractive to a hostile world (cf. Carson & Moo, 2005:636-637). By their behaviour, amidst suffering, believers have an opportunity to testify to God's power and goodness. Such obedience amid suffering would indicate to the world that a Christian's hope is not in the comforts of this world but in God (Schreiner, 2003:45). Piper (2010:93) concurs that the extent to which a Christian is willing to joyfully suffer (worldly) loss reveals the value they place on the treasure of belonging to God through Christ. As Christians submit to God in their suffering, they reveal that God is their true treasure.

- **1 Peter 3:4**

*Finally*, Peter refers to the gentle and quiet spirit of a suffering wife which is precious (πολυτελής) in the sight of God (1 Pt 3:4). In this section, Peter counsels suffering women to refrain from valuing (costly) 'hairstyles, jewellery and clothing' (1 Pt 3:3) but rather to value who they are in relationship to God (Schreiner, 2003:154). The premise of such counsel is

that God Himself places the value of believing women on an inward godly character rather than external looks enhanced by means of costly cosmetics. Peter does not suggest that it is wrong for a woman to dress beautifully (Cedar, 1984:154), yet he encourages these believing women to pursue a godly character rather than expensive attire. The value of the former far outweighs the value of the latter and an internal godly character is of eternal value (imperishable) whereas earthly possessions are perishable (refer 4.5.1.1 above) (Groenewald, 1977:54; Adams, 1978:97; Grudem, 1988:148).

Within the historical-social setting of Peter's audience it is observable that peasant women typically had no choice of dress and it was an exception rather than the rule when a woman possessed even one set of clothing in good condition (Davids, 1990:117). Although Peter's instruction seems more applicable to wealthier believing women who could afford such costly cosmetics, his intention is to warn women who could not afford it against meaningless aspirations to also possess what others have. Davids (1990:118) notes the application that freedom from such aspirations would allow these women to be more generous in their Christian service.

In explaining 'why' the internal qualities of a 'gentle and quiet spirit' are so precious to God, Grudem (1988:148) avers that it serves as proof that women trust God to provide in all their needs which results in God's glory – for He delights in being trusted. The example in the following verses (1 Pt 3:5-6) would support Grudem's conclusion, for when Peter states that Sarah 'put her hope in God' (1 Pt 3:5) he reminds women who suffer persecution under their unbelieving husbands, that God rewards all those who put their trust in Him (Schreiner, 2003:155). According to Achtemeier (1996:214), women of old (e.g. Sarah) kept their hope unwavering even amidst the vicissitudes of human existence for they had an eschatological hope. Believing women become 'children' of their ancestor Sarah as they have been born again to a living hope (1 Pt 1:3) and can trust that although they suffer in the present life, God will reward them at the final revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pt 1:7) (Davids, 1990:120; Jobes, 2005:206). This hope is a central Petrine theme aimed at consoling suffering believers (cf. Schreiner, 2003:155).

#### **4.5.1.4 Normative principles from the introduction to Peter's value system**

From the introduction to Peter's value system, the following preliminary principles for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" can be suggested:

- Believers must be aware that there is far greater value in what is eternal rather than the temporal;
  - All believers have been promised a heavenly inheritance;
  - The value of this heavenly inheritance lies in its eternality and security;
  - This heavenly inheritance is future, yet provides present hope and comfort;
  - All earthly/material possessions (like gold) are temporal and will suffer destruction and provide no lasting/true hope for believers;
- Believers must be aware that in the New Covenant God's blessings are not material, physical and earthly, but much more spiritual;
  - Believers were born into a new spiritual life which promises spiritual vitality and an incorruptible inheritance which cannot fade away/perish;
- Believers must value who they are in relationship to God more than owning material possessions;
- Believers must value that they are objects of God's grace and more privileged than angels;
- Believers must value their place in the kingdom of Christ by His grace;
- Believers must be aware that life's meaning is in who they are in Christ and how they fit in God's eternal plan of both present spiritual blessings of salvation and our anticipated final salvation;
- Believers must pursue spiritually significant things like the Word of God which will add value to their spiritual life;
- Believers must refrain from pursuing fulfilment in the material world for such is the futile lifestyle of unbelievers;
- Believers must value the purpose of suffering which refines and proves their faith to be genuine;
- Believers must not interpret suffering as proof of, or a result of inadequate/lack of faith;

- Believers must be aware that those whose faith has shown to be genuine through trials will partake in the future praise, glory and honour of Jesus Christ;
- Believers must be aware that genuine faith is worth far more than anything this world offers;
- Believers can have joy even in suffering because of the certainty of both their present and eschatological salvation in Christ;
- Believers must value who they already are in Christ by means of the blood of Christ rather than things temporal which they could gain from Him;
- Believers must be comforted by the blood of Christ which ransomed them for it confirms God's love and compassion;
- Believers must know and understand that material possessions cannot satisfy or give meaning in this life;
- Believers can find value and meaning in who they are in Christ;
- Believers must be aware that their suffering does not nullify their value to God; their suffering is not an indication of God's rejection or disapproval of them;
- Believers must value that they belong to a new community which is God's prized possession;
- Believers must value Christ who will never disappoint them in their hope;
- Believers must be comforted by the reality that God cares about them;
- In the midst of suffering believers must indicate to the unbelieving world that their hope is not in the comforts of this world but in God; God is a believer's all-sufficient treasure;
- Believers must pursue a godly character rather than expensive temporary possessions;
- Believers must trust God to supply in their needs when they are suffering as He will reward them at the final revelation of Jesus Christ;



#### **4.5.2 Specific Petrine values as normative principles**

From the introductory section on Peter's value system above (4.5.1 and sub-divisions) it is evident that Peter both refutes wrong values and instructs his suffering audience in new values. The normative task (Dingemans, 1996b:66-67, 94ff; cf. Osmer, 2008:129ff) as it relates to this study requires research into the specific values Peter upholds for suffering believers. Answers are required for two questions, namely which values Peter had to establish in his historic first audience and how these values could be applicable for pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

Four values emerge from 1 Peter for this normative task, namely:

- The value of God's control and compassion (4.5.3);
- The value of Christ and being in Christ (4.5.4);
- The value of belonging to the new people of God (4.5.5);
- The value of God-provided leadership to the people of God (4.5.6).

These four values are now discussed.

#### **4.5.3 The value of God's control and compassion**

In the pastoral task, it is important to determine believers' views and opinions of God, as this will affect their spiritual potential (Louw, 1999:152). Peter emphasises two of God's attributes to sculpt believers' understanding of His active role in their lives. Paramount is God's sovereignty in His control over every aspect of the believer's life in Christ. Unequivocally, God's sovereign will and control applies to a believer's life, even suffering (cf. for example 1 Pt 1:2, 5, 17, 21, 25; 2:15-17, 23; 3:17; 4:2, 5-6, 17-19; 5:2). Observably, however, God's sovereignty does not rule out or transcend His mercy/grace (compassion) extended to believers in their suffering (cf. e.g. 1 Pt 1:3, 13; 2:3, 10; 3:10; 5:5-7, 10, 12).

From a Reformed theology perspective, Sarles (1986:341) states that in that religious paradigm a "Prosperity Gospel" greatly undermines the concept of God's sovereignty. In fact, it appears eschewed in prosperity 'theology' as MacArthur (1992:328) shows: after reading volumes of prosperity belief material, not a single reference to the sovereignty of God could be found. Considering that God's sovereignty is, albeit rather simplistically,

defined as the exercise of God's will over His creation (Grudem, 1994:217), the absence of even mentioning it is crucial.

In Peter's theological paradigm, the grand theme of God's sovereign control over all people and their circumstances utilised to guide his suffering audience toward a trust in their faithful creator (cf. 1 Pt 4:19) stands in stark contrast to a "prosperity" paradigm. Peter's reference to the "will of God" in 1 Peter 4:19 is vital to the theological concepts contained in the letter (Grudem, 1988:40; cf. also Gardner, 2013:13) and, overall, Christians must know and understand that blind fate does not control creation, but it is in the Hand of a caring Father even if that care might be difficult to discern amidst suffering (Groenewald, 1977:21; Davids, 1990:22). In the realm of God's sovereignty, He brings to pass what He has announced 'long before' (cf. 1 Pt 1:10-12) (Jobes, 2005:48) and Peter simply states that only God has full control over all things and by His mercy He orders it for the good of His people (Davids, 1990:22). When Peter then unequivocally proclaims " ... this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!" (1 Pt 5:12) it falls into place naturally as the key verse for this epistle (cf. Best, 1971:13; Groenewald, 1977:11-12; Grudem, 1988:40; Jobes, 2005:42). Regarding discussion of the theodicy problem when God's role is examined (for instance why suffering occurs) the emphasis is not to 'justify' God but to restate the presence of God's justice with someone that must endure suffering of any kind (Louw, 1982:2-6). The believer must and can know without doubt God is present in suffering – He is not there as a destroyer but as One who seeks to unite the believer to His mercies/grace by faith (Louw, 1982:27-28). This means that God's compassion and presence in the Holy Spirit in suffering is that which allows the believer to live meaningfully in a broken world – such is the grace Peter admonishes his readers to 'stand firm in' (cf. 1 Pt 5:12).

In the opening chapter of the book *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*, Piper (2006:17-30) seeks to capture the connection between these two concepts (i.e. suffering and God's sovereignty) and states that Peter " ... celebrate[s] the sovereignty of God ... " (Piper, 2006:18) to comfort those who are suffering. In another chapter of the same book (*God's Grace and Your Suffering*), Powlison (2006:145) posits that when believers work through 1 Peter in a Bible study they are made aware that God meets them in their trouble, loss, disability, and pain – God is never 'absent' according to His gracious purposes. The focus of the aforementioned chapter by Powlison (2006) is to create an understanding of how God engages with a believer's suffering. By means of an exposition on the theology of an anonymous hymn, *How firm a foundation*, Powlison (2006:145-173) offers pastoral care to his readers throughout the chapter towards the conclusion that God in His sovereignty does

not relieve believers from all suffering, but He graciously accomplishes His glorious purposes through it. As Powlison shows, a grasp of Peter's theocentric emphasis could, therefore, aid a pastorant who requires pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

Louw (1982:19-20) distinctly warns against false consolations aimed at softening a believer's suffering in pastoral care. Cheap comfort (Louw, 1982:19-20) in counsel-clichés is useless and to tell a pastorant 'other people's suffering is far worse', or 'time heals all wounds' and 'everything will be better tomorrow' gains nothing. In the context of this study, similarly, cheap comforts and false consolations deny and consequently oppose the comfort offered in the Scriptures (cf. Louw, 1982:20) – the empty promises of God's will for an abundant life are of no value. The only comfort that pastorants require is to be assured, and to know of God's presence, control and compassion in suffering as Louw (1982:33 – free translation) states: " ... peace then, is coming to rest in God rather than being brought to a standstill by fate."

The 'rest in God' Louw (1982:33) refers to above requires comprehension and trust in who God is and His involvement in a believer's life. Two concepts in 1 Peter which emphasise his counsel to his suffering audience, and as it relates to Theology Proper, were selected, namely:

- God's sovereignty and grace in salvation, and
- God's sovereignty and grace in suffering.

In the context of 1 Peter, these themes are briefly discussed.

#### **4.5.3.1 God's sovereignty and grace in salvation**

- **1 Peter 1:2-9**

In 1 Peter the salutation highlights the vital concept of God's sovereignty and grace in salvation by different phrases: " ... according to the foreknowledge of God ... " (πρόγνωσις – 1 Pt 1:2); believers are "chosen" (1 Pt 1:1) " ... according to His great mercy ... " (1 Pt 1:3), and they are " ... being born again to a living hope" (1 Pt 1:3). This assurance testifies to God's sovereign grace that is evident in what God has done by the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ (Clowney, 1988:23). The solid foundation on which Peter's audience must build their hope is that everyone, although they might suffer socio-political alienation (1 Pt 1:1 'reside

as aliens', 'scattered' – Jobes, 2005:67), belongs to the God-head by means of their conversion. Their encouragement is divine, for their salvation lies in the heart of the Trinity (Jobes, 2005:67-68).

Louw and Nida (1993:335) define the lexical meaning of the word 'foreknowledge' (πρόγνωσις) (1 Pt 1:2) as "[knowing] ... something prior to some temporal reference point, to know about an event before it happens". God's πρόγνωσις (foreknowledge) does not refer to God observing in advance or acquiring information at some time prior in history, but it refers to God's foreordained/predetermined plan long before an event takes place (cf. Best, 1971:70; Clowney, 1988:33; Achtemeier, 1996:86; Jobes, 2005:68). Regarding Jesus, Peter shows by πρόγνωσις that He being 'foreknown before the foundation of the world' (1 Pt 1:20) in God's foreordained plan came when and why God willed and it was not merely predicted that this would happen (Davids, 1990:74; Schreiner, 2003:54). In the context of Peter's audience's situation, this 'foreknowledge' about them is to encourage them – they are the objects of God's loving concern from all eternity (Clowney, 1988:33).

God's covenantal love for His people in the Old Testament (Gn 18:19; Jr 1:5, et cetera) is expressed as eternal – there is not a time that God did not 'know' (in Hebrew יָדָע), every one of them (Schreiner, 2003:53). The idea of Peter's audience being elected on the basis of God's foreknowledge similarly assures them of God's love for them as a Father to whom they belong – something Schreiner (2003:54) refers to as "God's covenantal affection." Grudem, (1988:54 – cf. also Best, 1971:70) argues for an even wider practical implication of this Fatherly love by stating that apart from them being 'chosen' (ἐκλεκτός, 1 Pt 1:1) by God the loving Father, He determined their suffering circumstances (i.e. 'being scattered') before the world began. What they now experience is in harmony with, and not contrary to His Fatherly love for them (Grudem, 1988:54). By God's design believers have been united with their Creator and reaps encouragement out of the loving relationship shared with the Father – this serves as a comfort in troubled times (Jobes, 2005:68-69).

The sovereign yet gracious involvement of God in the lives of His people is further emphasised by the phrase, "according to His great mercy" (1 Pt 1:3). The theme of God's redemptive work, the focus for the result of this 'great mercy' (πολύς ἔλεος), is the rebirth (ἀναγεννάω) of believers to a 'living hope' (ἐλπίδα ζωσαν). It is also by such mercy (ἔλεος) that Gentiles who were formerly not His people became His people (1 Pt 2:10). This mercy can be defined as the gracious, undeserved act of God's love (Best, 1971:75) by which believers have been given new life as God's children " ... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pt 1:3). Clowney (1988:45) verbalises this graceful act as God fathering

believers through Jesus' resurrection (cf. also Schreiner, 2003:61; Gardner, 2013:29 for the concept of new birth in relation to the Fatherhood of God). Believers enjoy 'new life' with God as Father, secured in the resurrection of the Son and ultimately fulfilled in the final salvation – eternal life (1 Pt 1:9). The suffering believers in Asia Minor were, therefore, not to be crushed by their troubles, but they were to look forward to the 'inestimable blessing' awaiting them (Schreiner, 2003:62). This future glory will transform their present suffering just as their former (without Christ) condition was transformed by God's mercy (Achteimer, 1989:235).

The certainty of God's active role in the believer's new life extends beyond the use of the word 'mercy' (ἐλεος), and is appropriate in the context of the salutation relating to 'chosen' (ἐκλεκτός) in 1 Peter 1:1 (Best, 1971:74)<sup>25</sup>. Peter, however, use 'grace' (χάρις) frequently throughout the epistle in reference to the undeserved Fatherly love of God for believers which joins them to God by covenant (cf. 1 Pt 1:2, 10, 13; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12). The controlling metaphor that magnifies God's undeserved favour in 1 Peter is that they are the new people of God (Achteimer, 1989:222-231; Achteimer, 1996:69-72). By virtue of the continued grace extended to the children of God, believers can 'stand firm' (1 Pt 5:12) despite their suffering (Adams, 1978:31) and this firm stand will carry them through to full salvation (Best, 1971:14).

Peter's audience needed a reminder of the true grace of God in the difficult times they had to contend with (Groenewald, 1977:93). Grace was extended to them from their new birth in the past (1 Pt 1:3), it is there in their present sustenance and protection (1 Pt 1:5) and remains for their future inheritance in heaven (1 Pt 1:4) (cf. Achteimer, 1996:68). Grace is the basis for the soteriological doctrine of *redemption* as past event, *sanctification* as ongoing process and *glorification* as future reality, and these aspects are emphasised in 1 Peter (e.g. 1 Pt 1:2-5). Peter switches between the interconnected three 'tenses' of salvation, namely past, present and future for the pastoral guidance of his audience amid their suffering. Thereby Peter emphasises the theological truth that God is graciously active in their lives in all that He has done, is doing, and will do for believers (Grudem, 1988:40).

The message is that salvation is not complete at the point of the new birth – in Peter's view the [final] salvation for the Christian lies ahead and which will be revealed at the last day (1 Pt 1:5; 1:7; 1:13; 4:13; 5:1; 5:4). This concept was laid down already in the earliest stages of

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<sup>25</sup> Best (1971:74) indicates that the word 'mercy' is probably preferred to 'love' or 'grace' as it is often used in relation to God's election (cf. 1 Pt 2:10; Rm 9-11).

the Church, namely that salvation is an ongoing process. The Acts (2:47) state it so unequivocally that it cannot be overlooked or misunderstood: *ὁ δὲ κύριος προσετίθει τοὺς σωζομένους καθ' ἡμέραν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό* – “and the Lord added those that are being saved daily to it [the church] ... ” (free translation – researcher). The present passive participle *σωζομένους* emphasises God’s ongoing saving work in the believers (cf. Rousseau, 2010:102) of which it might be said that irrespective of poverty and distress or physical suffering (which believers endured in the book of Acts), God relentlessly continues to execute His gracious will.

Along these lines, Achtemeier (1989:235) states the purpose of the letter (1 Peter) “ ... to strengthen the readers in the ‘now’ of their suffering and persecution by assuring them that the future glory will transform their present condition as surely as their present situation transformed them from their past.” Believers’ present state of suffering and their response to it must be considered in the certainty of their past and future salvation by God’s sovereign and gracious activity. Peter’s counsel to his readers is then a commitment to live by new eschatological precepts and values in this old fallen world (Jobes, 2005:45). As Ladd (1974:596) explains it: Peter was guiding Christians to consider their place on the eschatological timeline and be assured that the present state of suffering will shortly end (1 Pt 1:6; 4:7; 5:10). Hope, appropriately, is 1 Peter’s central theme (Cedar, 1984:103; Davids, 1990:19; Guthrie, 1990:781) and this hope is convinced that the salvation process will come to fruition at the revelation of Christ, but only then (Davids, 1990:19-20).

Despite their circumstances, believers are reassured that now and forever they are the new people of God by His sovereign gracious design. Without that eschatological hope, there exists no Christian comfort regarding suffering (compare Louw, 1982:33).

#### 4.5.3.2 God’s sovereignty and grace in suffering

The will of God in suffering is a repeated concept throughout Peter’s first epistle (1 Pt 2:20-21; 3:17; 4:19; 5:6). Peter elucidates his audience in the understanding that God controls their suffering and graciously uses it for their good. Table 4-3 below represents God’s sovereign will toward believers’ suffering and His gracious provision in suffering:

**Table 4-3: God’s sovereign will and gracious provision in suffering**

| Verse         | God’s sovereign will in suffering        | Verse         | God’s gracious provision in suffering                |
|---------------|------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Peter 1:6-7 | Believers suffer trials by God’s design. | 1 Peter 1:3-9 | Believers have joy despite trials due to God’s mercy |

| Verse        | God's sovereign will in suffering                                | Verse        | God's gracious provision in suffering                              |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
|              |                                                                  |              | ensuring the hope of an imperishable inheritance and future glory. |
| 1 Peter 2:21 | Believers are called by God for the purpose of suffering.        | 1 Peter 2:25 | Believers have a guardian over their souls.                        |
| 1 Peter 3:17 | God could will that believers suffer for doing what is right.    | 1 Peter 3:18 | Believers have been brought to God.                                |
| 1 Peter 4:19 | Believers could suffer according to the will of God.             | 1 Peter 4:19 | Believers have a faithful Creator.                                 |
| 1 Peter 5:6  | Believers are to submit themselves under the mighty hand of God. | 1 Peter 5:6  | Believers will be exalted by God at the proper time.               |

From Peter's teaching as summarised in Table 4-3 above, God wills the suffering of believers in the present but not without the comfort of His divine purpose, presence, protection, provision, and promise of future exaltation. The tension between the present realities of suffering and the hope of realisation of salvation in the future is an 'already-but-not-yet' situation for believers living between the two comings of Jesus (Hollifield, 2011:41; Mbugua, 2015c:74). In a "Prosperity Gospel", the distinction between salvation promises which will be fulfilled after the second coming of Jesus appears to be ignored. Prosperity adherents claim said promises for the present dispensation between the two comings of Christ (refer Hollifield, 2011:41). These claims create a dispute, not *whether* followers of Jesus will be freed from all physical/material suffering (Rm 8:19-21 assert that they will), but rather *when* this will realise (cf. Mbugua, 2015c:74).

Hollifield (2011:41) refers to a "Prosperity Gospel" and its resultant un-Biblical proclamation as an 'over-realised eschatology' which aims at eradicating present suffering. This present age is marked by depravity, disease, and death and it is only the age to come where love, light and life will be fully realised (Hollifield, 2011:41). It is to be acknowledged that believers are already part of God's kingdom and enjoy certain benefits of that 'now' (e.g. union with God), yet the *fullness* of that kingdom will only be experienced with the second coming of Christ. Peter, therefore, encourages his audience that in the New Covenant, God's rewards are not about material, physical and the earthly (Grudem, 1988:64). Material prosperity and physical health are not prominent for believers walking in faith, therefore, believers who lack

earthly material rewards recognize that in the New Covenant they possess eternally more through their relationship with Christ (Grudem, 1988:64).

- **1 Peter 1:6-9**

According to Peter's counsel, various grievous trials test the genuineness of a believer's faith until this 'age to come' (1 Pt 1:6-7; 4:12). Those trials are used by God to sanctify the believer (e.g. 1 Pt 3:15; 4:1) (cf. Ladd, 1974:598) and the reality of suffering should not surprise the believer (1 Pt 4:12). The divine necessity of the trials (1 Pt 1:6) is expressed by the conditional "if necessary" (εἰ δέον) – it is by God's design whether they occur or not, just as it was by God's design that Jesus had to die (Mk 8:31; 1 Pt 2:21; 4:13) (Best, 1971:78). In Mark's Gospel, Jesus informed Peter and the other disciples of the divine necessity regarding His own suffering (Mk 8:31). Peter is the strong 'voice' behind the teachings in Mark's Gospel (Carson, Moo & Morris, 1992:95; Gundry, 1993:29) and so Mark 8:31 reveals Jesus' suffering as a divine plan (Van Bruggen, 1988:188; Gundry, 1993:428; Evans C.A., 2000:16). The use of δεῖ (must/it is necessary) (Mk 8:31) corresponds to the use of εἰ δέον (if necessary) (1 Pt 1:6) and used together with the infinitive παθεῖν (to suffer) in Mark 8:31, it indicates that Jesus' suffering was God-determined (cf. Van Emmeren, 2016:96).

Similarly, the believers' suffering is ultimately the inevitable reality of divine origin and not satanic force (Achte-meier, 1996:101). The comfort this provides is that the unfavourable circumstances of believers in the present life are not beyond God's sovereign control and do not occur without a reason/purpose (Grudem, 1988:67; Davids, 1990:56; cf. also Bigg, 1902:103; Cedar, 1984:117; Adams, 1978:18; Gardner, 2013:33). This fact does not mean God wants believers to suffer or that suffering is by nature good. Rather, it is understood that by God's mercy He works out His good plan through suffering, for "[s]uffering may not be God's desire, but it is not outside his sovereignty" (Davids, 1990:56).

The reference to believer's 'rejoicing'<sup>26</sup> (ἀγαλλιάω) (1 Pt 1:6), does not suggest that suffering is intrinsically joyful (Schreiner, 2003:67). Peter acknowledges that grief is a reality (Davids, 1990:56) in the verb λυπέω (suffer grief) (Grudem, 1988:67) which refers to a state of sadness or distress (Louw & Nida, 1993:318). It is appropriate for a believer to grieve in the

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<sup>26</sup> ἀγαλλιάω is in the present tense and can therefore either be taken as an indicative or an imperative. It makes sense for Peter to refer to their state of being rather than giving them a command as 1 Peter 1:8 uses the word in the same present tense form but where it is a clearer reference to indicative (Achte-meier, 1996:100; cf. also Grudem, 1988:66). The implication is that joy is the appropriate condition of a believer despite present sufferings.



midst of suffering for Peter is by no means denying the pain and discomfort of suffering, but he reminds his readers that it will not last long, hence his reference to “now for a little while” (ὀλίγον ἄρτι) (1 Pt 1:6). This is not to be interpreted as suffering on earth being brief in the sense that it could not endure even a lifetime, but eventually all suffering will vanish when Jesus returns (Schreiner, 2003:67). By virtue of the eschatological hope of 1 Peter 1:3-5, believers always have joy despite suffering, for God will fulfil His promises.

Louw (1982:38) highlights the importance of hope in human existence as the existential basis of joy and, therefore, there can be joy even in suffering. By this, Louw does not mean that suffering brings joy, but that joy found in hope makes suffering bearable (cf. 1 Pt 1:6). Peter encourages his readers to praise God by rejoicing in the ‘blessedness’ (εὐλογητός) of God (1 Pt 1:3) due to His mercy extended to them in the security of a ‘future inheritance’ (1 Pt 1:4). The joy in suffering is the precipitation of coming jubilation and for this reason the believer’s joy is doxological at heart (1 Pt 4:13) (Louw, 1982:39). This attitude of joy and praise could be a helpful remedy for hearts weighed down with discouragement because of suffering (Grudem, 1988:59-60).

In the context of the pericope of 1 Peter 1:3-9, Bigg (1902:99) argues for Peter’s use of ‘mercy’ (1 Pt 1:3) in relation to God having Fatherly compassion on the misery of the church through trials – labelling this mercy as the simple human sympathy of Christ. Peter, at the outset of his epistle, wants his audience to comprehend that the Gospel states that suffering is the road to glory (Bigg, 1902:99). Being children of God in the resurrection of the Son means Christ’s triumph belongs to the believer, having been brought from death to life by an imperishable seed (1 Pt 1:23-25) – this new life has a ‘living hope’ (1 Pt 1:3) which is provided and secured by the mercy of God. The living hope and the ‘brevity’ of suffering serves as comfort to believers in the midst of the present agony of trials (Best, 1971:77; Clowney, 1988:51-52; Davids, 1990:55).

The ‘brief’ (ὀλίγον) nature of the suffering is not to distract from the importance of it (Achtemeier, 1996:101). Suffering is of value to the believer, yet it should be noted that its value lies in the benefits for which God designed it. From a pastoral perspective, suffering must be related to the purpose God has with all things (Louw, 1982:2). According to Peter, suffering is the pathway to godliness that passes the test on the last day (1 Pt 1:7) and suffering results in eschatological salvation (1 Pt 1:9) (Achtemeier, 1996:101; Schreiner, 2003:66). Until such time and in preparation, faith is tested by God as gold is tested by fire – an analogy Peter’s readers would be familiar with (Davids, 1990:57). If gold must be refined

to bring out its true character/value, then so too must faith be tested to allow its value to emerge (Adams, 1978:19). Believers' faith is 'proven' by means of adversity (δοκίμιον) (1 Pt 1:7). Louw and Nida (1993:332) define δοκίμιον (proven) as learning whether something is genuine by means of a test. In the context of 1 Peter 1:7, the test relates specifically to a proven character which will be rewarded at the return of Christ (Achtemeier, 1996:102).

Jobes (2005:94) presents the necessary perspective that suffering believers should not interpret their distress as implying they have inadequate faith. To the contrary, God does a benevolent work through suffering by ensuring that those who resolutely hold on to the Saviour (believe) are guaranteed participation in the salvation to come (1 Pt 1:8-9). The word 'believe' (πιστεύω) in 1 Peter 1:8 indicates a trust or resting confidence in Christ (Grudem, 1988:70; cf. Louw & Nida, 1993:370). Peter's audience's commitment to Christ, while their persecutors aimed at causing them to lose hope and leave the faith (Davids, 1990:57), proves that they belong to Christ and will share in His glory. Genuine faith is seen in trusting God despite unwelcome, unwanted circumstances, and God values such faith as more precious than gold. Grudem (1988:69) encapsulates this value in saying: "[a]nd since God's evaluation of something is the ultimate standard of meaning in the universe Peter's readers have a secure basis for a sense of ultimate meaning and importance for their own lives."

Genuine faith as an outcome of trials provides meaningfulness and hope – a hope which consummates in glory. The benefit Peter notes in the trials is that it will bring glory to believers at the return of Christ (Davids, 1990:57). What is noticeable is that the glory (1 Pt 1:8) only appears in its fullness at this future time when Christ returns; the final result of a believer's testing (i.e. sharing in glory) will only be seen at the final judgment (Achtemeier, 1996:102), which is more valuable than any earthly treasure possibly lost due to present trials (cf. Davids, 1990:57; Jobes, 2005:95). Peter returns to this theme in the conclusion to the epistle as he reminds the believers of the brevity of their suffering and the gracious God who assures them of future glory: "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." (1 Pt 5:10). With the return of Christ, the one with proven faith will not only be relieved of suffering but will receive a great reward (cf. Cedar, 1984:52).

#### **4.5.3.3 Preliminary normative principles from the value of God's control and compassion**

From the value of God's control and compassion, the following preliminary principles for remedial pastoral guidance can be suggested:

- God does not release believers from all suffering in this present life;
- The world is not controlled by blind fate, but by the caring Father;
- It is not always possible to discern God's care amid suffering;
- God is present in suffering, but not as a destroyer but as a loving Father who seeks to tie believers to His mercies/grace by faith;
- God is present in the Holy Spirit so that believers can be comforted in His grace and live meaningfully even in a broken world;
- Believers belong to each member of the God-head by means of conversion;
- Believers must be comforted that they have been the object of God's covenantal love from all eternity and that assures them of God's love for them as a Father to whom they belong;
- Believers must know and understand that their suffering circumstances were planned by God before the world began and are not contrary to His Fatherly love for them;
- Believers can see God's goodness and faithfulness to them in that He has taken the initiative to draw them into an intimate, loving and redemptive relationship with Himself;
- Believers can be comforted by God's mercy/grace which was extended to them in their past new birth, in their present sustenance and protection and in their future inestimable blessings – God is graciously active in their lives;
- Believers can be assured that God's saving work continues and will be brought to completion despite present suffering;
- Believers must live in hope by new eschatological values. Believers must live with a deep conviction that Jesus will return to transform their present suffering condition just as they are presently transformed from their past unconverted position;

- Believers can be assured that by God's gracious design they are now and forever part of the new people of God;
- Believers must know and understand that God controls their suffering and graciously uses it for their good;
- Believers must know and understand that in the New Covenant, God's blessings are less material, physical and earthly. The New Covenant blessings are far greater, namely, spiritual fellowship with Christ and a future inheritance both material and eternal;
- Believers must not be surprised by their suffering but should understand the divine necessity of it;
- Believers must know and understand that their suffering is ultimately an inevitable reality of divine origin rather than fate or by satanic forces. Their suffering is not beyond God's sovereign control and does not exist without purpose;
- Believers must know and understand that their suffering is not by nature good, but God works His good plan through it;
- Believers can be joyful amid the grief of trials if their focus is on their future inheritance rather than their earthly status;
- Believers must know and understand that it is appropriate to grieve because of suffering;
- Believers are comforted because their suffering is brief – it will not last forever, and when Jesus returns all suffering will cease;
- Believers are comforted because God has a Fatherly compassion on their misery;
- Believers must know and understand that their suffering has value because God designed it with benefits;
- Believers' attitude of joy and praise could be a helpful remedy for hearts weighed down with discouragement because of suffering;
- Believers must accept they cannot always understand all the specific benefits of their suffering;

- Believers must know and understand the benefit of their faith being proven as genuine through suffering which will result in great reward when Jesus returns;
- Believers must not interpret their suffering as implying that they do not have adequate faith but that it will prove that they have genuine faith;
- Believers must know and understand that God values genuine faith more than gold and they should also value their faith more than gold;
- Believers must know and understand that genuine faith provides meaning in life and provides them with meaningfulness and hope.

#### 4.5.4 The value of Christ and being in Christ

The work that Christ fulfilled and its value for those in Him is central to 1 Peter's theology. This is a Christology of action (Carson & Moo, 2005:651) and the leitmotif of the letter is Jesus' passion, resurrection and second coming (cf. for example 1 Pt 1:2, 3, 5, 7, 13, 21; 2:24; 3:18, 21; 4:13; 5:1, 4) (Carson & Moo, 2005:651). These acts of Jesus constitute for Christians the model to imitate and create the basis on which Christians can experience the grace of God now and in the future (Carson & Moo, 2005:651).

Within the framework of a "Prosperity Gospel's" so-called beliefs, the essential pursuit is to pursue material and/or physical blessings rather than finding satisfaction in the spiritual blessings which all believers already possess in Christ and which will fully realise at His return. This pursuit surfaces in, for example, the title of a popular prosperity preacher Joel Osteen's New York Times best seller: *Your best life now* (2004 – emphasis added). True to the book's title, there is not a single reference to heaven. Osteen's focus is solely on what is claimed as earthly rewards available to believers such as victory, success, health, abundance, joy, peace, and happiness (Osteen, 2004:5). These are considered the signs of God's favour upon believers and Christians must no longer accept the 'average, mediocre life' of the 'status quo' (Osteen, 2004:8); contrarily, they must enlarge their vision as God will meet them at " ... their level of expectancy" (Osteen, 2004:14).

When people are besotted with materialism, dependence on Jesus for spiritual security and God's blessings in Christ fades away, as Magezi and Banda's (2017) research on prosperity prophets in Zimbabwe shows. Instead, prosperity 'prophets' become the agents by whom – according to their prosperity claims – believers will receive material blessings and health. From a Christological perspective, this is a cause for much concern and Magezi and Banda

(2017:2) found that while these prosperity 'prophets' usurp the mediatory role of Christ, their followers depend on these so-called 'men of God' as mediators of material blessings they hope to receive from God.

Peter's emphasis on the value of Christ and the spiritual blessings that believers have by their being in Christ is of the greatest importance to *firstly* bring 'prosperity' followers to Christ or, *secondly*, bring them back to Christ. In the paradigm and context of this study, Peter's emphasis on the value of Christ is a vital part of the paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". In strong statements Peter informs his audiences of their new position in and through Jesus Christ: he identifies them as 'born again' children of God (1 Pt 1:3, 1:23), 'living stones, being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood' (1 Pt 2:5), 'a chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation' (1 Pt 2:9), 'the people of God' (1 Pt 2:10) and 'bondslaves of God' (1 Pt 2:16). In his farewell greeting, Peter simply says they are 'in Christ' (1 Pt 5:14) and his intention is clear: that his audience must know, acknowledge and value their association with Jesus Christ.

The suffering which Peter's audience endured could have resulted, at least in part, from their association with Christ (cf. for example 1 Pt 4:15-16). Christ became the church's 'dyad' – the person or entity that defines or identifies them (Neyrey, 1993:51). For elucidation of this position, the concept of 'dyadism' must be elaborated on somewhat. Historically, the (only) cultural orientation for possibly all or the larger part of the world where the books of the Bible were written was 'dyadism' (Rousseau, 2004:84-85). The believers were embedded in some or other dyadic relationship wherein their sense of self was determined by and dependent upon the perceptions and evaluations of (their) others (Rousseau, 2004:85) – in other words, people thought differently about who a person might be and what might be the range of human behaviour expected from members of society (Neyrey, 1991:68). In this context, individuals " ... are not known and valued because of their uniqueness, but in terms of their dyad, that is, some other person or thing" (Neyrey, 1993:51). The honour-shame system which governed the first century Mediterranean societies (cf. Plevnik, 1993:95ff; Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:369ff) meant that their association with Christ might have cost Peter's audience possibly the most precious 'commodity' or fundamental value of their time, namely their honour (cf. Malina & Rohrbaugh, 2003:369). Due to their new identity in Christ, these Christian believers were despised by the world (unbelievers), but they had to know that belonging to Christ (to be 'in Christ' – 1 Pt 5:14) was more precious than the most valuable 'commodity' of their time, namely honour. What Peter's audience had to understand and embrace was the value of Christ and being in Christ rather than what the society in general

considered precious and valuable. Even if being in Christ results in great loss, whether honour, financial loss or even the loss of life itself, belonging to Christ is worth infinitely more than what the world offers.

Mark's Gospel<sup>27</sup> (cf. Mk 8:35-38) records that Peter was instructed by Jesus on the value of spiritual gain in Christ which is more valuable than what one might forfeit otherwise in this world for being associated with Christ. Mark 8:35-38 gives the rationale for accepting Jesus' call to suffering discipleship of self-denial and cross bearing (cf. Mk 8:34). The core question with which Jesus confronted Peter and the other disciples is: What is truly valuable? To gain material value in this world is not worth forfeiting the spiritual value obtained in being associated with Christ, for as France (2002:340 – italics original) adequately expresses: "To cling to the things of this life, the things which humanity naturally values most, is the way to forfeit *true* life; clinging to life itself is the ultimate example of this concern."

Suffering of any kind influences man in his identity, it influences his very existence and his understanding of the meaning of life (Louw, 1982:1; 2015:2). Life and meaningfulness in life is, however, not found in wealth or health, but from a Christian perspective, prosperity (or value) focuses more on who the believer is in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ) through the powerful work of the Spirit, rather than on what we receive from God ('from His hand'). This begs the important question regarding what a dignified human being is from an anthropological perspective: Are we living because of what we have or because of who we are in Christ? Human dignity/worth is in man's human essence, i.e. all humans are dignified beings by nature of being created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*) (Vorster, 2011:3-4) and receiving his spirit from God (*imago Spiritus*) (Vorster, 2011:6). Humans, therefore, are intrinsically valuable due to their relationship to God through Christ, despite what they have or do not have otherwise. For Christians specifically, their dignity/value/worth is in their reconciliation to God through the atoning sacrifice of Christ through which they become the 'image of Christ' (*Imago Christi*) to enable them to fulfil their God-given task and search for the righteousness of the Kingdom of God. Through the renewed humanity in Christ, the faith community with Christ becomes people meant to 'be' again, i.e. they have value and meaning by means of what they are in Christ (Vorster, 2011:7).

Peter counsels his suffering audience to find meaning and value in Christ by focussing their attention on:

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<sup>27</sup> Scholars (e.g. Carson, Moo & Morris, 1992:95; Gundry, 1993:29; et cetera) argue that Mark acted as a voice of Peter's teachings in the Gospel according to Mark.

- The value of the blood of Christ to believers (e.g. 1 Pt 1:2, 18-19);
- The value of the resurrection of Christ to believers (e.g. 1 Pt 1:3; 3:21-22);
- The value of the example of Christ's suffering to believers (e.g. 1 Pt 2:21-25; 3:18; 4:1-2, 12-19).

These three values are now exegetically examined from a Petrine perspective.

#### 4.5.4.1 The value of the blood of Christ to believers

The leading Christological value that Peter emphasises by which believers benefit, is the blood of Christ which is directly referred to on two occasions in the letter, namely 1 Peter 1:2 and 1 Peter 1:18-19. These two references can be grouped together in the exegetical analysis for the prepositional phrases of 1 Peter 1:2, and are expanded upon in the sections which follow (Achteimer, 1996:80), thus the reference to being 'sprinkled with the blood of Jesus' (1 Pt 1:2) is expanded when Peter states that believers 'were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ' (1 Pt 1:18-19).

##### • 1 Peter 1:2

The prepositional phrase *εἰς ὑπακοὴν καὶ ῥαντισμὸν αἵματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* ('to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood') (1 Pt 1:2) has interpretive difficulties such as understanding the force of the preposition *εἰς* (into), i.e. what sprinkled with blood means, what the relationship is between 'obedience' and 'sprinkled with blood' and what the relationship of both phrases is to Jesus Christ (cf. Achtemeier, 1996:87; Jobes, 2005:71). If the preposition *εἰς* (into) carries its normal force ("extension toward a special goal" – Louw & Nida, 1993:722; translated "into" – Mounce, 2003:62) the idea being conveyed in 1 Peter 1:2 is that the goal or the purpose of God's plan is to bring believers to obedience and to being sprinkled with blood. Achtemeier (1996:87) argues that there seems to be no relationship between the *ὑπακοή* (obedience) and the genitive *Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ* (Jesus Christ) so that the genitive only applies to the *αἷμα* (blood) (Achtemeier, 1996:87). The 'obedience' then is considered the activity of the believer and the 'blood' as referring to the blood of Christ (Schreiner, 2003:55). The divine activity behind this goal of obedience and sprinkled with the blood of Christ for believers is to be noted as it is a result of being chosen by God (1 Pt 1:1) (Achtemeier, 1996:87).



Sprinkling (ράντισμὸν) of blood is a reference to the Old Testament concept of establishing a covenant by means of sacrifice (Best, 1971:71-72; Clowney, 1988:35; Davids, 1990:49; Achtemeier, 1996:88; Schreiner, 2003:56; Jobes, 2005:71; Gardner, 2013:22). The obedience (1 Pt 1:2) Peter refers to could be a reference to the pledge of God's people (cf. Ex 24: 3,7) followed by sprinkling blood on the altar (cf. Ex 24:4-6) and on the people (Ex 24:8). If this is the Old Testament picture Peter has in mind, then he conveys the idea that his audience had been initiated into a New Covenant by Christ sacrificing His life on behalf of the believer.

Other scholars (e.g. Grudem, 1988:57) contend that Peter might have the practice of Leviticus 14:6-7 in mind where lepers were 'cleansed' from their condition and restored after the period of separation from fellowship with God and the people of God. Peter then could be saying that believers were chosen for the goal of obedience, yet such personal obedience will always be imperfect and thus requires continual cleansing from the spiritual defilement of sin (Grudem, 1988:57). This cleansing from sin God has provided through the sacrifice of Christ. The view on Leviticus 14 seems unlikely as there is no reference in the context to ordination (cf. Schreiner, 2003:56).

It makes more sense to understand Peter's reference to the 'blood of Christ' in 1 Peter 1:2 as the New Covenant believers had been brought into and which gives assurance of being in permanent relationship with God. This would make sense in the context where Peter described the secure inheritance which believers will receive at the return of Christ (1 Pt 1:3-5). The assurance of believers' relationship with God is embedded in the blood of Christ with which they were (are being continually) sprinkled. The blood of Christ is the assurance that Peter's audience are the true people of God, for in this blood, believers have a restored relationship and continuous fellowship with God. In this light, 'being sprinkled' by the blood of Christ is an eternally good gift from God to the believer (cf. Bigg, 1969:92). Virtually all references in the New Testament to the blood of Christ are metaphorical references to His atoning sacrifice and thus Peter's multiple references to the blood are, in themselves, the highest value indicator of absolute worth (cf. 1 Pt 2:24).

- **1 Peter 1:18-19**

The value of the believer's privileged position is enriched considering those who have obtained it were once following the 'futile way of life inherited from their forefathers' (1 Pt 1:18). This 'futile' (μάταιος) way describes a life that has no significant meaning – it is 'useless' (Louw & Nida, 1993:625) for it was lived 'pursuing a course of sensuality, lusts,

drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries' (1 Pt 4:3). The Gentile pagan lifestyle is a pursuit of meaningless temporary pleasure, but believers were redeemed from this way of life by the blood of Christ (1 Pt 1:18). The book of Ecclesiastes (cf. particularly Ec 2:1-11) stresses the meaninglessness of a society that pursues wealth and pleasure apart from being in a relationship with God and submitting to His revealed will (cf. Adams, 1978:42).

Meaningfulness is not present in what one possesses materially, but in who one is by the atoning work of Christ, for temporal things have no eternal value (cf. Cedar, 1984:126). When one attains a materialistic desire 'it lessens the desirability of it and becomes vain' (Adams, 1978:43). Possessions are meaningless when compared to the work of Christ (Gardner, 2013:52) as Peter contrasts in these verses the evanescent nature of material things like money (gold and silver) (1 Pt 1:18-19) and the eternal preciousness of Christ's blood (Schreiner, 2003:85; cf. also Cedar, 1984:127). Perishable materialistic things are of no value for spiritual redemption and a new life (Groenewald, 1977:31), and, therefore, Peter reminds his readers that they have been "born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable" (1 Pt 1:23-25). The world and the things of the world will pass away, but those born of the Word of the Lord (the Gospel of redemption by the blood of Christ) will endure forever. By redemption through the blood of Christ, believers were set free from meaningless pursuits of the pagan life, and Clowney (1988:72) strikingly notes that meaninglessness vanishes in the glory of redemption.

Those who deserved to be cast aside by God were cleansed and bought into fellowship with God with the atoning ransom price (the blood) of Christ (1 Pt 1:18-19). The concept of being 'redeemed' (λυτρό) has its roots in both Jewish (cf. Ps 34:22) as well as Greco-Roman culture (Cranfield, 1960:54; Achtemeier, 1996:127; Jobes, 2005:116) and referred either to a prisoner of war being purchased from the enemy or a slave being purchased from a former owner. What is noticeable in the context of the research question is that the value of Christ's blood as emphasised by Peter is spiritual and not material in nature – the blood is the eternally valid ransom price paid for forgiveness of sins (1 Pt 1:18) (cf. Bigg, 1902:118). Achtemeier (1996:127) avers that the redemption here is not only from sin and guilt but from the former way of life, but this seems to miss the specific words of the text (cf. Schreiner, 2003:86). Mark records in his Gospel that Jesus taught Peter and the other disciples that He would give His life as a 'ransom' (λύτρον) for many (Mk 10:45). This is a reference to being crucified – the act Peter associated with paying the price for the sins of believers (cf. 1 Pt

3:18). Other texts in the New Testament also use the term ‘ransom’ to refer to Jesus’ atoning payment for people’s sin (e.g. Rm 3:24; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 1 Tm 2:6, etc.).

Peter emphasises the value of the ransom price – the blood is a) ‘precious; b) not ‘perishable’ like gold and silver, and c) is that of ‘a lamb unblemished and spotless’ (1 Pt 1:18-19). The first two concepts (perishable and precious) were discussed above (refer 4.5.1.1 and 4.5.1.3). Regarding the third concept, the picture (cf. “as of” – 1 Pt 1:19) Peter employs of a ‘lamb’ is an Old Testament sacrificial concept which required the sacrifice to be ‘without blemish’ (e.g. Ex 12:5; Lv 22:17-25; Nm 16:14) and refers to the sinless perfection of Christ (cf. 1 Pt 2:22) (Bigg, 1902:119; Adams, 1978:44; Schreiner, 2003:86; Gardner, 2013:53). Regarding this perfect nature of Christ’s sacrifice, Peter’s audience had to value the ‘high price’ that was paid for them (Jobes, 2005:116). No other payment can redeem man’s soul from death (Clowney, 1988:70; Grudem, 1988:90) and bring him into a relationship with God (cf. 1 Pt 3:18).

A believer must value his new status of being in fellowship with God through the atoning work of Christ (Schreiner, 2003:84) – believers have ‘tasted that the Lord is good’ (1 Pt 2:3) (Jobes, 2005:117) – or as Davids (1990:71-72 – insert original) defines it: “ ... true and lasting value is found in the precious [i.e. high value] blood of Christ”. This great cost of the blood of Christ benefits believers (Jesus appeared for the believer’s sake – 1 Pt 1:20) and is worth infinitely more than perishable material things which are valued by the world (Gardner, 2013:52). What God has provided spiritually for the believer through the blood of Christ exceeds all material wealth (cf. Groenewald, 1977:31; Grudem, 1988:89).

#### **4.5.4.2 The value of the resurrection of Christ to believers**

In Peter’s first epistle, he directly refers to the resurrection of Christ on two occasions (1 Pt 1:3 and 1 Pt 3:21-22). Both references emphasise the result of Jesus’ resurrection for believers, and it is the means by which believers have been “born again to a living hope” (ἀναγεννήσας ἡμᾶς εἰς ἐλπίδα ζῶσαν) (1 Pt 1:3) and also the means by which believers are “saved in baptism ... for an appeal to God for a good conscience” (σώζει βάπτισμα ... συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς ἐπερώτημα εἰς θεόν) (1 Pt 3:21). By the preposition διὰ (translated ‘through’ as the “ ... marker of intermediate agent, with implicit or explicit causative agent” – Louw & Nida, 1993:797) on both occasions (1 Pt 1:3 and 1 Pt 3:21), Peter emphasises that it is ‘on account of’ (διὰ) the resurrection of Christ that believers possess a ‘living hope’ (ἐλπίδα ζῶσαν) (1 Pt 1:3) and an ‘appeal for a good conscience’ (συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς ἐπερώτημα) (1 Pt 3:21).

- **1 Peter 1:3**

In Peter's first reference to the resurrection, the value is in the result of new birth to a living hope (1 Pt 1:3). Present circumstances are not the defining factors for believers' joy in Christ, but the enduring soteriological reality of His resurrection (Cedar, 1984:113). Although believers might be perplexed by devastating physical circumstances (Jobes, 2005:4), Peter reminds his audience that they possess the 'greatest blessings of all' (Gardner, 2013:30 – cf. also Achtemeier, 1996:94), namely a 'living hope' (ἐλπίδα ζῶσαν) (1 Pt 1:3), for Christ rose from the dead and believers share in this new life – that is His resurrection life (Rousseau, 2010:125). Doubtlessly, the completion of this hope is future (i.e. the obtaining of the inheritance – Davids, 1990:19-20) but the source of that blessed hope is what believers already have in Christ. Rousseau (2010:125) refers to the quality of believers' possession of the resurrection life in terms of what the Johannine author/s called 'eternal life'/life from God, the Eternal, life of *quality* in the now, and *security* for eternity (Rousseau, 2010:125, cf. also Song, 1998:266-267). This means hope is not merely valuable due to a 'something' suffering believers will one day possess, but in Christ, hope is the precious present possession of believers.

The adjectival participle ζῶσαν (living) (1 Pt 1:3) shows the present nature of this hope, for eternal life has commenced at the new birth (cf. 1 Pt 1:23) – wherefore hope is the “ ... vibrant reality throughout the life of a believer” (Gardner, 2013:29) for the day of being united to Christ has already dawned for the believer at his new birth (Clowney, 1988:45). Believers' comforting amidst suffering lies in what they already possess in Christ – a new spiritual life (Grudem, 1988:61). Believers are being carried by hope (Groenewald, 1977:19), the guaranteed victory over and redemption from death and judgment and the certainty of the already-but-not-yet nature of future salvation (Louw, 1982:33; cf. also Best, 1971:76; Schreiner, 2003:61-62). In this perspective, Cranfield's (1960:34) identification of Christ as God's supreme gift to believers is fitting. In Christ the believer has the guarantee that salvation is secure in the present and will come to fruition at the return of Christ. Clowney (1988:46) appropriately wrote “ ... our hope is anchored in the past: Jesus rose! Our hope remains in the present: Jesus lives! Our hope is completed in the future: Jesus is coming!” and this hope is fundamental to overcoming hopelessness in the midst of suffering (Louw, 1982:33; Mack, 1994:189) for without hope the Christian consolation would be futile.

Some scholars (e.g. Cedar, 1984:113; Clowney, 1988:44; Gardner, 2013:29) highlight the importance of separating the contemporary use of the word 'hope' (which expresses an

uncertain desire) with its Biblical use, which expresses a present conviction/certainty that God always delivers on His promises. Cranfield (1960:37) makes the striking observation that despite all the grandeur and charm of the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations they were still people without genuine hope, for the warmth of the enjoyment of the present was always overshadowed by the chill of no secure future (Cf. Jobes, 2005:85). Mack (1994:190) (cf. also Best, 1971:77; Achtemeier, 1996:95; Schreiner, 2003:61; Jobes, 2005:84 for the concept of vain hope) appropriately warns against false hope, the focus of which is on “... human ideas of what is pleasurable and desirable.”

The idea that the answer to human suffering lies in obtaining what the human heart desires is futile, for Biblical hope’s focus is grounded in what God promises in the Scriptures, and He never promised that believers would get everything they desire (Mack, 1994:190). Mack’s (1994:190) warning against a ‘name-it-and-claim-it-approach’ to human desires is especially appropriate in the context of this study’s research aim to show that a “Prosperity Gospel” provides only false hope.

In the context of a “Prosperity Gospel”, false hopes of guaranteed abundant wealth and excellent health could lead to more confusion, despair and suffering. Peter has no such hopes in mind, but draws his audience’s attention to the spiritual blessing they obtained of sharing in the resurrection life through Christ. Knowledge of the living Christ and the powerful effect of His resurrection on the believer makes this life worth the effort and for this reason Louw (1982:35) refers to 1 Peter 1:3 as the most succinct summary of the essence of pastoral care. Keeping Biblical hope alive in the heart of human beings is essential in a world filled with suffering, for the promises of God build a network of meaning in which the believer can gain perspective on his seemingly hopeless situation and reorient himself in terms of his suffering (Louw, 1982:35).

- **1 Peter 3:21**

The second reference to the resurrection of Christ is tied to “baptism which saves you ... an appeal to God for a good conscience” (σώζει βάπτισμα ... συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς ἐπερώτημα εἰς θεόν) (1 Pt 3:21). This could also be considered a valuable spiritual blessing which all believers possess by means of their association with the resurrection of Christ.

Peter applies the benefits of Christ’s resurrection to the baptised believer (Cranfield, 1960:106). The context (1 Pt 3:18-22) in which such benefits (1 Pt 3:21) are to be interpreted, concerns Christ’s victory over all opposing powers, a victory in which believers

also share (Achte-meier, 1996:251, 262). The resurrection is arguably the greatest victory for it conquered death and believers share in this victory by means of their baptism which seals their full and final salvation, for Jesus is resurrected and occupies the position of Lord over all evil forces (1 Pt 3:22). Therefore, believers can be encouraged amidst their suffering, because Christ reigns supreme even though it might feel that evil is getting the upper hand, the believer's life is protected in their union with the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ (Davids, 1990:143; Gardner, 2013:122-123). In Christ's resurrection, the believer finds victory over the greatest troubles, even the doom of death (Clowney, 1988:164).

With his connection of believers' baptism to Noah and his family who were brought safely through the water (1 Pt 3:20), Peter reminds his audience that they will be saved from the judgment of God in the future. They have already been through the judgment of God in the death of Christ and survived through their association with the resurrection of Christ (Schreiner, 2003:194; Jobes, 2005:252).

Paul projects a similar argument of 'the doom that Christ has suffered' in Romans 6:1-11, where it is affirmed that not only did Christ die for the believer, but the believer also died with Christ, which enables him to live a resurrected life pleasing to God (Rm 6:4-6). Through baptism a believer shares in Christ's death and resurrection with the result that death is conquered (Achte-meier, 1996:267; cf. also Cranfield, 1960:105; Grudem, 1988:171; Davids, 1990:144). Christ died once for all, never to die again (Rm 6:9-10) and in His resurrection life, believers must live as having died to sin but are alive to God (Rm 6:10-11).

Peter, similar to Paul in Romans 6, indicates that those who share in the resurrection of Christ, as evidenced in their baptism, are able to live lives conscious of what God wants and exercise the will to follow it (Grudem, 1988:171; Achte-meier, 1996:270). Christ is the reason, for He leads His people to God because of His victory, through His death and resurrection, over the powers of evil (Achte-meier, 1996:268).

Peter references a 'pledge' (ἐπερώτημα) (1 Pt 3:21) which is made to God as a commitment by a baptised believer to have a consciousness of God which shapes one's behaviour according to His will (cf. Cranfield, 1960:106-107; Achte-meier, 1996:271; Jobes, 2005:255). It is debated among scholars whether ἐπερώτημα (1 Pt 3:21) is to be translated 'request' or 'pledge'. Davids (1990:145) argues that 'pledge' seems the more probable translation as Jews made pledges at their initiation into the community (for other scholars who agree with translating ἐπερώτημα as 'pledge' cf. for example Best, 1971:148; Groenewald, 1977:71; Jobes, 2005:255 – contra for example Bigg, 1902:165; Grudem, 1988:171-172; Schreiner,

2003:196). Such an interpretation could make sense as Peter continues to urge believers to “live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God” (1 Pt 4:2). Grudem (1988:172) warns, however, against the theological problem that such a pledge to maintain a good conscience could lead to a believer no longer trusting God to give (and sustain) salvation but rather relying on one’s own commitment to obedience for salvation.

This theological problem highlighted by Grudem (1988:172) could be overcome, however, by understanding the pledge in the context of the baptism which is salvific in nature due to the resurrection of Christ. The pledge a believer makes to God is understood to only be possible because of sharing through baptism in the resurrection of Christ, which enables the believer to live a resurrected life free from the dominion of sin (cf. also Rm 6:1-11). In the new life of the resurrection, the believer has the power to overcome sin and follow the will of God, even if that leads to suffering circumstances or despite suffering circumstances (1 Pt 4:1).

The wider textual context of the passage (1 Pt 3:15-22) emphasises the importance of the Lordship of Christ and concludes with a reference to Christ’s position at the right hand of the Father – a position of power and authority (cf. Davids, 1990:146; Gardner, 2013:122). The value of obedience or submission to the Lordship of Christ cannot be underestimated. Neyrey (1993:52) highlights this in the statement that in a dyadic society obedience has great value for in a Mediterranean culture “... those in subordinate positions should subject themselves or be subjected to authority above them” (Reese, 1993:125). In a Mediterranean dyadic society, God rewards those who live in humble submission (Reese, 1993:126) and Peter, therefore, encourages his audience who might be suffering due to their obedience to God (1 Pt 3:17), that God will exalt them at the proper time (1 Pt 5:6).

In Peter’s value system, believers’ obedience is a central theme and as such constitutes their ethical or holiness motif in Peter’s Christian life paradigm (Davids, 1990:17; Achtemeier, 1996:38). The suffering audience must ‘sanctify Christ as Lord in their hearts’ (1 Pt 3:15) for, as Peter reminds them in the opening section of the epistle, they were ‘chosen by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, unto obedience of Jesus Christ’ (1 Pt 1:1-2). They must remain ‘holy in all their behaviour’ (1 Pt 1:15) because of what God in His sovereignty has graciously given and will continue to give to them in Christ (cf. Achtemeier, 1996:38). As part of this holy conduct they were to remain steadfast in their suffering and not allow it to lead them off course. Regarding this steadfastness, Jobes (2005:48) profoundly noted that “... faith chooses to obey rather than take the path of least

resistance.” Peter’s teachings on obedience are not merely to help Christians survive their suffering, but to guide them towards benefitting from it (De Waal Dryden, 2006:45) for God uses the suffering to sanctify the believer.

This pursuit of a holy lifestyle might be part of the suffering that Christians are called to endure during their stay on earth. It is a ‘self-denial’ (refer Mk 8:34) and Jobes (2005:5) explains that sin typically aims at avoiding suffering but the believer must choose to suffer unfulfilled desires rather than sin. Davids (1990:17) agrees that such a pursuit of holiness under the Lordship of Christ requires abstention from ‘desires’ (ἐπιθυμέω) (1 Pt 1:14) – included in such ‘desires’ are money and possessions. Along this line of reasoning, Christians are instructed by Peter to humbly obey God’s will, whatever the cost involved might be or whatever suffering might come as a result of such obedience. In this way, believers are to follow in the steps of their Master Jesus (1 Pt 2:21-23; 4:1), for obedience in suffering is the pathway to glory (Bigg, 1902:99).

The believer’s commitment to obedience implies a missionary motif in 1 Peter (e.g. 1 Pt 2:12; 3:1; 3:15; etc.). Horrell (2009:507-508) seeks insight into what the earliest readers of 1 Peter considered to be its central themes and considers what two of the earliest New Testament manuscripts (The Crosby-Schøyen Codex ms 193 and the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex containing P72) disclose. By pointing out the group of writings to which 1 Peter belongs in the original assembled form of the Crosby-Schøyen Codex ms 193, Horrell (2009:505) highlights similar themes found in the books within this collection. One of the books grouped with 1 Peter is Jonah, and Horrell (2009:208) identifies that the clear missionary emphasis in Jonah is that which aligns the book with 1 Peter. Along the lines of Horrell’s (2009) hypothesis, Peter aims at helping his suffering readers to comprehend part of God’s intended purpose through their suffering – that by their behaviour they may witness to the world.

Peter’s audience found themselves in a world that was hostile but also watching, and for Peter, the believer’s lifestyle must be different from, but attractive to a hostile world (Carson & Moo, 2005:636-637). By their behaviour amidst suffering, believers are given an opportunity to testify to their trust in God’s power and goodness, for they exemplify hope which is based on the Lordship of Christ (Cedar, 1984:164), while outwardly they have little reason to remain hopeful. Obedience amid suffering would indicate to the world that a Christian’s hope is not in the comforts of this world but in God (Schreiner, 2003:45) (1 Pt 3:15). Piper (2010:93) concurs that the extent to which a Christian is willing to joyfully suffer



(worldly) loss reveals the value they place on the treasure of God. As Christians submit to God in their suffering, they reveal that God is their true treasure.

The importance of the motif of obedience to fulfil a missionary purpose amidst suffering cannot be underestimated. Piper (2010:24) states that if Christians worship money they act just like the world and that nullifies missions. Prosperity beliefs fail to offer unbelievers an alternative to what they already count as valuable and faith in a Jesus who would make you rich and healthy could, therefore, not be considered a 'new life' – it is still pursuing the same things that have always been pursued. Christians cannot attract the world by a message of prosperity, for that is no different from what unbelievers already pursue (cf. Piper, 2010:25).

The resurrection achieves for the believer a 'new resurrected life' with Christ, enabling him to obey despite the sacrifices it might require, and which stands as a testimony of hope and meaning to a hopeless and meaningless world.

#### **4.5.4.3 The value of the example of Christ's suffering to believers**

In 1 Peter, Christ's suffering is exemplar of godly suffering (e.g. 1 Pt 2:21; 4:1). It is to be acknowledged that the suffering of Jesus has unique aspects which cannot be imitated by His followers. Peter conveys that Christ died for the forgiveness of sins (1 Pt 2:24; 3:18) – within evangelical soteriology, clearly this cannot be exemplified by Christians in their suffering. The emphasis seems not to be on imitating the purpose of Christ's suffering, but to maintain the attitudes with which Christ suffered, for example Peter's emphasis on the meekness of Jesus amidst suffering (cf. 1 Pt 2:23) (Ladd, 1974:598). The questions that could assist the research on Peter's Christological teachings are: What could be learned by a suffering community from the way Jesus conducted Himself amidst suffering and in what way does the suffering of Christ benefit the believer?

The father of the modern-day prosperity movement, Kenneth Hagin (1982:3), also distinguishes between the 'example' and 'substitution' of Christ's suffering. Rather than emphasising Christ's attitude in suffering, Hagin (1982:3-4) argues that apart from persecution, Christ was a substitute for all other forms of suffering (like poverty and sickness). Hagin's essential argument seems to be that because Jesus emptied Himself of all when He came to earth, believers should never be empty<sup>28</sup>. It is to be acknowledged that

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<sup>28</sup> Hagin's (1982) 'shallow' (lack of responsible) exegesis can only lead one to conclude that Hagin's opinion on various Scripture passages are no more than exegetically unfounded speculations and possibly bordering on intentional Scripture-twisting.

Jesus' suffering did result in benefits for His followers, but the specifics and timing of those benefits seem to be under dispute.

Although most references to Jesus in 1 Peter are to His suffering (Davids, 1990:23), it is noted that Jesus' journey did not end at the tomb. God vindicated Him by the resurrection which is the assurance that those who follow Him will also be vindicated in the future. Christians are, however, living between the time of past redemption by His death and resurrection (1 Pt 1:2-3), and that final vindication (Jobes, 2005:47-48) and the revelation of Jesus in the future (1 Pt 1:5; 1:7; 1:14; 4:13; 5:1; 5:4). Matera (1999:184) adequately stresses the point by indication that Peter presents a Christology of suffering and that there is a connection between the past suffering of Christ and the present condition of believers and the glory of Jesus is the future expectation of those who presently follow in Christ's example of suffering.

In the present time (described as 'a little while' – 1 Pt 1:6; 5:10), Peter exhorts and encourages believers to imitate Jesus in suffering, for those who suffer will also experience a great reward when Jesus returns (Schreiner, 2003:46). By Jesus' example of suffering, Peter dispels the modern-day notion of a "Prosperity Gospel" that Christians who are not prospering are perpetually sinning or find themselves out of God's will, for Jesus is portrayed as sinless (1 Pt 2:22) and yet He suffered (cf. MacArthur, 2011:95). Likewise, Peter's encouragement to his suffering audience is that suffering did not imply that they were living in sin or that God was displeased with them (Davids, 1990:111; Jobes, 2005:197).

Necessary questions that must be asked regarding a "Prosperity Gospel" are *inter alia*: Was Jesus in contravention of God's will and/or in sin amid His suffering? What could be learned and imitated from Jesus' example in suffering? In what way do the past and future spiritual provisions of Christ encourage/comfort believers amid suffering? Peter's Christology could guide believers in answering these questions and formulate principles that could guide suffering believers regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". One pericope in 1 Peter, which relates to Christ's suffering as example for believers namely 1 Peter 2:21-25, is selected for exegetical analysis.

- **1 Peter 2:21-25**

1 Peter 2:21-25 is considered the heart of Peter's Christology (Jobes, 2005:192). In this pericope (1 Pt 2:21-25), Peter points believers to the reality that their newly obtained dignity in Christ also leads them to a new destiny, namely to suffer as Christ suffered (Best,

1971:118). The context leading up to this teaching on Christ's suffering example concerns slaves who were unjustly suffering physical and emotional pain at the hand of their cruel masters (1 Pt 2:18-20) (Groenewald, 1977:48ff; Adams, 1978:87; Davids, 1990:107; Schreiner, 2003:134) and suffering the loss of empowerment and status (Jobes, 2005:187). These suffering believers are comforted that God is with them and that by His power they will be sustained and enabled to overcome their suffering, for to remain standing firm in suffering is to experience God's grace (Groenewald, 1977:49). Cranfield's (1960:84) comment<sup>29</sup> that " ... we may apply the message of this section much more generally; for all sufferings, small or great, may become meaningful and dignified when accepted in the light of Christ's cross", assists the research aim of this study. The distasteful suffering of Peter's audience seemed meaningless, but Peter's message is that any share in the suffering of Christ results in dignity and value (Cranfield, 1960:84).

Peter's counsel then sets Jesus as the example of how to live a dignified, meaningful life even when facing the most miserable circumstances (Jobes, 2005:188). Peter's statement that believers were 'called for this purpose' (1 Pt 2:21) refers to the preceding teaching that slaves must trust God in suffering while doing good (1 Pt 2:18-20) and he confirms that it is within God's will for believers to suffer (Best, 1971:118; Schreiner, 2003:141; Gardner, 2013:86) before they will receive their reward/inheritance (Schreiner, 2003:141). Concomitantly, Peter described our heavenly calling, he does not conceal our earthly calling (Clowney, 1988:116) and before believers will share in Christ's glory (1 Pt 5:10) they are called to share in His suffering.

This finding effectively contradicts "Prosperity Gospel" tenets which deny the divine 'purpose' of remaining godly/obedient in the face of the reality of temporal suffering. Peter received the important lesson of the necessity and reality of suffering from Jesus Himself after Peter strongly objected to the suffering of Christ (Mk 8:31-32). In Mark 8:34-38 the call to suffering discipleship is explained. The semi-metaphorical references of 'self-denial' and 'cross bearing' (Mk 8:34) could ultimately indicate the cost of losing one's life for following Christ, but could also include any form of self-sacrifice (Van Emmenes, 2016:215). Following Jesus requires submission to His sovereign will even if it means suffering the loss of the entire world (Mk 8:35-37) in order for the soul to be saved at the appearance of the Son of man in all His glory (Mk 8:38). Clowney's (1988:117) comment that Christians who lay claim to no

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. also Schreiner (2003:134), Jobes (2005:187) and Achtemeier (1996:192,194) who argue that the principles addressed to slaves apply to all believers for the concept of slave is paradigmatic for the status of all Christians as they are slaves of God.

suffering corresponds to Peter's carnal advice to Christ to avoid suffering (cf. Mk 8:32). As for pastoral guidance regarding such prosperity beliefs it should be noted that Peter, by the time of his first epistle, considers the suffering of Christ, which is also an example for believers to follow, as central to his Christology (Jobes, 2005:192). Believers also need to be transformed from rejecting suffering as the will of God to accepting it as central to their Christology.

The word 'example' (ἀπολείπω) (1 Pt 2:21) was used at the time of Peter's writing to refer to children who, while they were learning to write, were required to trace over a pattern of alphabet letters with the objective to have the end product as close as possible to the original (cf. Cranfield, 1960:84; Bigg, 1902:146; Adams, 1978:88; Clowney, 1988:118; Achtemeier, 1996:199; Schreiner, 2003:142; Jobes, 2005:195). In this way believers are to 'follow in the steps of Jesus' (1 Pt 2:21) – as closely as possible. It is specifically the attitude of Jesus' meek obedience to His Father's will that serves as an example to believers (cf. Clowney, 1988:118; Jobes, 2005:195). Jesus had the ability to escape His suffering, but submitted to the Father's will without seeking to vindicate Himself (1 Pt 2:23) (Clowney, 1988:119), instead He was determined to 'keep entrusting<sup>30</sup> Himself to God'.

Jesus' silence (1 Pt 2:22-23) demonstrates that He was under control while suffering and that He trusted that God was in control. 'Entrustment' (παραδίδωμι) (1 Pt 2:23) refers to 'handing over' the entire situation – Himself, His suffering circumstances and His enemies – to the sovereign control of God (Grudem, 1988:138; Gardner, 2013:87). Trust in God's control does not mean suffering will necessarily be removed or that it will be easy. Jesus, after all, entrusted Himself and yet He died, yet such a trust in the presence of God in the midst of suffering serves as a great comfort to believers, for God will enable the believer's endurance through the trial (Gardner, 2013:87).

The believer's obedience in suffering is focussed on honouring God and serving others like Christ did (Adams, 1978:88) – a true call to 'self-denial' (Mk 8:34). Surely obedience in suffering is not an easy calling, but in this reality, God is more fully glorified (Grudem, 1988:137). It must be noted that believers should not seek suffering, but the reality of it is unavoidable. Believers' comfort in suffering, however, lies in the reality that their suffering is embedded in the suffering of Christ – this understanding enables believers to suffer for as

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<sup>30</sup> The imperfect tense of (παραδίδωμι) (1 Pt 2:23) indicates continuous action (Grudem, 1988:138; Schreiner, 2003:144; Gardner, 2013:87) which supports the translation "kept entrusting".

He (Christ) suffered for the believer, the believer is willing to also suffer for Him (Louw, 1982:31).

A shift occurs from Jesus' suffering set forth as an example for believers to imitate (1 Pt 2:21-23) to the purpose of His suffering by which believers benefit (1 Pt 2:24-25). The redemptive value of Christ's suffering finds its origin in the prophecy of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 (Bigg, 1902:147; Best, 1971:119; Grudem, 1988:137; Gardner, 2013:86) which Peter himself witnessed as it played out in the passion of Christ (cf. Cranfield, 1960:85; Clowney, 1988:119). Gardner (2013:86) adequately shows the connectedness of 1 Peter 2:22-25 with Isaiah 53 with the following summary:

- Verse 22 quotes Isaiah 53:9 ("no deceit in His mouth"),
- Verse 23 has a background in Isaiah 53:7 ("no threats and no retaliation"; "like a lamb led to the slaughter"),
- Verse 24 draws upon Isaiah 53:12 ("He bore the sins of many") and 53:9 ("by His wounds we are healed"), and
- Verse 25 reflects on Isaiah 53:6 ("we all, like sheep, have gone astray").

Christ suffered according to Isaiah's prophecy to fulfil the will of the Father (cf. Is 53:10) (Clowney, 1988:110) and to enact His redeeming love (Gardner, 2013:88) as He was bearing humanity's sins on the cross ('tree') (1 Pt 2:24). That Jesus was personally identifying with the sins of believers can be seen in the reference 'in His body' (ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ) (1 Pt 2:24). In this the compassion of the Lord Jesus can be witnessed – He identified with man in his greatest problem, namely his sin, and brought the ultimate solution, namely forgiveness.

By using the word ξύλον (tree/wood) (1 Pt 2:24) instead of σταυρός (cross), Peter might have had Deuteronomy 21:23 in mind, indicating that Jesus became a curse on behalf of believers (Grudem, 1988:139; Schreiner, 2003:145; Gardner, 2013:87). This indicates that Jesus' suffering benefits believers as He took upon Himself the punishment of sin in their place (Cranfield, 1960:86). In theological terms this is substitutive atonement (Schreiner, 2003:145; Gardner, 2013:88; cf. also Bigg, 1902:147) where Christ is both the priest bringing the offering and the offering itself.

The great benefit which Jesus' suffering brought to believers is the forgiveness of their sins which resulted in reconciliation with God (cf. 1 Pt 3:18). Believers are no longer subject to the pain associated with the penalty for sin for Christ already suffered for that, but the pain which remains for the believer is their calling to follow in the suffering steps of their Master (Clowney, 1988:123). Nonetheless, believers never have to experience separation from God in their suffering for separation from God was the penalty for sins, from which believers were freed in the suffering of Christ (cf. Cranfield, 1960:86).

The purpose of Christ suffering was not merely to lift the burden of sin but also to empower believers toward living a life of righteousness (1 Pt 2:24). Believers are no longer under the dominion of sin (cf. Rm 6:2) and through the death of Christ on their behalf are enabled to progress in sanctification (Davids, 1990:113; Achtemeier, 1996:203; Clowney, 1988:124; Grudem, 1988:140). The believer's freedom in Christ is precisely the empowerment to righteousness (compare 2 Cor 5:21) and Song (1998:224) articulates the believer's freedom in Christ as free from God's *wrath* (Rm 5), freedom from *sin* (Rm 6), free from the *law* (Rm 7) and free from *death* (Rm 8). An integral part of this sanctification is the example believers are called to follow in suffering (1 Pt 2:21-23) – to trust and obey in submission to God's sovereign will (cf. 1 Pt 4:19).

A final benefit for believers which flows out of Christ's suffering is found in Peter's statement that by "His wounds you were healed" (οὗ τῶ μώλωπι ἰάθητε) (1 Pt 2:24). Although it is possible that Peter could be referring to physical healing of the wounds slaves retained from the physical beatings they received from their cruel masters (Best, 1971:123; cf. also Schreiner, 2003:146), both the preceding and succeeding contexts strongly suggest that the subject here is spiritual healing (forgiveness of sins) rather than physical healing. 1 Peter 2:24 begins with a reference to "forgiveness of sins" and 1 Peter 2:25 continues with the purpose conjunction γάρ (for) to show that the healing referred to is spiritual 'returning' to the Shepherd (for scholars who argue for spiritual healing/forgiveness of sins cf. example Cranfield, 1960:86; Adams, 1978:89; Grudem, 1988:140; Achtemeier, 1996:204; Schreiner, 2003:146; Gardner, 2013:89; etc.). If this is a reference to physical healing it could be taken as referring to the final healing of the people of God with the return of Jesus Christ, but it is noteworthy that Peter does not refer to the healing by the hands of Jesus but the healing by the wounds of Jesus – the wounds " ... heal suffering at its root: the curse of sin ... (t)he wounds of Christ transforms present suffering – no longer is it bitter – it has become fellowship in the steps of Jesus" (Clowney, 1988:123). Believers will ultimately be led to the safety of their inheritance and final deliverance (Gardner, 2013:89). Having been taken into

God's care, believers are safe for eternity and can endure present suffering (Groenewald, 1977:52).

The two pictures in 1 Peter 2:25, namely 'Shepherd' (ποιμήν) and 'Guardian' (ἐπίσκοπος), illustrate the benevolent care of Jesus. These references are to Jesus specifically, as God the Father is nowhere in the New Testament entitled 'Shepherd' (Achteimeier, 1996:204; Schreiner, 2003:147). The implication is that believers are guided, protected, cared and provided for during their often, difficult pilgrimages on earth – one might be suffering, but believers will never be lost. Christ is with them, and they are under His care even if their physical circumstances are unpleasant (Davids, 1990:114).

Louw (1982:30-31 – free translation by researcher) adequately explains Peter's counsel to suffering believers regarding Jesus' suffering by noting that " ... the fact that the believer is not suffering by himself but in intimate fellowship with Christ, is a significant source of comfort ... believers are willing to share in [Christ's] suffering so that in the midst of suffering Christ might be glorified". The redemptive value of Christ's suffering enables believers to walk in the suffering footsteps of their Master on the way to glory.

#### **4.5.4.4 Preliminary normative principles from the value of Christ and being in Christ**

From the value of Christ and being in Christ, the following preliminary principles for remedial pastoral guidance can be suggested:

- Association with Christ could lead to various forms of suffering/loss, yet belonging to Christ is more valuable than what society in general considers precious and valuable;
- To gain material value in this world is not worth forfeiting the spiritual value obtained by being associated with Christ;
- Life and meaningfulness of life (human dignity) is not found in wealth or health, but prosperity (or value) focuses more on who the believer is in Christ rather than what one receives in God's providence;
- Believers are intrinsically valuable because of their relationship to God through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, despite what they have or do not have otherwise;
- Hope is a present precious possession of believers for eternal life found in the resurrection of Christ commences at the new birth;

- Hope is not dependant on circumstances but upon the past reality of the resurrection of Christ in which believers share in a new spiritual life;
- Hope assures a guaranteed victory over and redemption from death and judgment (certainty of eternal life);
- Human ideas of what is pleasurable and desirable are false/vain hope;
- Hope focuses on what God promised in the Scriptures and God never promised believers would get everything their hearts desire;
- False hope of abundant wealth and excellent health leads to confusion and despair;
- Believers share in Christ's victory over all opposing powers in the resurrection – death has also been conquered for believers and they will be saved from God's judgment in the future;
- Christ reigns supreme and even though it might feel that evil has the upper hand in suffering, believers are protected in their union with the resurrected Christ;
- A believer is enabled to live a resurrected life pleasing to God – in the new life of the resurrection, the believer has the power to overcome sin and follow the will of God, even if that leads to suffering circumstances or despite suffering circumstances;
- Believers who suffer due to their obedience to God or who remain obedient to God while suffering will be rewarded in the future appearance of Christ – believers must humbly obey God's will regardless of the cost involved;
- Christian faith in action is remaining steadfast in suffering and not allowing it to lead one off course;
- It is better to suffer unfulfilled needs and desires than to sin in order to escape suffering;
- Submission to God in suffering may witness to the world that a Christian's hope and comfort does not lie in this world but in God – God is their all satisfying treasure;
- Faith in a Jesus who wants to make you rich and healthy could not be considered a new life for that is the pursuit of the old (unconverted/pagan) life;



- Believers are initiated into a New Covenant by the blood of Christ which gives assurance of forgiveness of sins and a permanent relationship with Christ and thus to be sprinkled by Christ's blood is to be considered an eternally good/valuable spiritual gift from God;
- Believers have been redeemed from a life void of significant meaning of pursuing temporary pleasures which cannot satisfy the soul;
- Meaningfulness cannot be found in a pursuit of material possessions, but is found in the atoning work of Christ which brings the believer into fellowship with God;
- The world and the things of the world will pass away, but those born of the Word of the Lord (Gospel of redemption by the blood of Christ) will endure forever;
- Christ's bloodshed for believers is of greater value than material possessions and thus believers ought to value the high price which was paid for them – what God provided spiritually for the believer through the blood of Christ exceeds all material/temporal 'blessings';
- Those who imitate Christ in submitting to suffering will receive a great reward when Jesus returns;
- Suffering does not imply that the believer is in sin or that God is displeased with them for Christ was sinless and yet He suffered;
- It is within God's will for believers to suffer and believers are called to submit to God's sovereign will even if it results in the loss of the entire world;
- Believers should imitate Christ's meek submission to God's will and to keep trusting that God is in control;
- Trust in God does not mean suffering will be removed or will become easy, but trust in the presence of God in suffering serves as great comfort that God will enable the believer's endurance through the trials of life;
- Christian suffering is not vain but is embedded in the suffering of Christ and will result in future glory;
- Believers benefit from the suffering of Christ as it is testimony of His redeeming love by which He suffered the judgment for the believer's sin to provide forgiveness of sins;

- Believers never have to experience separation from God in their suffering;
- Believers obtained spiritual healing and have been brought under the permanent/eternal care, nurture, protection and provision of the Shepherd and Guardian of their souls;
- Faith in the crucified Christ implies a willingness to submit to God's will of suffering;
- Believers never suffer by themselves but in intimate fellowship with Christ.

#### **4.5.5 The value of belonging to the new people of God**

The value of belonging to the new people of God where every believer is enclosed in the mutual love in the church (cf. Rm 5:10) is something to be cherished. Believers are joined to one other in their union with Christ and Peter puts a very high value on this community bond that Christians share (e.g. 1 Pt 2:4-5, 2:9-10, 4:17; 5:1-5). Although Peter prefers Old Testament symbolic concepts such as 'living stones, a spiritual house and holy priesthood' (1 Pt 2:4-5) rather than the more common New Testament word *ἐκκλησία* (church) (Achteimeier, 1996:36), he reflects a simple organisation of the New Testament church in, for example, references to a 'flock' and 'elders' (1 Pt 5:1-2) and to 'brotherhood' (1 Pt 2:17, 5:9) (cf. Ladd, 1974:600).

Elliot (1990:132-150) gives an adequate summary of Peter's emphasis on group consciousness, solidarity and cohesion. Peter exhorts his audience to regard their internal cohesion and he emphasises the necessity of belonging to a group where one has acceptance and security (Elliot, 1990:133). Believers are stronger when they are bound together with a common identity and cause. This group-consciousness is an 'essential' for suffering believers (Elliot, 1990:133; compare 1 Pt 5:9). Peter specifically enunciates 'collective terms' such as 'household' (1 Pt 2:5), 'brotherhood' (1 Pt 2:17) and 'flock' to stress the cohesive unity and intimate association of believers (Elliot, 1990:133). It is particularly the new social structure which believers share that protects them from the onslaughts of " ... outside pressures calling for conformity" (Elliot, 1990:134).

The solidarity which believers share in Christ creates social distance from those who reject Christ and thus believers are to be independently coexistent with unbelievers (Elliot, 1990:135). Believers are encouraged to cease pursuing the social norm of 'Gentiles' (1 Pt 4:3) and break away from their past ignorant pursuits (1 Pt 1:18). The new people of God no longer share the social values of unbelievers and so the loss or sacrifice of worldly mores gives no reason for discouragement among believers. A believer's value lies in his dignity

and honour found collectively with other believers in their union with Christ (cf. Elliot, 1990:135), and now they share a distinctively different set of loyalties and motives (Elliot, 1990:140) – namely a submission and obedience to the will of God (cf. 1 Pt 4:2, 19).

Various scholars (e.g. Ladd, 1974:600; Davids, 1990:18; Carson & Moo, 2005:650; Jobes, 2005:45; etc.) share Elliot's (1990:132-150) sentiment above and show that Peter employs this theme of solidarity among believers as a means of encouragement to his suffering audience. If the letter was meant for a predominantly Gentile audience (as argued for by *inter alia* Clowney, 1988:31; Davids, 1990:8-9; Achtemeier, 1996:50-51; Schreiner, 2003:38-39; Carson & Moo, 2005:650-651) it makes this theme particularly comforting in suffering – those who at one point had no part in the people of God (1 Pt 2:10) and who dwelt in darkness (1 Pt 2:9), are redeemed by the blood of Christ (1 Pt 1:18-19) who lavished His mercy upon them (1 Pt 2:10). They were brought into His marvellous light (1 Pt 2:9) and He made them a people for God's own possession (1 Pt 2:9). Based upon these Petrine phrases one must conclude that the church is the evidence of the effectiveness of God's mercy (cf. Jobes, 2005:46).

Peter teaches that God's mercy is ever present with believers despite their suffering. Although they are rejected by society (1 Pt 2:4, 4:4, etc.) they have the comfort of the Christian community-cum-family where one is assured of brotherly love, compassion and sympathy (1 Pt 3:8) (Jobes, 2005:45). Although in Christ they became aliens and strangers in this world (1 Pt 1:1, 2:11), Christians have a secure home in the household of God, and it is this group who was called with the purpose of inheriting a blessing at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pt 3:9). This blessed assurance might well be the blessing Peter wants his readers to value beyond worldly honour, acceptance and prosperity.

Their communal solidarity (love, hospitality, service) (1 Pt 2:17, 4:8-11, etc.) and shepherding oversight instructed by Peter (1 Pt 5:1-5) serves the purpose of ministering the manifold grace of God to believers in times of suffering (1 Pt 4:10). Davids' (1990:19) comment concerning individual Christians who have less of a chance of surviving in suffering than those united in community, emphasises such a benefit of the Christian community. The relevance of Christian community in Peter's value system to this study is well articulated by Gardner (2013:64 – insert added by researcher) in the statement “ ... never did the church of the western countries need to study these ideas (Christian community) more earnestly than in today's individualistic world.”

The individualistic focus of a “Prosperity Gospel” on personal wealth and health as the ultimate of the Christian faith would benefit from considering Peter’s communal emphasis. The research paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, would gain much from an exegetical analysis of Peter’s ecclesiological emphasis and how it is employed to remedially guide those who are confused by their suffering. For this purpose, two pericopes were chosen for closer exegetical analysis, namely 1 Peter 2:4-10 and 1 Peter 4:7-11.

#### 4.5.5.1 The value of God’s people

- **1 Peter 2:4-10**

An analysis of the literary structure of 1 Peter shows that 1 Peter 2:4-10 is of central importance in the epistle. Elliot (1990:134) designates it as the “ ... culmination of an introductory affirmation of the identity, dignity and commonality of the Christian believers (1:3-2:10)” and “ ... establishing the basis and premise for the following exhortation to concerted action (2:11-5:11)”. This section (1 Pt 2:4-10) encourages believers to be aware of their true status as the ‘new’ people of God, and although they might lack worldly esteem and value (1 Pt 2:4), their joint union with Christ brings dignity and value beyond anything owned or esteemed by those who reject Christ (and them). Gardner’s (2013:63) reference to this section (1 Pt 2:4-10) as ‘a profound treasure’ capably describes a section which emphasises the riches of the privileges believers already have in Christ (cf. MacArthur, 2004:104).

In the building metaphor, Peter (cf. 1 Pt 2:4-8) emphasises the “living stone” concept (labelled the dominant image – Jobes, 2005:146) which is a metaphorical reference to the resurrected Jesus Christ (Best, 1971:100; Clowney, 1988:84; Achtemeier, 1996:154; Schreiner, 2003:103-104; Jobes, 2005:149). The modifying clause “which has been rejected by men” (ὅτι ἀνθρώπων μὲν ἀποδοκιμασμένον) (1 Pt 2:4) affirms the reality that Jesus suffered while on earth. Although the perfect tense of ἀποδοκιμάζω (ἀποδοκιμασμένον) (rejected) could indicate an ongoing action (cf. Mounce, 2003:224) which would allude to all those who, throughout the ages, reject the Gospel (Achtemeier, 1996:154), it is sensibly argued (cf. for example Schreiner, 2003:104; MacArthur, 2004:105) that the ‘rejection’ Peter refers to ultimately reached its climax specifically in the crucifixion.

Peter’s audience is, however, reminded with a contrasting conjunction δὲ (but) (1 Pt 2:4) that the suffering of Christ was God’s perfect plan to exalt His ‘chosen’ and ‘precious’ Son (1 Pt

2:4) by setting Him in place as the ‘choice stone, a precious corner stone’ (1 Pt 2:6-7). Peter’s quotation of the three Old Testament passages that refer to a ‘stone’, namely Isaiah 28:16 (cf. 1 Pt 2:6), Psalm 118:22 (cf. 1 Pt 2:7) and Isaiah 8:14 (1 Pt 2:8), all serve the purpose to confirm that it was God’s pre-planned will for Christ to suffer and become the foundation upon which the new people of God would be ‘built’ (οἰκοδομεῖσθε) (1 Pt 2:5).

God’s sovereign control regarding the suffering of Christ at the hands of evil men should not be missed (cf. Davids, 1990:90). The rejection (crucifixion) of God’s chosen ‘stone’ resulted in the victory of the resurrection by which the corner stone was set in place – the new building of God, which consists of believers, was to be built on Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. This picture is a reminder that God is sovereign over suffering to fulfil His good purposes for the community of God’s people and the personal suffering of the believer should also be interpreted in this light – as it was with Christ, believers are destined for vindication after suffering. Like the ‘choice’ (ἐκλεκτός) and ‘precious’ (ἐντιμος) ‘living stone’ (λίθον ζῶντα) (1 Pt 2:4), Jesus Christ, believers are also ‘chosen’ (ἐκλεκτός) (1 Pt 1:1) of God and of ‘precious value’ (τιμή)<sup>31</sup> (1 Pt 2:7) to Him (Schreiner, 2003:104; cf. also Davids, 1990:86; Achtemeier, 1996:154; Jobes, 2005:148). Louw and Nida (1993:734) classify the two nouns, ‘chosen’ (ἐκλεκτός) (1 Pt 1:1) and ‘precious value’ (τιμή) under the same semantic domain, namely “Status” and sub-domain, namely “Honor or respect in relation to status”, with similar definitions which focus on the value/status of a person resulting in due honour or respect. Contrary to a “Prosperity Gospel”, it must then be emphasised that a believer’s suffering is not an indication of the absence of God’s interest or a believer’s lack of value to God which results in being rejected by God, but ‘suffering lack in this world’ could much rather be evidence of divine election (cf. Achtemeier, 1996:153).

Peter labels the ‘living stone’, Jesus, as ‘choice’ and ‘precious’ in God’s sight (1 Pt 2:4) not merely to exalt Christ, but to indicate the ‘precious value’ (1 Pt 2:7) of those that are united to Him (Clowney, 1988:86). Peter refers to a series of Old Testament references (1 Pt 2:6-10) and he uses several metaphorical terms (1 Pt 2:5) to stress that those who ‘come to’ (προσέρχομαι) Christ (1 Pt 2:4) and/or ‘believe’ (πιστεύω) in Him (1 Pt 2:7) possess an even greater measure of the blessings of Old Testament Israel (Grudem, 1988:103). To gain understanding of the spiritual value Peter assigns to those joined to Christ, a brief discussion of the three metaphorical references in 1 Peter 2:5 follows below.

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<sup>31</sup> Believers are made precious to the Father by their connection with Christ. The phrase ὑμῖν οὖν ἡ τιμή τοῖς πιστεύουσιν in 1 Peter 2:7 could be literally translated: ‘to you that believe is the honour/precious value’ (cf. Clowney, 1988:87)

*Firstly*, Peter identifies believers as ‘living stones’ (λίθοι ζῶντες) (1 Pt 2:5), corresponding with Christ, the ‘living stone’ (λίθον ζῶντα) in 1 Peter 2:4. The adjectival participle ζάω (living) joined with the metaphorical usage of λίθοι (stones) describes God’s ‘building’ not as an object, but a living, biological entity (Clowney, 1988:87). Believers are alive (they have eternal life) in their new birth by the resurrection of Christ (1 Pt 1:3). In 1 Peter 1:3 Peter also uses the adjectival participle ζάω (living), to indicate the present nature of the believer’s ‘hope’ (Gardner, 2013:29), and in 1 Peter 2:5 Peter shows that believers already possess new life in their union with Christ – to some degree the ‘hope’ of a believer is already being realised. Believers’ blessings are not only future orientated (as in 1 Pt 1:4-5) but specifically belong to the people of God ‘now’ (i.e. in this present life). Peter puts a very high value on this blessed fact for in it believers find the joy and honour of sharing in the ‘new life’ with one another (cf. Clowney, 1988:88).

The *second* metaphorical reference which highlights the value (dignity and honour – Elliot, 1990:135) of believers, is found in the expression “being built up as a spiritual house” (οἰκοδομεῖσθε οἶκος πνευματικός) (1 Pt 2:5). The term ‘house’ (οἶκος) is used in the Old Testament to refer to the ‘temple’ (cf. 2 Sm 7:13; 1 Ki 3:2; etc.) (Schreiner, 2003:105; cf. also Cranfield, 1960:64; Grudem, 1988:105) and this would appear to be Peter’s intention for using the word in 1 Peter 2:5 – indicated by the subsequent references to a ‘priesthood’ and ‘sacrifices’<sup>32</sup>. The church (collective sum of believers) is identified by Peter as the new temple of God, not a physical house but a ‘spiritual’ (πνευματικός) one. Scholars (e.g. Cranfield, 1960:64; Best, 1971:102; Groenewald, 1977:38; Grudem, 1988:105; Achtemeier, 1996:156; Schreiner 2003:105; Jobes, 2005:148) consider ‘spiritual’ (πνευματικός) to be a reference to the fact that the church is animated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. As the temple was a symbol of the presence of God amongst His people, the church is now the privileged possessor of God’s presence by means of the indwelling Spirit of God (cf. Rousseau, 2010:78).

Although not as prominent as God the Father or Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit does feature in 1 Peter’s theological teaching<sup>33</sup>. Peter’s reference to the Spirit as doing a ‘sanctifying work’

<sup>32</sup> Some scholars (cf. Elliot, 1966:157-159; Elliot, 2000:412) prefer the term οἶκος as reference to a ‘household’ rather than to a ‘temple’. However, as Achtemeier (1996:159 – cf. also Best, 1969:280) shows, the contextual evidence makes it difficult not to see the concept of ‘temple’ within the phrases of 1 Peter 2:5.

<sup>33</sup> “Prosperity Gospel” preachers seem to have a special fondness of the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit. In a “Prosperity Gospel” belief system, the Holy Spirit is a ‘power’ that can be utilised toward the prosperity of a believer (compare MacArthur, 1992:325). Although it falls outside the

(1:2) concludes the full circle of Trinitarian involvement in the lives of his suffering audience. The purpose of the 'Spirit-indwelled' house is to create a 'holy' (ἅγιος) priesthood to offer up 'spiritual' (πνευματικός) sacrifices (1 Pt 2:5). Grudem (1988:105) indicates that the beauty of spiritual characteristics such as holiness and faith is more valuable than gold and jewels.

The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit which brings believers into spiritual communion with God supersedes the beauty and value of any temporal material temple (MacArthur, 2004:107). With so little else being said about the work of the Holy Spirit in 1 Peter<sup>34</sup>, by default this spiritual emphasis of a sanctifying work towards holiness and faith could be interpreted as an important concept for Peter with which he instructs his suffering audience towards a new value system.

The reality of the Spirit's presence indicates how believers share in the honour of Christ and gives assurance of their relationship to God – as it is fittingly validated by the Old Testament Jewish concepts of 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession' (1 Pt 2:9), a new 'people of God' (1 Pt 2:10) (cf. Clowney, 1988:88). Although Peter's audience could have been deprived of any social status (e.g. 1 Pt 3:16), they are comforted by the reality that they are part of what Jobes (2005:149) calls a " ... much grander and everlasting community." Concomitantly, it is by the values and convictions of this new community that they must now understand themselves, not as self-centred individuals, but as each taking their place in the spiritual house (Jobes, 2005:149).

The 'place' of the believer in the 'spiritual house' to which Jobes (2005:149) refers is encapsulated in the *third* metaphorical reference employed by Peter to stress the great measure of communal blessing that believers possess, namely that believers are joined

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scope of the current research to do a complete analysis and critique regarding a "Prosperity Gospel's" teaching on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, one aspect relevant to the current research is the popular belief in "Prosperity Gospel" circles that the presence of the Holy Spirit is evidenced in those who are 'blessed' – with the logical antithesis that suffering, therefore, manifests with those 'without the Spirit.'

This concept is expressed by the term 'anointing of the Spirit' that results in countless blessings like healing, provisions and even debt-free living (Hinn, 2016). The assumption (which appears to come over more like an accusation – researcher) is that believers who lack these 'blessings' are without the 'anointing' of the Spirit. Basically, this perspective is abusive in its execution, as Johnson and Van Vonderen (1991:56; compare also Rousseau, 2010:14) show: in the context of this study, believers without the 'prosperity' touted by a "Prosperity Gospel" must view themselves negatively for they fall short on the presence of the Holy Spirit. This sort of belief contradicts Peter's teaching in 1 Peter 2:5 and 4:14.

<sup>34</sup> A further reference to the Holy Spirit is found in 1 Peter 4:14 where Peter conveys that suffering is an indication that the Spirit of God rests upon believers, which is the blessing from God amid suffering. Groenewald (1977:82) comments that it is to be noted that it is this Spirit that is a believer's guarantee of a glorious inheritance (2 Cor 1:22, 5:5; Eph 1:14). The present presence of the Spirit also serves as an eschatological hope to suffering believers.

together ‘for a holy priesthood’ (εἰς ἱεράτευμα ἅγιον) (1 Pt 2:5). The preposition εἰς (for) (1 Pt 2:5) has the force of introducing the purpose for God constituting believers as a ‘spiritual house’ (Achteimer, 1966:156; Schreiner, 2003:106) so that they would be ‘a holy priesthood’ (1 Pt 2:5). The active role of this ‘priesthood’ is further explained in the phrase ‘offering up spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ’ (1 Pt 2:5).

In order to show the privileged spiritual position that all believers possess in their priesthood, MacArthur (2004:108) elaborates on the Old Testament privileges of ‘priesthood’ such as sovereign election by God, cleansing rituals for sins, and being clothed for service. MacArthur (2004:108) then attributes similar privileges on all New Testament believers – God elected them for salvation; they are washed of their sins by the blood of Christ and are clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

Some scholars (e.g. Cedar, 1984:138; Grudem, 1988:107) view this reference to a ‘priesthood’ (cf. also 1 Pt 2:9 βασιλῆιον ἱεράτευμα – ‘royal priesthood’) in the light of the Reformation teaching of the ‘priesthood of all believers’ – the doctrine which affirms the equal right and privilege of every believer to draw near to God in worship without the mediatory work of an ordained priest (cf. for example Grudem, 1988:107). Achteimer (1996:156) (cf. also Schreiner, 2003:106), however, argues that the idea in 1 Peter 2:5 (also 1 Pt 2:9) is not the individual status of a believer as having access to God, but the emphasis is on the corporate function of the priesthood as the consecrated and separated people of God (Davids, 1990:87), not merely obtaining a valued status but also having a valued communal ministry of ‘offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God’ (1 Pt 2:5) (cf. Clowney, 1988:88).

In contrast to the physical (animal and other) sacrifices of Old Testament Israel (cf. example Ex 29:10-19; Lv 1-6), the new chosen priesthood of God (the church) brings ‘spiritual’ sacrifices – an obvious parallel to the identification of believers as a ‘spiritual’ house (1 Pt 2:5). God’s preference of ‘spiritual’ over ‘physical’ sacrifices was already conveyed to Israel in the Old Testament in passages such as Psalm 40:6, Hosea 6:6 and Micah 6:6-8, where it is indicated that God is more concerned about the attitude and holy conduct of His worshippers than about animal sacrifices. With the inauguration of the New Covenant, it became clear that animal sacrifices were no longer required (cf. Heb 8:13; 9:11-15; 10:1-18) and that only ‘spiritual’ sacrifices remain.

The exact nature of Peter’s reference to ‘spiritual’ sacrifices (1 Pt 2:5) has elicited extensive suggestions by scholars as to its practical application, as Peter does not elaborate



specifically on the practical nature of such sacrifices. Some scholars (e.g. Bigg, 1902:129; Lenski, 1966:90; Adams, 1978:64) argue for 'prayer and praise' as the primary practical application of these 'spiritual sacrifices'. The practical emphasis falls on verbal expression of thanksgiving/gratitude to God for all the blessing that has been poured out on believers through Jesus Christ, as Clowney (1988:96) indicates: "(w)e adore God not to gain his favour, but because adoration is response to his grace ... (t)he core of our worship is not receiving but giving". With Peter's emphasis on the communal nature of this 'priesthood' and considering this view of 'prayer and praise' resonates in Hebrews 13:15, which states: "Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name", 'prayer and praise' as practical expression of the spiritual sacrifices Peter had in mind should be considered plausible.

Other scholars (e.g. Achtemeier, 1996:158-159) make a strong case that the primary focus of the 'spiritual sacrifices' (1 Pt 2:5) of the 'holy priesthood' (1 Pt 2:5), is found in the parallel phrase 'royal priesthood' a few verses later (1 Pt 2:9). In 1 Peter 2:9, Peter states the 'purpose' (ᾠς) of the priesthood as the enablement to " ... proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light". Achtemeier (1996:158) understands this as an evangelistic witness to the world. There seem to be no exegetical grounds upon which to discard that Peter, at least in part, intended to encourage his audience toward an evangelistic effort in their 'spiritual sacrifices'. Jobes (2005:150) makes the important point, however, that such evangelistic efforts are not merely verbal witnessing, but also to be seen in practical holy living. In this light, the spiritual sacrifices include all good behaviour that results from the sanctifying work of the Spirit to the praise and honour of God.

Davids (1990:88-89) acknowledges 'praise and thanksgiving' as a form of 'spiritual sacrifices' but also emphasises practical, loving service to other believers, which particularly finds its expression in sharing material goods. The 'spiritual' identification of the sacrifices should then not be understood as excluding all 'material' components (cf. Grudem, 1988:105; Davids, 1990:89). The sacrifice of sharing with those in need is traced back to the earliest stages of the church (cf. for example Ac 2:44-45; 4:34-35) and the New Testament frequently admonishes believers toward self-sacrificial sharing of material goods (e.g. 1 Tm 6:17-19; Eph 4:28; Rm 12:8).

There is merit to all the scholarly views regarding 'offering spiritual sacrifices' presented above, but to limit the practical application to merely one aspect, however, seems short-sighted in light of the entire New Testament's teaching on the subject. The sacrifices of

believers concern the ‘whole person’ (Gardner, 2013:66) and all pure service to God qualifies as ‘spiritual sacrifices’ (Grudem, 1988:106). Any act of service which flows as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit is acceptable to God (cf. Schreiner, 2003:107). MacArthur (2004:115-117) offers a range of New Testament passages which all present valid applications of the kind of sacrifices Peter likely had in mind. These include offering one’s body (Rm 12:1-2), offering praise (Heb 13:15), good works (Heb 13:16), sharing possessions with those in need (Heb 13:16), evangelistic efforts (Rm 15:15-16), prayers (1 Pt 4:7; 1 Tm 2:1-2) and loving others (1 Pt 4:8; 1 Jn 4:7). The common quality in all these New Testament applications regarding ‘spiritual sacrifices’ is found in their sacrificial nature.

Peter would be aware of the expectation of selfless service to others by all who follow Jesus, rather than pursuing selfish gain. In Mark 10:32-45 the incident of James and John requesting the prominent positions at the right and left hand in Christ’s kingdom is recorded. This was an event that Peter witnessed, signifying selfishness which he himself probably shared – indicated by Mark 10:41 which state that the other disciples became ‘indignant’ with James and John. Peter and the other disciples were upset with James and John for they also desired the prominent positions James and John requested (Van Emmenes, 2016:154) – the twelve disciples equally craved personal benefit and no one was willing to give preference to or exemplify love for another.

This selfish attitude of the twelve disciples presented a perfect opportunity for Jesus to teach His disciples on the true value system of God’s kingdom, namely to serve, rather than to be served (Van Emmenes, 2016:155-158). Value in God’s kingdom is entirely different to that which is esteemed by the world. Jesus uses the concept of ‘slave’ (δοῦλος) (Mk 10:44) to guide His disciples to the understanding that in God’s kingdom, self-sacrificial service to others far outweighs personal power and superiority (Van Emmenes, 2016:157). This is a radical reversal of values: to serve rather than to be served, to deny self rather than to seek self-glorification and self-gratification. In this, Jesus led the way, and “ ... [He] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” ( ... οὐκ ἦλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν) (Mk 10:45). The two infinitives in Mark 10:45 (διακονηθῆναι [to serve] and δοῦναι [to give]), both stress the attitude of selflessness for the benefit of others. Jesus presents His followers with the ultimate example of how to obtain ‘greatness’ in God’s Kingdom, namely by means of self-sacrificial servanthood. Jesus’ teaching on discipleship, that the ambition and desire for personal gain conflicts with His mission of selfless service (France, 2002:409), is likely reflected in Peter’s teaching on ‘offering spiritual sacrifices to God’ (1 Pt 2:5). In God’s house, the ultimate value

is not found in the greatness one possesses by worldly standards, but in self-sacrificial service and humility – this could rightly be called a spiritual sacrifice that is ‘acceptable to God’.

The high degree of group consciousness raised by Peter accentuates the value of the mutual support believers enjoy in their unity in Christ. Peter requires, however, that the new people of God value such solidarity to the extent that they sacrificially serve one another through Christ. Elliot (1990:134) summarises it well: “A place of belonging, mutual acceptance and security could only be preserved through a heightened sense of involvement in a communal enterprise.” For believers to ‘survive’ in a world of suffering, they need to value their solidarity and commit to the communal enterprise of ‘loving the brotherhood’ (1 Pt 2:17).

#### **4.5.5.2 The value of the mutual love between believers**

- **1 Peter 4:7-11**

The unity between believers is particularly strengthened by sincere brotherly love (1 Pt 1:22-25; 2:17; 3:8-12; etc), and 1 Peter 4:7-11 depicts such loving attitudes and actions which encourage group solidarity (Elliot, 1990:145). Although the overriding theme of this section of verses is ‘love’ (Best, 1971:158), it is the recipients, namely fellow believers, that Peter emphasises (evident in the repetitive phrase, ‘one another’ [ἑαυτοῦ – 1 Pt 4:8, 10; ἀλλήλων – 1 Pt 4:9] – Elliot, 1990:145). This would indicate that the crux of Peter’s teaching in this pericope (1 Pt 4:7-11) concerns attitudes and actions that would strengthen community life among believers (Achtemeier, 1996:293). Considering that suffering is the overarching theme of the chapter (i.e. 1 Pt 4) (Cedar, 1984:174), the solidarity among believers is crucial to Peter’s counsel. Peter highly values the believing community as a ‘source of strength’ (Achtemeier, 1996:293) for those who, like Peter’s audience, are suffering as Christians.

The introductory statement in 1 Peter 4:7, that the ‘end is near’ (Πάντων δὲ τὸ τέλος ἤγγικεν), should not be understood as referring to the end of the world as a mere catastrophic event (Cranfield, 1960:111; Jobes, 2005:276), but rather that the goal of God’s redemptive history is near fulfilment (MacArthur, 2004:235; Gardner, 2013:130). The perfect tense of the verb ἤγγικεν (is near) (1 Pt 4:7) could be better translated ‘has come near’ (Achtemeier, 1996:294)

to indicate that the emphasis is not merely on the approaching of an event, but that the end-time events are already under way<sup>35</sup>.

Peter's statement in 1 Peter 4:17 that "it is time for judgment to begin", (specifically for the household of God) supports the present nature of the 'end' (τέλος) (1 Pt 4:7). The reason Peter considers the end to be 'near' (ἐγγίζω) (1 Pt 4:7), is because the major events in God's redemptive plan, namely the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, have already taken place and now only one aspect of that divine plan remains for the goal of human history to be realised, namely the return and rule of Christ (Jobes, 2005:275). The death and resurrection of Christ inaugurates the 'last days' (Schreiner, 2003:210; cf. also Grudem, 1988:180) and now believers look for the final event, namely the imminent return of their Saviour (on immanency cf. Achtemeier, 1996:294; MacArthur, 2004:235). On God's timeline of redemptive history, it could be said that any time after Jesus' resurrection the goal of history is near, as Christians are living in the last stage of the redemptive plan of God. It is thus accurate to consider it no truer for modern believers that the end is near, than for Peter's audience (Jobes, 2005:276). The encouragement to believers who live in the interval between the ascension and the return of Christ, which is marked by affliction (Groenewald, 1977:77), is that the return of Christ signifies the termination of present persecution and suffering (Adams, 1978:129). Cranfield (1960:110) adequately articulates this encouragement when he writes that the present suffering of the believer acts as a sign that the end is near for the catastrophes of life indicate that this corrupt world is passing away and those who believe are pointed to the return of Christ. Believers find significance, meaningfulness, a sense of value, self-worth and identity, not in the temporal things of this world, but in the good news of the eschatological hope Peter announces: the end is near (cf. Cranfield, 1960:110; Jobes, 2005:275).

It is this anticipated coming of Christ that calls for 'sound judgment' (σωφρονέω) and 'sobriety' (νήφω) (1 Pt 4:7) among believers. Louw and Nida's (1993:352, 353) classification of the two concepts, 'sound judgment' (σωφρονέω) and 'sobriety' (νήφω), under the same domain (Think) and subdomain (To think, thought) defined respectively as "an ability to reason and think properly in a sane manner" and "to be in control of one's thought processes and thus not be in danger of irrational thinking", support the notion of many scholars (e.g. Schreiner, 2003:211; MacArthur, 2004:240; Jobes, 2005:277) that the

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<sup>35</sup> The predicament with understanding the 'end' as merely referring to the event of the 'end of the world', is how Peter could make that statement and 19 centuries later it has still not occurred (cf. Cranfield, 1960:112).

two concepts are closely related or even to be understood as synonyms. With these concepts, Peter calls Christians to disciplined watchfulness (Bigg, 1902:172; Best, 1971:159; Achtemeier, 1996:294; MacArthur, 2004:240) with a commitment to God and their fellow believers. This ‘awareness’ is necessary to maintain internal cohesion among believers (Elliot, 1990:145) and requires believers to think rightly about themselves (Rm 12:3) (Cedar, 1984:175) and to avoid undue emotions or uncontrolled passions (MacArthur, 2004:240). Cranfield (1960:113) aptly expresses this thought by saying that believers are to interpret their suffering in the light of the return of Christ and should not be distracted by the preoccupation of the comforts of this world and especially the deceitfulness of riches.

An awareness of the ‘end-time’ in which believers live, brings a seriousness and gives meaning to the present (Achtemeier, 1966:294), a meaningfulness which Schreiner (2003:211) expresses in the words: “making your life count now”. This meaningful life is found in a pursuit of holiness (cf. MacArthur, 2004:235), which could be linked to Peter’s condemnation of foolish worldly pursuits such as sensuality, lust, drunkenness, etc. (1 Pt 4:3-5). The eschatological hope of believers is an incentive for meaningful spiritual duty.

The first aspect of spiritual duty concerns the believer’s ‘fellowship with God’ (cf. Best, 1971:159; Cedar, 1984:174) – expressed in Peter’s link between ‘soundness/soberness’ and ‘prayer’ (1 Pt 4:7). Believers cannot effectively enjoy fellowship with God through prayer if their minds are distracted by worldly pursuits (MacArthur, 2004:240). Some scholars (e.g. Elliot, 1990:145; Achtemeier, 1996:294; Gardner, 2013:131) place greater emphasis on the theme of community in the pericope (1 Pt 4:7-11)<sup>36</sup> and, therefore, argue for a communal emphasis in Peter’s exhortation to prayer, i.e. corporate prayer is not only an expression of the worshippers’ union with God, but also an expression of their union with one another. 1 Peter 3:7, which states that a husband’s disunity with his wife could hinder his prayers, serves to support that, in 1 Peter 4:7, Peter requires unity among believers to be expressed in corporate prayers.

In the context of Peter’s audiences suffering circumstances, such communal prayer would show a dependence upon the Lord (Adams, 1978:130; Schreiner, 2003:211), find a solace in God through difficult times (Groenewald, 1977:77) and seek His wisdom in the affairs of life (Davids, 1990:157; Gardner, 2013:131). The prayers of believers should focus on ‘one

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<sup>36</sup> This theme of community is evident in the repetitive phrase, ‘one another’ [ἐαυτοῦ – 1 Pt 4:8,10, ἀλλήλων – 1 Pt 4:9].

another', where God is requested to move in the time that remains and encourage fellow believers in their suffering (cf. Clowney, 1988:178).

With the 'nearness of the end', Peter is not proposing a kind of passivity for believers where they merely pray for God's provision toward fellow believers as they await the consummation of the end-times in the glorious return of the Lord, but he brings to his readers' attention their active role in caring for one another during their stay on earth (1 Pt 4:8-11). By using the phrase 'πρὸ πάντων τῇν' (above all) (1 Pt 4:8), Peter emphasises the predominant virtue in each believer's responsibility towards communal welfare, namely that of 'love' (ἀγάπη) for 'one another' (1 Pt 4:8) (cf. Best, 1971:159; Adams, 1978:131; MacArthur, 2004:241; etc.). A believer finds meaning, purpose and direction in life by the role they play in enabling the Christian community to 'survive' through such love (cf. Jobes, 2005:278).

The importance of the virtue of love is further highlighted by Peter expressing the need for the 'love' between the brotherhood to be 'fervent' (ἐκτενής) (1 Pt 4:8). The word ἐκτενής means 'to stretch out' (Louw & Nida, 1993:657) and in the context of 1 Peter 4:8 refers to a continuous or persistent action – as Achtemeier (1996:295) notes “ ... the love stretches to the extent of not even being cooled down by suffering.” In the context of suffering, the temptation is to become selfish and consider one's own needs as of primary importance (Groenewald, 1977:77), but Peter proposes a more meaningful vision for believers – that of communal well-being through sacrificial love (cf. MacArthur, 2004:241).

Peter firstly elaborates on how fervent love expresses itself by the phrase ὅτι ἀγάπη καλύψει πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν (because love covers a multitude of sins) (1 Pt 4:8). Commentators differ on the interpretation of this phrase, and two main views dominate the discussion: either Peter means that God's love graciously covers the sins of His people<sup>37</sup> (cf. for example Best, 1971:159) or believers' love for one another means they are willing to forgive other believers who transgress against them (cf. for example Groenewald, 1977:78; Adams, 1978:131).

It might be valid to take the phrase as a general axiom (as in Pr 10:12 and Ja 5:20), meaning love covers sins regardless of whether it refers to God forgiving man or man forgiving his

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<sup>37</sup> Some scholars (e.g. Bigg, 1902:173) consider the phrase 'love covers a multitude of sins' to mean the love believers have toward one another as a type of secondary atonement before God (i.e. God forgives someone's sin because of the love shown to another), but this creates soteriological complexities and Peter himself is clear that atonement lies in the blood of Christ (cf. 1 Pt 1:18-19, 2:24; 3:8). Furthermore, such a love toward atonement would be self-centered rather than self-sacrificial (cf. Groenewald, 1977:77). This view should be rejected as it has been by many scholars (e.g. Groenewald, 1977:77; Davids, 1990:158; Achtemeier, 1996:29; Schreiner, 2003:212).

fellow man (Cranfield, 1960:114; Davids, 1990:158; MacArthur, 2004:241). Contextually though, it makes sense that Peter applies the proverb specifically to believers overlooking or forgiving the offenses committed by other believers against them, for love's purpose is to bind believers together in unity (cf. Adams, 1978:131; Elliot, 1990:145; Achtemeier, 1996:295). To maintain a strong solidarity among believers, especially in pressured times, love must 'stretch' and continually seek to offer self-sacrificial forgiveness to other believers (Achtemeier, 1996:295; cf. also MacArthur, 2004:242 and Jobes, 2005:278).

Authentic love is also shown in practical ways such as 'hospitality' (φιλόξενος) (1 Pt 4:9). The word literally means 'to be kind to strangers' (Louw & Nida, 1993:455 – domain: Association, sub-domain: Show Hospitality) and thus the scholarly view (e.g. Bigg, 1902:173; Cranfield, 1960:115; Adams, 1978:131) that Peter could be referring to providing lodging, meals and other basic needs to travelling evangelists/preachers, is trustworthy. Places of temporary lodging were not common in New Testament times (Adams, 1978:131; Clowney, 1988:183; Jobes, 2005:280), and the very few inns that were available were in most cases unaffordable to the average believer (cf. Davids, 1990:159; Schreiner, 2003:213). For this reason, travelling ministers of the Gospel depended on the benevolence of fellow believers to share the resources God had given them.

Some scholars (e.g. Achtemeier, 1996:297; Jobes, 2005:280), however, do not exclude the possibility that Peter is also (or maybe even predominantly) requiring a hospitable attitude toward believers within his audience's immediate community. The objective phrase 'one another' (ἀλλήλων) (1 Pt 4:9) and Groenewald's (1977:78) argument that many believers were likely driven from their homes and left destitute by persecution (cf. also Davids, 1990:159 and Elliot, 1990:146), support the need to provide lodging even to those within their own community.

Regardless of who Peter has in mind as recipients of his audience's hospitality, the main emphasis is that this was a necessary way to express sacrificial love to the brotherhood (Achtemeier, 1996:297) and thus the attitude with which believers make such sacrifices, is emphasised by Peter in the phrase 'without grumbling' (ἄνευ γογγυσμου) (1 Pt 2:9). It is probably accurate to state that hospitality would come at great expense to Peter's audience (cf. Best, 1971:160; Groenewald, 1977:78) for they themselves possibly lived from hand-to-mouth (Davids, 1990:159). Believers would only be motivated toward such inconvenient and undesirable sacrifice, if they 'live[d] in light of eternity' (1 Pt 4:7 – 'the end of all things is near') (Cranfield, 1960:115). Elliot (1990:145) makes another important contribution toward

the believer's motivation for sacrificial hospitality in pointing to the social bonds which are furthered among the believing community in the process of self-sacrificially opening their homes and sharing resources.

Peter expounds on one final expression of self-sacrificial love toward communal solidarity, namely that of 'serving one another' (ἐαυτοὺς αὐτὸ διακονοῦντες) (1 Pt 4:10). As each believer received a gift (ἐκαστος καθὼς ἔλαβεν χάρισμα) (1 Pt 4:10) they must make a significant contribution toward the well-being of the believing community (cf. MacArthur, 2004:244). None were left out/excluded from receiving a gift for 'each one' (ἐκαστος) (1 Pt 4:10) (cf. Cedar, 1984:178, Achtemeier, 1996:297; Schreiner, 2003:214) was so favoured, and this gives meaning, purpose, and value to the life of every believer.

The variety of gifts (compare Rm 12:6f) distributed by the Lord as He willed is expressed in the word 'manifold' (ποικίλος) (1 Pt 4:10). Peter's point is each believer is the benefactor of a unique gift (cf. MacArthur, 2004:243) bestowed upon them by the gracious act of God<sup>38</sup> with which they can serve other believers in a meaningful way (cf. also Rm 12:3-13 for similar exhortations from the Apostle Paul towards contributing to the well-being of the body by means of serving one another in love with the gifts that were graciously received from the hand of God). Peter's encouragement to his audience, who had little to boast of in worldly value and esteem, is that they possess a valuable God-given ability to make a meaningful impact in this life. Furthermore, the variety of gifts bestowed upon the church is to be greatly valued by believers (cf. Clowney, 1988:181), for this indicates that God provided manifold ways for His grace to be ministered to those who suffer many kinds of trials (Jobes, 2005:281; cf. also Grudem, 1988:182).

The purpose of gifts is to avail them for the benefit of other believers (cf. Cedar, 1984:178; Schreiner, 2003:214) (compare 1 Cor 12:7). Peter, therefore, calls upon his readers to be 'good stewards' (καλοὶ οἰκονόμοι) (1 Pt 4:10) of the gracious gifts they have received. The word οἰκονόμος (steward) (1 Pt 4:10) described household managers (Best, 1971:160; Groenewald, 1977:79; Davids, 1990:160; Achtemeier, 1996:298) who were to manage the master's goods toward the well-being of all who were part of the household. What believers then received from God by His grace is not for self-centred gratification, but for sacrificial service toward communal benefit and unity (cf. Adams, 1978:132). Believers are to make "... one concerted effort to serve the spiritual and practical needs of the family ... " (Elliot,

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<sup>38</sup> The word χάρις (grace) (1 Pt 4:10) is an objective genitive, which indicates that gifts are realised by God's grace (Cranfield, 1960:116).



1990:148). In the context of suffering, Adams (1978:134) makes a valid point regarding believers' responsibilities towards others by suggesting that a focus on Christian service leads a believer away from focussing on their own suffering. The implications for (and against) a "Prosperity Gospel" cannot be missed here: a selfish pursuit of personal benefits at the expense of fellow believers is missing the mark of Peter's counsel: that like Christ (Mk 10:45) believers have meaning and purpose of life in a sacrificial servant-hood to each other.

Instead of listing various gifts (as in 1 Cor 12:8-12), Peter states two broad categories (cf. Groenewald, 1977:79; Achtemeier, 1996:298; Schreiner, 2003:214; MacArthur, 2004:245) under which all gifts can be grouped, namely gifts of 'speech' (λαλέω) and gifts of 'service' (διακονέω) (1 Pt 4:11). Speaking could include gifts such as preaching, teaching or prophesying, while serving would focus on gifts which aim to attend to the physical needs of the believing community (assisting the poor, sick and otherwise vulnerable members<sup>39</sup>) (cf. Groenewald, 1977:79; Davids, 1990:160-161; Achtemeier, 1996:298-299).

Both categories of gifts promote humility, for the speaker does not speak his own words but God's and the one serving does not serve by his own strength but by that which God provides (1 Pt 4:11) (Cranfield, 1960:117; cf. also Groenewald, 1977:80). God's provision to enable believers to make a meaningful contribution to the believing community must be highly valued by each individual believer – believers have a worthwhile purpose and goal (contributing to the spiritual and physical communal well-being) and the ability to achieve that goal was granted to them in the 'oracles of God' they are to speak (i.e. speak in relation to what God has revealed in the Old Testament and through Jesus and the Apostles – Jobes, 2005:282), and the 'strength which God supplies' (i.e. providing all the resources required with which they are to serve – Cranfield, 1960:117). Because the gifts are practised by God's enabling providence, all ministry from which believers benefit should be perceived as ultimately testifying to God's loving care (cf. Achtemeier, 1996:299) and thus the very purpose of practising the gift is for God to be glorified in everything (1 Pt 4:11 – [ἵνα ἐν πᾶσιν δοξάζεται ὁ θεός]).

The doxology which ends this major section of teaching in the epistle (1 Pt 2:11 to 4:11) (cf. Achtemeier, 1996:292, 300; Jobes, 2005:275) is a fitting way to remind believers that even though they feel powerless in the situations they face, all power belongs to God – and that

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<sup>39</sup> The irony is that a 'gospel' which promises every believing person abundant wealth and excellent health renders redundant the very need for these gifts of service to others in need.

encourages believers to serve one another even with the little means they possess (Jobes, 2005:283).

#### **4.5.5.3 Preliminary normative principles from the value of belonging to the new people of God and the mutual love between believers**

From the value of belonging to the new people of God and the mutual love between believers, the following preliminary principles for remedial pastoral guidance can be suggested:

- Believers have been united to a brotherhood and it is necessary for believers to belong to a group of fellow believers where one can receive acceptance and security in a suffering world;
- Believers must cease to pursue the social norms of unbelievers and transform their social values toward finding dignity and honour with other believers in their union with Christ;
- The communal solidarity among believers serves as evidence that God has effectively brought each believer into His household by His mercy;
- Believers obtain the blessing of being joined to one another as the new people of God by the suffering death and vindicating resurrection of Jesus Christ. God stands sovereign over suffering to fulfil His good purposes for the community of God's people and the personal suffering of the believer should be interpreted in this light;
- Believers are chosen of God and of precious value to Him due to their joint union with Christ;
- A believer's suffering is not an indication of the lack of God's interest or the believer's lack of value to God;
- The present reality of new life and belonging to the people of God serves as the reason for the believer's joy and honour;
- The body of believers (church) is the privileged possessor of God's presence by means of the indwelled Spirit of God in each individual believer;

- Believers are blessed by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in their lives which makes them even more precious to God than the expensive gold and jewels of the Old Testament temple;
- The reality of the Spirit's presence indicates how believers share in the honour of Christ and gives assurance of their relationship to God;
- Believers do not merely have a valued status as the new chosen priesthood of God, but they also have a valued ministry of self-sacrificial service to God and His people which flows from the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer – self-sacrificial servanthood to fellow believers is of true value in God's kingdom;
- For believers to 'survive' in a world of suffering, they need to value their solidarity and commit to the communal enterprise of 'loving the brotherhood';
- The believing community is a 'source of strength' for those who suffer as Christians;
- The encouragement to believers who live in the interval between the ascension and the return of Christ, which is marked by affliction, is that the return of Christ signifies the termination of present persecution and suffering;
- Believers find significance, meaningfulness, a sense of value, self-worth and identity, not in the temporal things of this world, but in the good news of this eschatological hope that the end is near;
- A meaningful life can be found in the pursuit of holiness and the eschatological hope of believers is an incentive for meaningful spiritual duty;
- Believers cannot effectively enjoy fellowship with God through prayer if their minds are distracted by worldly pursuits;
- Believers can find encouragement in their communal prayers for it shows dependence upon the Lord, brings a solace in God through difficult times and seeks His wisdom in the affairs of life;
- A believer finds meaning, purpose and direction in life by the role they play in enabling the Christian community to 'survive' through mutual brotherly love;

- In the context of suffering, the temptation is to become selfish and consider one's own needs as of primary importance, but the communal well-being through sacrificial love is a more meaningful vision for believers;
- In order to maintain a strong solidarity among believers, especially in pressured times, love must continually seek to offer self-sacrificial forgiveness to other believers;
- Sacrificial sharing of resources promotes social bonds among believers and makes a valuable contribution towards the well-being of the Christian community;
- No believer is excluded from receiving a grace-gift by which they make a valuable contribution to the well-being of the community of believers, and this gives meaning, purpose and value to the life of every believer. Believers possess a valuable God-given ability to make a meaningful impact in this life;
- Through providing gifts to believers, God provided for His grace to be ministered in manifold ways to those who suffer many kinds of trials;
- God's provision to enable believers to make a meaningful contribution to the believing community must be highly valued by each individual believer;
- Even though believers might feel powerless in the situations they face they are to be reminded that all power belongs to God and all things are unto His glory.

#### **4.5.6 The value of God-provided leadership to the people of God**

Believers require a certain type of shepherd-leadership to guard over the 'flock of God' (1 Pt 5:1-4) in order to survive (cf. Achtemeier, 1996:322; Jobes, 2005:309) in times of trial and tribulation. In 1 Peter 5:1-5, Peter highlights the value of the 'church structure' God provided (cf. Jobes, 2005:299) to believers, and particularly the kind of shepherd-leadership which will see the Christian community through the suffering of this life. In the context and objectives of this study in Practical Theology, this aspect is especially important as the shepherd-metaphor is considered crucial to effective pastoral care (cf. for example De Klerk, 1978:24; Dreyer, 1981:11; Gerkin, 1997:27-28; Louw, 1993:23-24; Louw, 1999:27-40, 61-63; Louw, 2015:279-281).

The word 'pastoral' has its origin in the Latin word '*pastorem*' ('shepherd') and implies the necessary insight into the life of another person in order to supply in their needs (Miller-McLemore, 2012:269). In a discussion of the long Biblical history of the shepherd-metaphor,

Louw (2015:279) points to God's grace, love and faithfulness which gave the people of Israel the much-needed security to know they were safe under God's shepherding care (compare Ps 23). In the New Testament, Jesus (compare John 10) came as a shepherd to fulfil the promise of the servant of David that He would tend the flock of God (cf. Ezk 34:23). He did not hesitate to take the metaphor upon Himself (Jn 10:10) and the four Gospels portray Jesus as the Shepherd who came to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel (cf. Mt 10:6). He ministered to them with compassionate love and sincere mercy (cf. Mt 9:36) through a selfless act of giving His life as a ransom for them (Mt 26:31; Mk 10:45; Jn 10:18).

The shepherd-metaphor is transferred to church leaders by both the Apostle Paul (cf. Ac 20:28-29), and the Apostle Peter (1 Pt 5:1-4). Jesus is the Chief Shepherd (1 Pt 5:4), and like Him, overseers of God's flock must minister as sensitive and compassionate under-shepherds in an expression of God's covenantal care for His people. Peter, especially, knew the gracious responsibility of the commission to take care of the flock – in probably one of the most profound pericopes on this aspect (Jn 21:15-17) Jesus spelled out the task in its detail – even at peril to die as Jesus did (Jn 21:18-19). Louw (2015:281) adequately explains the concept of the term shepherd from this pastoral perspective: “[i]n the shepherding function, pastoral care concretely represents God's caring support for people in need.”

In the context of this study which aims to propose a paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance of believers regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, Peter's pastoral motif of caring for and protecting God's people in the midst of suffering could encourage believers toward the value of God's provision of faithful shepherds (1 Pt 5:5). Believers must especially be warned against false teachers (2 Pt 2) that would lead them astray (cf. Ac 20:29-30 where Paul uses the wolf-metaphor to refer to false teachers that harm the flock). For this purpose, two Petrine passages (1 Pt 5:1-4 and 2 Pt 2) are exegetically analysed.

#### **4.5.6.1 The value of godly, faithful shepherds**

- **1 Peter 5:1-4**

Peter uses the pastoral term *παρακαλέω* (exhort/urge) on three occasions in his first epistle (1 Pt 2:11, 5:1, 5:12). He exemplifies and indicates his earnest pastoral appeal to his readers to take heed of his counsel – *παρακαλέω*, it can be said, represents the purpose of the entire letter (Achtemeier, 1996:324). In Practical Theology, *παρακαλέω* is a fundamental metaphor in pastoral care and it expresses compassion, sympathy and care (Louw, 2015:290-291).

Peter's appeal, therefore, to his audience in 1 Peter should thus not be taken as a mere moral instruction, but as a powerful expression of God's mercy (cf. Louw, 2015:291) aimed at comforting his readers by reminding them that God cares for them and as a result of such care, instructs them for their own protection and well-being.

In 1 Peter 5:1, Peter's exhortation (παρακαλέω) is directed specifically toward the elders (πρεσβύτεροι), a New Testament term that is used for leaders in the church<sup>40</sup> (Davids, 1990:175; MacArthur, 2004:263). The concept of 'elder' is from its usage at Qumran where the 'overseer' was considered a shepherd and spiritual father of the community with adequate knowledge of the law. Elders were responsible for community decisions and most significantly they had control over the community's welfare funds (O'Brien, 1991:47). From this perspective, Peter's connection of elders with the shepherd-metaphor and specifically that they must refrain from greed (1 Pt 5:1-3) is clear and significant. The elders had a heavy responsibility to make sure that the flock was well taken care of – both spiritually guided and provided for physically.

There seems, however, to exist an exegetical contention among scholars regarding the lexical flow between 1 Peter 4:12-19 and 1 Peter 5:1-5, and it is debated why Peter would at this point in the letter address the elders – or to state it differently, what is the connection, if any, between the preceding pericope (i.e. 1 Pt 4:12-19) that deals with 'suffering' and " ... judgment which must begin in the household of God", and the address to the elders to 'oversee the flock of God' (1 Pt 5:1-2) (cf. Davids, 1990:174; Schreiner, 2003:230; Helm, 2008:158).

The conjunction οὖν ('therefore') (1 Pt 5:1) would avow that there is in fact a connecting flow of thought in Peter's mind moving from chapter 4 going into chapter 5. The best explanation for the flow of thought from 1 Peter 4:12-19 to 1 Peter 5:1-4 seems to be that Ezekiel 9:6 serves as Peter's textual basis (cf. example Grudem, 1988:192; Schreiner, 2003:230; Helm, 2008:158; Gardner, 2013:152). In Ezekiel 9:6, the pronouncement of judgment over the house of Israel is said to begin at the Temple, which corresponds with Peter's announcement that "judgment begins with the household of God" (1 Pt 4:17), and the first entity at the Temple is the elders (cf. Ezk 9:6). The thought of God's refining judgment in 1

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<sup>40</sup> The term 'elder' could also refer simply to those who are advanced in years rather than to church leaders, but Best (1971:167) (cf. also Bigg 1902:183) solves the dilemma by pointing out that leaders in the early church communities were commonly drawn from the elderly (cf. also Groenewald 1977:85; Achtemeier, 1996:322; Jobes, 2005:302 for a discussion on πρεσβύτερος [elder] as a reference to leaders rather than the elderly in the community of believers).

Peter 4:17 prompted Peter to address the elders who might be exposed to persecution first (Schreiner, 2003:230). This could explain Peter's logic in moving from a section on suffering to addressing the leaders. Davids (1990:174) also makes the significant observation that the address to the elders and those who are to submit to them (cf. 1 Pt 5:1-5) is sandwiched between two sections on suffering (1 Pt 4:12-19 and 5:6-11). This is no coincidence (Davids, 1990:174) for Peter must address the solidarity that is required among believers in the face of persecution and suffering (Davids, 1990:174) and thus the leaders are reminded of the crucial role they play in holding the flock together in times of trial (Adams, 1978:147; cf. also Achtemeier, 1996:322). The reality of the persecution and suffering that the members of the churches faced, probably contributed to Peter's appeal to the elders, for they have been tasked to care for troubled sheep (MacArthur, 2004:263; cf. Achtemeier, 1996:322).

Two significant aspects of Peter's address to the elders in the context of suffering must be highlighted regarding the aim of research in this study. *Firstly*, Peter indicates that elders are especially exposed to, and not exempt from, suffering and *secondly*, the flock experiences trouble in this life and they require care, compassion and oversight amid those circumstances. An avowal then as per a "Prosperity Gospel" that suffering is not God's intention for any believer at any time clearly contradicts Scripture. In fact, it nullifies the need for any pastoral function. If it is God's intention for everything to always go well for all believers, the pastor-shepherd's function of caring for those in need (Louw, 2015:281) is redundant, it does not have and serve any real purpose. Cranfield (1960:124), to the contrary, captures the urgency of Peter's exhortation regarding the pastoral task by noting that what is urgently needed is for the church to understand its pastoral task as laid out by 1 Peter 5:1-4.

Peter stresses the vital need for caring shepherds – they are a gift from God to the church in times of suffering, and because God provides the necessary comforts in suffering through godly shepherding, believers also have the assurance that God cares for them (cf. Louw, 2015:281). Peter shares and expresses this pastoral empathy – he is a 'fellow elder' (συμπρεσβύτερος) (1 Pt 5:1) – and he addresses the elders and personally identifies with the challenges, fears, and pressures that accompany the task of a shepherd-pastor (MacArthur, 2004:266; Jobes, 2005:300; Gardner, 2013:152). The two phrases " ... witness of the sufferings of Christ" (μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων) and " ... partaker of the glory to be revealed" (τῆς μελλούσης ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι δόξης κοινωνός) (1 Pt 5:1) could be jointly read with Peter's reference to himself as a 'fellow elder' to show that Peter considers himself a fellow witness and a fellow partaker of glory with the elders he wants to encourage (Davids,

1990:177; Jobes, 2005:301). If this hypothesis is accepted, Peter is not saying that he was a physical eye-witness of the 'sufferings of Christ' but he, with the elders he addresses, faithfully testifies concerning the sufferings of Christ. Peter (and the other disciples) were not at the cross as the central event in the suffering of Christ, namely the crucifixion (cf. Mk 14:27, 50 and especially John 19 that shows only the beloved disciple was with the women and witnessed Jesus' death), but Peter saw the resurrected Christ (cf. example Jn 21:15-17) who bore the marks of His suffering (cf. Jn 20:27) (MacArthur, 2004: 266). This already qualifies Peter as a trustworthy witness to the Gospel message – a ministry in which church leaders share and must exercise their responsibility with care and devotion (Achtemeier, 1996:324) regardless of what is to be suffered as a result. It is this same Gospel message of Jesus' suffering which assures believers that after they shared in Christ's suffering, they will experience joy and glory at His revelation (1 Pt 4:13), for " ... suffering for Christ and glory of eternal life is ... two sides of the same coin" (Jobes, 2005: 302). Peter, therefore, encourages his fellow elders to continue in their faithful witness of the Gospel, proclaiming Christ's suffering and sharing in Christ's suffering, for Jesus exemplified that suffering is the pathway to glory (cf. Schreiner, 2003:323).

Peter defines the elders' (πρεσβύτεροι) (1 Pt 5:1) task with two verbal concepts, namely ποιμαίνω (shepherd) and ἐπισκοπέω (exercising oversight) (1 Pt 5:2) (refer 4.5.6 for discussion of the shepherd-metaphor from a practical theological viewpoint). The three concepts that Peter makes use of in 1 Peter 5:1-2, namely elder (πρεσβύτερος), shepherd/pastor (ποιμήν) and overseer (ἐπίσκοπος) are used interchangeably in the New Testament and basically refer to the same pastoral task/office (Grudem, 1988:194; Schreiner, 2003: 234). The shepherd-metaphor has a long Old Testament history (cf. example Ps 23; Is 40:11; Jr 23:1-4; Ezk 34:1-31) and is used frequently in the New Testament (cf. example Mt 10:10-14; Jn 10:1-18).

Peter's preference for the shepherd-metaphor regarding the pastoral task may likely derive from his own call to pastoral work in John 21:15-17 (Groenewald, 1977:86; Clowney, 1988:199; Achtemeier, 1996:325; Helm, 2008:161). As such, his admonishing of his fellow elders makes perfect sense, for they too must 'shepherd [Jesus'] sheep' (ποιμαίνει τὰ πρόβατά μου) (Jn 21:16) and 'feed' (βόσκω) them (Jn 21:15, 17) (refer 4.4.1.2 for a discussion on Peter's pastoral calling). Shepherding the flock requires sound teaching from the Bible to ensure that the sheep are spiritually fed and so that they can develop discernment (MacArthur, 2004:265).



The ‘discernment’ MacArthur (2004:265) alludes to would be an important aspect required for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. The foremost responsibility of the shepherd-elder is to exercise oversight (ἐπισκοπέω) (1 Pt 5:2) by guarding orthodoxy (Ac 20:29-31) in order to produce discernment in the sheep, and also to assist the weak, even at the shepherd’s own expense for as Achtemeier (1996:326) has it, it is ‘more blessed to give than to receive’ (cf. Ac 20:35).

Peter qualifies the command to shepherd with three apposing adverbs/adverbial phrases as outlined in Table 4-4 below:

**Table 4-4: Peter’s qualification of the elder-shepherd task**

| Text        | Negative qualification                              | Affirmative qualification             |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Peter 5:2 | Not under compulsion<br>(μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς)             | But voluntarily<br>(ἀλλὰ ἐκουσίως)    |
| 1 Peter 5:2 | Not for sordid gain<br>(μηδὲ αἰσχροκερδῶς)          | But with eagerness<br>(ἀλλὰ προθύμως) |
| 1 Peter 5:3 | Not as lording it over<br>(μὴδ’ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες) | But as examples<br>(ἀλλὰ τύποι)       |

These qualifying instructions would be particularly relevant in times of persecution and suffering where selfless servants who are willing to make personal sacrifices for the flock are required (Schreiner, 2003:234 – cf. also Achtemeier, 1996:326). The three qualifiers warn shepherds regarding their motives and approach in overseeing God’s people, for if they lead them astray they will not escape God’s judgment (cf. 1 Pt 4:17-18) (Gardner, 2013:152). The flock of God must not be abused and exploited for personal gain – like the shepherds in Ezekiel 34:4-8 did and who treated the flock harshly and brutally because they cared only for themselves (Schreiner, 2003:233; cf. also Cranfield, 1960:127).

A closer look at the qualifiers as listed in Table 4-4 above elucidates the excellence of the calling and the greatness of the task of a shepherd:

- The first qualifier requires shepherds to do their work of oversight “not under compulsion but with eagerness” (μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς ἀλλὰ ἐκουσίως) (1 Pt 5:2) – that is to say, they were not to consider this challenging work to be forced upon them by others who selected them for the position (cf. Davids, 1990:179; Jobes, 2005:304). The term ἐκουσίως (willingly) (1 Pt 5:2) could be defined as “ ... pertaining to being willing to do something

without being forced or pressured” (Louw & Nida’s [1993:296] semantic domain: ‘Attitudes and Emotions’; sub-domain: ‘To be willing’).

In the context of persecution and suffering circumstances of the community of God’s people, the leaders would often be the first targets (Schreiner, 2003:234) and thus by accepting the position, leaders and their families could be exposed to extreme dangers (Davids, 1990:179). Clowney (1988:205) contemporises the risk in stating “ ... any true shepherd will soon feel the weight of pastoral care ... In countries where conversion to Christ is illegal and baptism brings a prison sentence, the office of elder carries a different meaning.” This ‘weight’ of pastoral care could make the ministry of shepherding-oversight an unwanted burden, but Peter requires shepherds to be the kind of leaders who are willing to take such risks at their own expense and to do the work of oversight cheerfully rather than begrudgingly, for that is pleasing to the Lord (Jobes, 2005:304). A godly (God-approved) shepherd is one who aims at pleasing God in his attitude and motive – to serve with a whole-hearted-desire even though it comes at possible personal risk and/or expense for it is God’s will for shepherds to serve in this way (cf. MacArthur, 2004:268).

- Secondly, it is required that shepherds do the work of oversight “ ... not for sordid gain, but with eagerness” (μηδὲ ἀισχροκερδῶς ἀλλὰ προθύμως) (1 Pt 5:2). It would be exegetically forced and contradictory to the teaching of the New Testament to read into this phrase an objection from Peter against any form of compensation for those who labour as leaders in the church – for example in 1 Corinthians 9:3-14 Paul explains the right of “ ... those who proclaim the gospel to make their living from the gospel” (1 Cor 9:14) and he instructs the church in Ephesus that “ ... the elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor<sup>41</sup>” (1 Tm 5:17) for “ ... the laborer is worthy of his wages” (1 Tm 5:18). The principle of reward for the work is the same principle Jesus taught in Matthew 10:10 so Peter could hardly be opposing the principles laid down by his Master. Peter’s warning in 1 Peter 5:2, however, clearly concerns ‘greed’ amongst elders who exploit their position in leadership to enrich themselves (even dishonestly) at the expense of those they are supposed to sacrificially care for (cf. Best, 1971:170; MacArthur, 2004:269; Jobes, 2005:305). Achtemeier (1996:327) references the case of the elder Valens who was accused of greed by Polycarp (*Phil.* 11.1-4) to indicate that “ ... at least

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<sup>41</sup> Many commentators (e.g. Guthrie, 1957:105; Wilson, 1982:77; Stott, 1996:137) agree that “honor” here in 1 Timothy 5:17 refers, at least in part, to remuneration for elders.

some succumbed to the temptation of personal enrichment at the expense of their community”.

Cranfield (1960:129) (cf. also Cedar, 1984:188) refers to the term *αἰσχροκερδῶς* (sordid gain) (1 Pt 5:2) as ‘filthy lucre’ which denotes a ‘shameful spirit of greediness’ (compare also 1 Tm 3:3 [πλήκτην; ἀφιλάργυρον]). Louw and Nida’s (1993:292 – domain: Attitudes and Emotions; sub-domain: Desire Strongly) definition of *αἰσχροκερδῶς* (sordid gain) (1 Pt 5:2) is almost verbatim of Achtemeier’s sentiment above: “ ... [to] be ... shamefully greedy for material gain or profit”. Money-loving (φιλάργυρον) leaders pose a danger to their flock and the New Testament repeatedly warns leaders not to have an obsessive love of money (cf. for example 1 Cor 2:17; 1 Tm 6:5-10; Tt 1:11; Jude 11). Peter tackles the issue head-on in 2 Peter 2:3, 13-16 where he warns believers against greedy false teachers (cf. 2 Pt 2:1) (refer 4.5.6.2 for a discussion on Peter’s warning against greedy false teachers). Indeed, ministry for money and personal gain is nothing but “ ... a prostitution of the calling of the Lord of the church” (MacArthur, 2004:269).

Contrarily, the flock of God must be served eagerly (προθύμως) (1 Pt 5:2) and leaders must not be motivated by greed. Such ‘eagerness’ displays a zealous desire for the task rather than a shameful desire for self-enrichment (Cranfield, 1960:129; Adams, 1978:146; Davids, 1990:180). The term *προθύμως* could be translated ‘willingly’ (Schreiner, 2003:235) and *προθύμως* has to do with one’s attitude and emotion as Louw and Nida (1993:288) treat it in that semantic domain under the sub-domain of ‘Eagerness, to be earnest, devoted’ (Louw & Nida, 1993:297). Critically viewed, MacArthur’s (2004:269) explanation that with *προθύμως* Peter requires a selfless servant who is willing to sacrifice rather than having a preoccupation with money and materialism, refutes everything that is promoted by a so-called “Prosperity Gospel”. Godly, faithful shepherds are eager, earnest and devoted to serve God’s flock even at personal expense rather than personal gain.

- Peter’s third qualifier on how elders should shepherd God’s flock is found in 1 Peter 5:3 which states: “ ... not yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock” (μηδ’ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου). The concept to ‘lord it over’ (κατακυριεύω) others (1 Pt 5:3) is most likely something Peter recalls from the teaching of Jesus on leadership – in Mark 10:42-44, Jesus uses the same word *κατακυριεύω* (to lord over) along with the synonym *κατεξουσιάζω* (to misuse power) (Mk 10:42), to teach the twelve that the way to greatness

in God's kingdom is vastly different from the standards and methods of the world. France (2002:419) defines the concepts *κατακυριεύω* and *κατεξουσιάζω* as follows: "[t]hey convey the expression of uncontrolled exploitation of power, the flaunting of authority rather than its benevolent exercise". In the Greco-Roman world greatness was equated with power (Evans C.A., 2000:118) and the desire of the disciples to obtain the primary position at the right and left hand of the throne of Jesus (Mk 10:37) could allude to a selfish attitude and was aimed at personal benefit. Jesus, however, taught His disciples that to use a position of power for personal benefit is to follow the example of Gentile leaders, something the Master was obviously opposed to, for Jesus states: "[b]ut it is not this way among you" (Mk 10:43).

The ultimate value in God's kingdom is not power and superiority, but rather servanthood and humility and, therefore, Jesus instructs His disciples to become 'servants' (*διάκονος*) (Mk 10:43) and 'slaves' (*δοῦλος*) (Mk 10:44). Servants and slaves were considered the lowest class in first-century Mediterranean societies and Stegemann and Malina's (2002:257) description of this lower class is striking: " ... these groups ... lacked citizenship, and, therefore lack of status ... [i]t was not so much their labor that they offered, but themselves ... ". With His teaching in Mark 10:43-44, Jesus puts before His disciples (including Peter) a reversal of values and calls them to serve rather than to be served (cf. France, 2002:409) – to deny themselves, rather than to seek selfish gain.

Peter echoes the teaching of Mark 10:42-45 to his 'fellow elders' when he calls upon them 'not to lord it over those allotted to your charge' (*μηδὲ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων*) (1 Pt 5:3). Leaders are called to be self-sacrificial servants who must avoid using God's people for advancement of their own status (cf. Grudem, 1988:196; Schreiner, 2003:236). Peter's requirement that elders must constantly set the example (as would the present *τύποι γινόμενοι* ['examples be' – 1 Pt 5:3] suggests) is fitting in the context of the shepherd-metaphor, for in ancient times shepherds did not drive their sheep, but walked in front of/led them and called them to follow (Davids, 1990:181). Elders are to lead the way so that all those the Lord appointed<sup>42</sup> them to oversee would follow in the self-sacrificial footsteps of the Master, Jesus, who Himself "did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45).

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<sup>42</sup> The word *κλήρος* (allotted) (1 Pt 5:3) was used to refer to a marked object, like a dice which was used to cast lots to make decisions and it occurs frequently in the Old Testament in reference to what God has apportioned or distributed to someone (Jobes, 2005:306). In the context of 1 Peter 5:1-4, Peter uses the word to refer to the portion of the flock over which an elder was appointed by God to oversee.

Achtemeier (1996:328-329) effectively summarises the force of Peter's three qualifiers on the elders' oversight over the flock when by arguing that shepherds in the church ought never to abuse their authority for personal gain but rather apply it for the good of those the Lord entrusted to their care.

Having made it clear that earthly status and riches are not what should motivate the elder in his task, Peter points these leaders to the promised reward for their work: "... you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (κομιεῖσθε τὸν ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον) (1 Pt 5:4). Peter is not suggesting there is no reward to motivate elders toward faithful service, but it is the timing and nature of the faithful elder's reward which he emphasised – it will occur "... when the Chief Shepherd appears" (φανερωθέντος τοῦ ἀρχιποίμενος) (1 Pt 5:4).

The 'Chief Shepherd' (ἀρχιποίμην) was used in the Roman context to refer to one who had oversight over the other shepherds when a flock was divided among a few if it was too large to be managed by only one shepherd (Jobes, 2005:306). In the context of 1 Peter it must be a reference to Jesus Christ, as He is also identified as the 'Shepherd' (ποιμήν) in 1 Peter 2:25. Scholars (e.g. Grudem, 1988:197; Davids, 1990:181; Achtemeier, 1996:329; Schreiner, 2003:236; MacArthur, 2004:270) agree that 'appearance' (φανερῶ) (1 Pt 5:4) is a reference to the second coming of Jesus and thus the reward in mind is an eschatological reward – a 'crown' (cf. Davids, 1990:181).

A 'crown' (στέφανος) (1 Pt 5:4) was a wreath awarded to victors at athletic events (Jobes, 2005:306), but its value was temporal as the parsley (or other greens like laurel), from which it was made (Adams, 1978:147), withered in time (Davids, 1990:181; MacArthur, 2004:270). The 'crown' Peter had in mind, however, is 'unfading' (ἀμαράντινος) (1 Pt 5:4), a word which refers to a red flower which supposedly never loses its colour (Achtemeier, 1996:330; MacArthur, 2004:270; Jobes, 2005:300, 306). The reversal of values is clearly propagated again by Peter in the contrast between the temporal earthly values (financial and status/honour) in 1 Peter 5:2-3 and the eternal heavenly values in 1 Peter 5:4 (an unfading crown of glory). Peter guarantees no earthly rewards, but he encourages the elders to look beyond this present world to the guaranteed imperishable reward when Jesus returns.

Although this section (1 Pt 5:1-4) addresses church leaders directly, it also benefits all believers who, based on these important principles outlined by Peter, should choose the elders that will lead them (cf. Helm, 2008:159). The following verse in 1 Peter 5:5 instructs the rest of the congregation in the term 'younger men' (νέος) (those not in a position of

seniority – Jobes, 2005:307), to ‘submit’ (ὑποτάσσω) to their leaders. This is, however, to be understood in the context of 1 Peter 5:1-4 which outlines the type of leaders which believers ought to submit to. Peter does not enforce an unconditional submission to any proclaimed leader, but he expects the believers to measure their leaders against the qualities addressed in 1 Peter 5:1-4 and if they are found faithful, believers should submit and follow their example (cf. Schreiner, 2003:238).

This aspect is important in the context of the research aim of remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Believers can be instructed in discernment based on Peter’s counsel on the type of leaders they should be following and submitting to, for such remedial pastoral guidance to be effective.

#### **4.5.6.2 The value of identifying and avoiding false teachers**

- **Peter 2**

To balance Peter’s identification and urging of true/faithful shepherds (cf. 1 Pt 5:1-4) (4.5.6.1), the opposite scenario namely Peter’s identification of and warning against/to false teachers, deserves attention. Peter’s first epistle makes no explicit reference or gives no specific warning against/to false teachers, but in the second epistle<sup>43</sup> which was likely addressed to the same group(s) of believers<sup>44</sup>, Peter devotes a significant portion of the letter to the topic of false teachers (cf. 2 Pt 2). By doing so, he aims to establish, strengthen and stabilise Christians in the true knowledge of God (Helm, 2008:179). Some scholars (e.g. Davids, 2006:216) consider the section concerning false teachers the main concern of 2 Peter.

2 Peter 2 describes a portrait of false teachers by which Peter warns his readers against their destructive tactics (MacArthur, 2005:67, cf. also Helm, 2008:225). This ‘portrait’ could be applied in a paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, as pastorants could be warned to avoid those who portray character-traits similar to which Peter identifies for his audience. MacArthur’s (2005:77) comments that teachers who

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<sup>43</sup> For arguments in favour of Petrine authorship of 2 Peter see for example Schreiner (2003:259-270), Davids (2006:123-130) and Green (2008:144-150).

<sup>44</sup> Although no absolute certainty exists among scholars (cf. Davids, 2006:136) about the statement in 2 Peter 3:1 that this is the second letter that Peter wrote to the recipients likely indicates that the first letter implied is that of 1 Peter (Bigg, 1902:237; Schreiner, 2003:276; MacArthur, 2005:14). This would mean that the recipients of both 1 and 2 Peter are the same group(s) of believers.

imitate the characteristics of 2 Peter 2 are frauds shows the need for believers to be informed, vigilant and discerning to avoid the influence of those who would lead them astray.

It falls outside the scope and purpose of this study to do a full analysis of all the character-traits of false teachers, as outlined in 2 Peter 2. Character-traits particularly relevant to the research topic regarding a “Prosperity Gospel” should be discussed however, and three traits were selected namely *greed* (2 Pt 2:3, 14-17), *deceptive promises* (2 Pt 2:17-19) and *arrogance* (2 Pt 2:10-11).

These character-traits of false teachers are now discussed.

- **Greed (2 Pt 2:3, 14-17)**

In 2 Peter 2:3 and 2 Peter 2:14 Peter characterises false teachers (ψευδοδιδάσκαλος) (2 Pt 2:1) with the word *πλεονεξία* (greed). In the semantic domain of ‘Attitudes and Emotions’ (Louw & Nida, 1993:288) and the sub-domain ‘To desire strongly’ (Louw & Nida, 1993:291) *πλεονεξία* denotes “ ... a strong desire to acquire more and more material possessions” (Louw & Nida, 1993:291) (cf. also Green, 2008:244). In Scripture, *πλεονεξία* is often associated with charlatan attitudes (MacArthur, 2005:78) (cf. Jr 6:13; 8:10; 1 Tm 6:3, 5, 9-11; Tt 5:1-3; Jude 11,16). The central motive of the false teachers Peter warns his readers about is the desire for the comforts of this life (Schreiner, 2003:333) and their willingness to ‘exploit’ (ἐμπορεύομαι) (2 Pt 2:3) those in the church for their own profit.

The term *ἐμπορεύομαι* (exploit) (2 Pt 2:3) is from commercial terminology (Green, 1987:108; Lucas & Green, 1995:91) and simply means “to engage in business” (Louw & Nida, 1993: 580 – semantic domain: Possess, Transfer, Exchange; sub-domain: Earn, Gain, Do Business) (cf. also Schreiner, 2003:333). In Peter’s usage, the false teachers took advantage of believers by a trade of deception with ‘false words’ (πλαστοῖς λόγοις) (1 Pt 2:3) to satisfy their greed. Davids (2006:224) describes their practice as “ ... taking advantage of believers by implying that what is offered is more valuable than what it is.” At face value, this ‘trade of deception’ is virtually identical to modern-day “Prosperity Gospel” practice which presents excessive wealth as the ultimate value and God’s will for all believers if they financially support a prosperity preacher’s ministry (Hinn, 2008:85-100; for critique of this practice compare also McConnell, 1988:171; MacArthur, 1992:324; Hanegraaff, 2009:211-224).

In the prosperity paradigm, material wealth is over-valued, and it comes at the expense of finding meaning and comfort in the imperishable treasures already obtained in Christ. The pliability of those teachers' 'false words' (πλαστοῖς λόγοις) (2 Pt 2:3) suggest a willfull distortion and falsification of the Gospel itself (cf. Paul in Gl 1:6 ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον) – a damnable practice (cf. Paul in Gl 1:8) – and possibly relates to the false teachers' opinion that Jesus will not return (cf. 2 Pt 3:3-4), thus allowing them freedom to satisfy their sinful lust in this present life (cf. Schreiner, 2003:333). If this life is all that there is, logically then one's aim would be to enjoy it by obtaining as much as one can, for there is no future inheritance (or judgment) awaiting with the return of Christ. Indeed then, your best life is **now** as Osteen would have it in the title of his 2004 best seller.

In this sense, to offer wealth as the goal and purpose of the believer's life is to 'exploit' believers – to trade with God's people for one's own profit by 'selling' them πλαστοῖς λόγοις – plastic-shaped-for-your-purpose, words. Such a practice is not 'gospel' – it goes against the grain of the historical revelation of God (cf. Groenewald, 1977:125) and in fact, it renders both the 'practitioner' and the 'believer' most pitiable (1 Cor 15:19).

The severity of the indictment on false teachers for their greed intensifies in 2 Peter 2:14. They "entice unstable souls" (δολοῦντες ψυχὰς ἀστηρίκτους) for "their hearts are trained in greed" (καρδίαν γεγυμνασμένην πλεονεξίας). 'Entice' (δολοῦμαι) is a fishing/angling term (Lucas & Green, 1995:112; Schreiner, 2003:352) which paints the word-picture to lure a fish with bait – to persuade by deceptive means (Green, 2008:282). In the context of this study, one might compare prosperity teachers' 'bait' with their deceptive proclamations that God wants to make every believer extremely rich, but then, the barbed hook concealed in the bait is that believers must liberally fund their preacher's 'ministry' (Hinn, 2008:85-100, for critique compare also McConnell, 1988:171; MacArthur, 1992:324; Hanegraaff, 2009:211-224). It appears then that even Peter's audience was exposed to false, seductive, tactics that " ... encouraged [them] to live for the comforts of this life without any thought of judgment" (Schreiner, 2003:352). Believers were put on a false trail to pursue a hedonistic lifestyle – i.e. a life of pleasure and comfort (Gardner, 2013:251) instead of following Christ even in hardship.

This 'encouragement' poses an anomaly in ancient culture and which should have been clear warning that what they are being fed is incongruent with everything they knew from their own culture and the Gospel itself. The limited good nature of the first century peasant society would have made any quest for material riches futile from the start. In the discussion



of the socio-historical context of Peter's first audience above (refer 4.4.3.1 and 4.4.3.2) it was shown that a "Prosperity Gospel" hermeneutic falls wretchedly short by neglecting/ignoring the 'world' in which the Scripture was 'birthed'.

It would not be invalid to place modern-day prosperity chants on par with what Peter is warning his audience about – people whose pseudo-teaching must be avoided for it spells danger for 'unstable souls' (ψυχὰς ἀστηρίκτους) (2 Pt 2:14) (believers who are not firmly grounded in the truth – cf. 1 Pt 2:12 – Groenewald, 1977:131; Schreiner, 2003:352). Instead of caring for God's flock (1 Pt 5:2), these 'teachers' satisfy their own greed and exploit those who do not stand firm in the truth.

The word γυμνάζω (train) Peter uses (2 Pt 2:14) to describe the greed of these false teachers, is an athletics term (Schreiner, 2003:353) from which the English word gymnasium derives. It aptly shows how much energy, practice and effort these false teachers devote towards satisfying their greed – they have indeed become professional strategists that abuse God's people for their own personal gain. Fittingly then, Peter accentuates the primary incentive of personal gain (cf. MacArthur, 2005:102) and refers to the example of evil Balaam (1 Pt 2:15-16 – cf. Nm 22-25). Balaam was motivated by profit and is a case in point for teachers who seek personal gain at the expense of God's people (Kistemaker, 1987:304). Balaam was a prophet motivated by profit. When Balak, king of Moab requested Balaam's services, he was willing to curse God's people in return for payment (cf. Nm 22:7, 17) (MacArthur, 2005:102). Peter describes Balaam as someone 'who loved the wages of unrighteousness' (ὃς μισθὸν ἀδικίας ἠγάπησεν) (2 Pt 2:15), a person driven by love for material rewards, rather than a love for God and His people (Kistemaker, 1987:304; cf. also Schreiner, 2003:354). Green (1987:125 – insert added by researcher) paints the prophet's irrationality/madness (παραφρονία) (2 Pt 2:16) in his statement that "Balaam was so swayed by his greed that he actually thought he could succeed in his plan of opposing God's will ... [but] even a donkey knew better" (cf. also Schreiner, 2003:353). In the same way Balaam put his greed above the well-being of God's people, false teachers' greed is far above the well-being of Christian believers: they " ... forsook the right way, they have gone astray, they followed the way of Balaam" (καταλείποντες εὐθεῖαν ὁδὸν ἐπλανήθησαν, ἐξακολουθήσαντες τῇ ὁδῷ τοῦ Βαλαάμ) (2 Pt 2:15). Those false teachers' forsaking the way to following the way of Balaam is a violation of God's will to pursue their own personal will of comfort and security in material wealth (Groenewald, 1977:132; Davids, 2006:242; Green, 2008:286).

Helm's (2008:234) view that the motives of a preacher's heart can be discerned by their "view of money" indicates the need for followers of Christ to be very cautious and discerning of who they allow to influence them. Peter's warning against greedy teachers is then a vital aspect in a pastoral paradigm toward remedial guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

- **Deceptive promises (2 Pt 2:17-19)**

A second characteristic of false teachers which Peter addresses as " ... a concerned and angry pastor ... " (Lucas & Green, 1995:115) and which is truly relevant to the research topic regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" is their deceit of believers with their false promises. In 2 Peter 2:17-19, Peter exposes this tactic of the false teachers of his day. Modern-day prosperity preachers' promises of abundant wealth and excellent health as God's will for all believers (e.g. Copeland, 1974:51; Hagin, 1983:14; Savell, 1983:47; Bishop, 1997:16, 18) have been, and are exposed in the many reports of poor and sick believers who were devastated and questioned their faith, when such promises failed to materialise (cf. Retief, 2014:6; Mbugua, 2015a:i; Mbugua, 2015b:12).

Two analogies, namely "springs without water" (πηγαὶ ἄνυδροι) and "mists driven by a storm" (ὁμίχλαι ὑπὸ λαίλαπος ἐλαυνόμεναι) (2 Pt 2:17), introduce Peter's identification of the deceptive tactics of those false teachers. These two analogies convey the same message (Groenewald, 1977:133; Schreiner, 2003:356; Davids, 2006:244): as springs promise water to a traveller in the intense heat and dry conditions of the Middle East but disappoints if found to be dry; and as mist, under the same dry conditions, promises water but fails to deliver when it is quickly blown away by a stormy wind, so these false teachers, to the disappointment of misled believers, fail to deliver on their extravagant promises (Green, 2008:292).

The speech of the false teachers is described as words of 'arrogance' (ὕπερογκος) and 'vanity' (ματαιότης) (1 Pt 2:18). Arrogance (ὕπερογκος) refers to 'excessive boasting' and is defined as " ... words too big for what one is talking about" (Louw & Nida, 1993:432 – semantic domain: Communication; sub-domain: Boast) or simply blown-up words (cf. Davids, 2006:244). Vanity (ματαιότης) pertains to 'uselessness' (Louw & Nida, 1993:625 – domain: Value; sub-domain: Useful, Useless) or that which lacks genuine value. MacArthur (2005:105 – inserts added by researcher) bares the deception of the false teachers' rhetoric: " ... they dazzle their victims ... (with) guarantees (which) include ... prosperity ... and happiness."

Peter again uses the fishing term ‘entice’ (δελεάζω) (1 Pt 2:18 – as in 1 Pt 2:14 cf. discussion under ‘greediness’ above) (Schreiner, 2003:357) to describe the tactic of the false teachers. The heretics’ bait was ‘fleshly desires’ (ἐπιθυμίαις σαρκός) (1 Pt 2:18) which Green (2008:295) describes as a gratification of the flesh above all else – whatever one wants, must be pursued as the ultimate value. Using ‘arrogance’ and ‘vanity’ in the same phrase (2 Pt 2:18), Peter shows the irony of their boastful words which produce no meaningful or valuable result (Green, 2008:295). Peter further highlights the irony of the false teachers’ promises in 2 Peter 2:19 by showing that while they promise ‘freedom’ (ἐλευθερία) the exact opposite, i.e. ‘slavery’ (δοῦλος, δουλόω), ensues. Ironically, “[t]he vanity of their offer is evident in that the errorists (*sic*) themselves are nothing more than people enslaved by their own corruption (v.19)” (Green, 2008:291). The proverb (Schreiner, 2003:359) which concludes 2 Peter 2:19 “... by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved” (ὃ γὰρ τις ἡττηται, τούτῳ δεδούλωται) speaks of one who serves his own ‘selfish end of depravity’ (Gardner, 2013:256). A “Prosperity Gospel’s” proponents’ and followers’ desire for wealth leads to their enslavement to mammon<sup>45</sup> rather than to God (cf. Mt 6:24).

#### • **Arrogance (2 Pt 2:10-11)**

The third characteristic that false teachers might display is highlighted by Peter. Indeed relevant to the research topic of a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” is ‘arrogance’. In 2 Peter 2:10 the false teachers’ arrogance results in that they “despise authority” (κυριότητος καταφρονοῦντας). They are characterised by being ‘daring’ (τολμητής) and ‘self-willed’ (αὐθάδης). The literal translation of 2 Peter 2:10 (κυριότητος καταφρονοῦντας) boils down to ‘despise lordship’. The exegetical question for consideration is: Whose ‘lordship’ is in Peter’s mind? The verses continue to discuss the ‘reviling’ (βλασφημέω) of ‘angelic majesties’ (lit. ‘glories’) (δόξα) (1 Pt 2:10), and **lordship** (κυριότητος) is in the singular which strongly suggests that the referent is God. Davids (2006:233; cf. also MacArthur, 2005:93) traces it back to 2 Peter 2:4. Whenever one ignores the rule or will of God in any given circumstance or moral requirement it is rightly considered ‘despising’ (καταφρονέω) His authority, or as Louw and Nida’s (1993:763) definition of καταφρονέω (under the domain: ‘Moral and Ethical Qualities and Related Behavior’ and sub-domain: ‘Despise, Scorn,

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<sup>45</sup> ‘Mammon’ (μαμωνᾶς) (cf. Mt 6:24) describes the riches and wealth of this world in a negative light – a pursuit of wealth or a love of money at the expense of serving and loving God (cf. Louw & Nida, 1993:562 – domain: Possess, Transfer, Exchange; sub-domain: Be rich, Be wealthy) – where it is personified: a Syrian deity (Liddell & Scott, 1889:486).

Contempt') would apply: to have 'contempt for God because His lordship is thought to be without value'.

This thinly veiled contempt is not alien to "Prosperity Gospel" proponents who prefer to play lord over their own lives and circumstances. Hagin (1983:10) blasphemously illustrates it in his viewpoint that it is unnecessary (even sinful) to pray 'if it is Thy will', when offering a request to God (or rather giving commands for God to act upon), for that prayer expresses doubt in one's own authority. Copeland (1978:72) clearly believes and states that a believer's authority overrides that of God.

The implication of both Hagin's and Copeland's view above is that man is considered lord over his own life and circumstances while God exists to serve in submission to man's authority. Any teaching, attitude or action that considers the sovereign rule of God as of little value (or subject to man's rule) are 'destructive heresies' (αἱρέσεις ἀπωλείας) of 'false teachers' (ψευδοδιδάσκαλος) (2 Pt 2:1) that believers must avoid.

The description of false teachers as 'daring' (τολμητής) and 'self-willed' (αὐθάδης) (1 Pt 2:10) overlap in meaning and the repetition intensifies the meaning as "boldly arrogant" (Schreiner, 2003:347) – these false teachers were devoted to their own benefit at whatever cost (Green, 1987:116; MacArthur, 2005:97). This prideful, self-centred attitude which defies God and man, is illustrated by Peter in the false teachers' practice of 'reviling' (βλασφημέω) 'angelic majesties' (lit. 'glories' – δόξα, 1 Pt 2:10). It is not entirely clear who these 'glories' are – they could possibly refer to human beings in high positions like government or church leadership, or to righteous angels (Davids, 2006:235-236; Green, 2008:272-273). Some scholars (e.g. Schreiner, 2003:347; MacArthur, 2005:98) argue that the context favours a view that these 'glories' refer to evil/fallen angels. The determining factor might lie in who the interpreter considers the κατ' αὐτῶν (against them) in 2 Peter 2:11 refer to – if the 'glories' (2 Pt 2:10) are taken as angels in general, then 2 Peter 2:11 is saying 'angels' (ἄγγελος) do not repay the evil by bringing a reviling judgment against the false teachers (κατ' αὐτῶν) who 'revile' (βλασφημέω) (2 Pt 2:10) them; but if the glories concern fallen angels then Peter (2 Pet 2:11) is saying that righteous angels do not even bring a reviling judgment against these fallen angels (κατ' αὐτῶν), something the false teachers in their arrogance do not hesitate to do. The second possibility seems best to the researcher, swayed by the parallel passage in Jude 8-9 which states: "Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you". The righteous angel Michael refrained from pronouncing judgment

against the devil but trusted the sovereign authoritative rule of God to settle the matter regarding Moses' body. In a general sense, Peter is saying that even righteous angels, although they are 'greater in might and power' (ἰσχύϊ καὶ δυνάμει μείζονες ὄντες) (2 Pt 2:11) than fallen angels and having authority over them (MacArthur, 2005:99) refrain from instructing God how to bring judgment over the fallen angels. The false teachers Peter refers to, however, did not understand their sphere of authority. They, being lower than angels (cf. Ps 8:5), sought to play god over them – claiming an authority which they did not possess but which belongs to God alone.

Lucas and Green (1995:108) make the contemporary application of Peter's identification of the false teachers in 2 Peter 2:10-11 by stating: "[t]here are still those today who will all too easily discard inconvenient Christian doctrine and ethics in order to make life seemingly more pleasurable and the gospel more attractive". The hubris of "Prosperity Gospel" proponents, who claim to be able to play god over unwanted life circumstances to 'make life more pleasurable', could be considered equal to the type of arrogance and self-willed activities of the false teachers of Peter's day. Believers must be made aware of the insolent, dangerous teachings, and could be remedially informed when Peter's warning against such heretics is taken to heart.

#### **4.5.6.3 Preliminary normative principles from the value of godly/faithful shepherds to the people of God**

From the value of godly/faithful shepherds to the people of God, the following preliminary principles for remedial pastoral guidance can be suggested:

- Believers require godly, faithful shepherds to minister God's compassionate care (grace, love and faithfulness) to them in times of suffering – caring shepherds are a gift from God in times of suffering;
- The God-provided pastoral function implies that God's flock will experience trouble in this life and under those circumstances require care, compassion and godly oversight;
- Believers should compare church leaders they will follow to the following Petrine qualities:
  - Godly shepherds are willing to be exposed to suffering for the sake of leading God's flock;

- Godly shepherds continue in their faithful witness of the gospel of Christ's suffering even when it results in sharing in the suffering of Christ;
- Godly shepherds are guardians of orthodoxy and a crucial shepherding function of shepherds is to feed the sheep with deep truths from Scripture which will result in discernment in believers;
- Godly shepherds are selfless servants who are willing to make personal sacrifices for the flock;
- Godly shepherds will not misuse and abuse believers for personal gain – they will not dishonestly enrich themselves at the expense of believers;
- Godly shepherds have the zealous desire to be selfless servants who are willing to lead God's flock at their own expense (self-denial) rather than be preoccupied with money and materialism (selfish gain);
- Godly shepherds will not use their position of power for personal benefit – the ultimate value in God's kingdom is not power and superiority, but servanthood and humility;
- Godly shepherds value the imperishable eschatological reward which will be received at the second coming of Christ above perishable earthly riches and status;
- Believers should be vigilant and discerning to avoid false teachers and their destructive tactics aimed at leading believers astray:
  - False teachers have a strong desire for their own comfort through acquiring more and more possessions;
  - False teachers take advantage of believers by deceiving them with false words (which do not concur with the historical revelation of God) to satisfy their own greed;
  - False teachers aim at deceiving believers by implying that what they offer is more valuable than what it really is, for instance to promote/over-value materialism;
  - False teachers are trained professionals in strategically abusing God's people for their own personal gain;

- False teachers have a love for material rewards at the expense of a love for God and His people;
- False teachers act irrationally by considering that they can oppose God's will to satisfy their own will of comfort and security in material wealth;
- False teachers seek to deceive their audience by confident rhetoric that promotes a lifestyle of which the ultimate value is gratifying one's fleshly desires;
- False teachers' promises are without substance and lead to believers' disappointment;
- False teachers reject the will of God for/over their lives in the midst of unwanted circumstances and arrogantly desire to play lord over their own lives in order to make life more pleasurable;
- False teachers claim authority they do not possess but which belongs to God alone.

#### **4.6 Summative normative perspectives related to a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel"**

From the preliminary principles which flow out of the exegetical analysis of the Petrine value system, the following summative normative perspectives are presented, which serve as the basis for a Petrine paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel":

- There is a lack (even absence) of a responsible exegetical and hermeneutical approach among "Prosperity Gospel" leaders/preachers;
  - The quasi-gospel proclaimed by a "Prosperity Gospel" is not founded upon the accurate interpretation of Biblical teaching;
  - Adherents to the prosperity movement are not exposed to any sound exegetical method of Biblical interpretation;
- As determined by the will of God, Christian believers are exposed and susceptible to various forms of suffering during their earthly lives and belief in God does not acquit them of persecution, poverty, sickness, death, et cetera;

- A believer's suffering is not an indication of a lack of faith, being outside the will of God, that one is rejected by God, or of little/no value to God;
- Believers must not be surprised by suffering but understand there is a God-ordained necessity for it;
- God cares for believers in their suffering;
- Believers must trust God in their suffering for it is not always possible to discern God's purpose in suffering;
- Believers can be comforted and joyful in their suffering for it is brief and will ultimately lead to glory when Jesus returns;
- Submission to God in suffering is a testimony that a believer's comfort does not lie in this world but in God – God Himself is a believer's all-satisfying treasure;
- A Christian believer's value system should be founded upon the Biblical teaching of what God reveals as precious and valuable rather than on what unbelievers (the world) esteem precious and valuable;
  - Believers must value the spiritual rather than the material. Their relationship to God and the imperishable/eternal heavenly inheritance which belong to believers in Christ far outweighs perishable/temporal earthly gains (e.g. money, possessions, fame, well-being);
  - Believers must find their meaning in spiritual things like the treasures of knowing God through His words and a godly character rather than pursuing fulfilment or meaning in material earthly possessions;
  - Believers find meaning and purpose in who they are in Christ and the spiritual blessings they already received from Christ, rather than seeking meaning in life by expecting material possessions from Christ;
- Believers must value God's control over their lives, even in suffering, and that God cares for them in their suffering;
  - God's care for believers is evident in His active mercy/grace which was extended to them in their past new birth, their present sustenance/protection and their future inestimable heavenly blessings;



- God planned suffering but this is not contrary to His Fatherly love/compassion for believers;
- God is present in the suffering of the believer and controls the believer's suffering and graciously uses it for the believer's good;
- Believers must know that faith in God (trusting Him in suffering) is more valuable than gold and genuine faith in God provides meaning in life and provides believers with meaningfulness and hope;
- Believers must value who Christ is and who they are in Christ;
  - A believer's association with Christ can lead to various forms of suffering, yet the value of belonging to Christ is greater than what the non-Christian society values (i.e. comfort and material security);
  - Meaningfulness is not found in wealth or health, but in the atoning work of Christ which brings the believer into fellowship with Christ and with the Father. Believers ought to value the high price which was paid for them by Christ;
  - Believers have the secure hope of eternal life due to their connectedness with the resurrected and glorified Christ;
  - Due to the believer's connection with the resurrected (victorious) Christ, a life of victory over sin (shunning the desires of the flesh) and living according to the will of God, at whatever price/sacrifice, is possible;
  - The forgiveness of sins obtained by the blood of Christ is an eternally valuable spiritual possession of the believer;
  - Believers should imitate Christ's meek submission to God's will in suffering and due to their relationship with Christ they are never separated from God in their suffering;
- Believers must value their connectedness with God's people and the mutual love between believers;
  - Belonging to God's redeemed people provides a believer with a realm of acceptance and security in a suffering world;

- The body of believers is the privileged possessor of God's presence by means of the indwelling Holy Spirit;
- The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the people of God is more valuable than earthly treasures;
- Believers have a valued ministry of self-sacrificial service to God and His people (self-sacrificial servanthood is of true value in God's kingdom);
- The believing community provides support and strength to suffering Christians; Fellowship among believers in prayer brings solace in God during difficult times;
- A Believer finds meaning in life by self-sacrificially contributing to the communal welfare and care of the people of God. This meaningful contribution of love among fellow believers must be highly valued;
- Believers must value self-sacrificial godly leaders who shepherd God's flock faithfully, and avoid greedy, selfish leaders who abuse God's flock for personal gain;
  - Believers require godly, faithful, self-sacrificial shepherds to minister God's compassionate care to them in times of suffering;
  - Leaders' character must be evaluated by believers before they are followed and those who faithfully serve God's people are a gift to the church, but those who selfishly abuse God's people should be avoided.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

The normative task of Practical Theology interpretation was addressed in this chapter. The normative principles which emerged from the exegetical analysis of Petrine teaching (predominantly 1 Peter) provide the foundation for the practical task addressed in chapter 5, namely to answer Osmer's (2008:4, 175ff) question: 'How might we respond?'.

In the context of Peter's first epistle (supported by 2 Peter and Mark's Gospel), the author presents a value system to his audience that guides them towards meaning, value and hope in their suffering and persecution. The significant conclusion that can be drawn from God's value system, as described by Peter, is that it is contrary to the value system of the world (unbelievers) (1 Pt 1:13-14; 4:2; cf. Ja 4:4). Whereas the world seeks meaning, value and hope in temporal possessions and (sinful) pleasure, believers are urged to find their

meaning, value and hope in their eternal security under the sovereign rule of God who blessed them abundantly in His Son and everything regarding their belief in Him, for He joined them to a body of believers where they can live and serve meaningfully under the care and protection of the God-provided faithful shepherds.

The normative perspectives outlined in this chapter are of utmost value in a paradigm designed toward pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” which share similar pursuits of abundant wealth and constant comfort in this life. The final task focusses on such a paradigm towards a new praxis (chapter 5).

## CHAPTER 5

### PRAGMATIC TASK: REMEDIAL PASTORAL GUIDANCE REGARDING A BELIEF IN A “PROSPERITY GOSPEL”

#### 5.1 Introduction

In the descriptive-empirical task of this study (chapter 2) it was found that a “Prosperity Gospel’s” praxis can be negatively experienced both spiritually and physically by some people who embrace the religious phenomenon. Participants in the empirical research found that the main attraction for professing believers appears to be the promises/returns of abundant financial wealth and perfect health. Pastorants were understandably disappointed, but more so upset, when these promises by their trusted prosperity pastor failed to come true.

From the literature review on a “Prosperity Gospel” it is unmistakable that this religious phenomenon’s message is highly popular – it is probably the most popular in the modern-day Evangelical church. Resultantly, it might be surmised that vast numbers of people overall could suffer disappointment by this ‘gospel’. Regarding its popularity, the definitive question which required an answer was why people accept and believe in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Finding an answer to this question was the focus of the interpretive task (chapter 3). The research towards these ends is by far not exhaustive, but valuable insights were gained from missiological, sociological and psychological perspectives. These perspectives can promote the ‘sagely wisdom’ (Osmer, 2008:29, 81-86) to understand not only what is going on but why it is going on. This understanding would be an imperative with pastoral guides to lead people in how to live spiritually rewarding lives (even without much of the earthly possessions so touted by a “Prosperity Gospel”).

Insight into normative perspectives of how a Christian believer ought to “... hear and heed God’s Word ... ” (Osmer, 2008:29) specifically regarding a “Prosperity Gospel” is then non-negotiable. Normative perspectives were obtained from the exegetical analysis of (particularly) 1 Peter (chapter 4). In the epistle, both the author and audience’s situation are conducive to remedial intervention from Scriptural perspectives for people who are dismayed by a false ‘gospel’. Peter was addressing a suffering audience to find hope in God and meaning in their spiritual blessings in Christ instead of seeking it in temporal circumstances. The exegetical findings indicate that suffering of any nature neither nullifies hope nor meaningfulness for believers who align themselves with God’s value system. In the

exegesis, the value of being ‘in Christ’ and who they are in relation to God and fellow believers are foremost, and would guide believers to discern and follow leaders who care for their souls and not exploit them for personal financial gain.

The final step in the research endeavours to provide pastoral guides with a practical remedial paradigm or pastoral model which can be implemented towards a new praxis for guiding (counselling) pastorants regarding an erroneous belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. This pragmatic task culminates the foregoing research which was conducted specifically towards this end: to let God’s Word remedy the problems caused by a distorted ‘gospel’ – which is not a ‘gospel’ at all – and that exploits (sometimes gullible and undiscerning) pastorants. It is evident from the descriptive-empirical research findings (refer 2.4.19 and sub-divisions) that a “Prosperity Gospel” in some or many instances is not much concerned with solid Biblical bases for soteriological and sustained spiritual belief towards the sanctification of church members. This dire shortcoming within a “Prosperity Gospel” needs to be addressed with pastorants who suffered spiritual (and in many cases temporal) damage. The pastoral paradigm envisaged for this chapter would address these lacunae and, therefore, its focus is on remedial normative – Biblical – principles from a Petrine perspective.

Diagram 5-1 below highlights the pragmatic task in Osmer’s (2008:11) Practical Theology methodology towards a new praxis, and indicates the relation of the pragmatic task to the other three tasks:

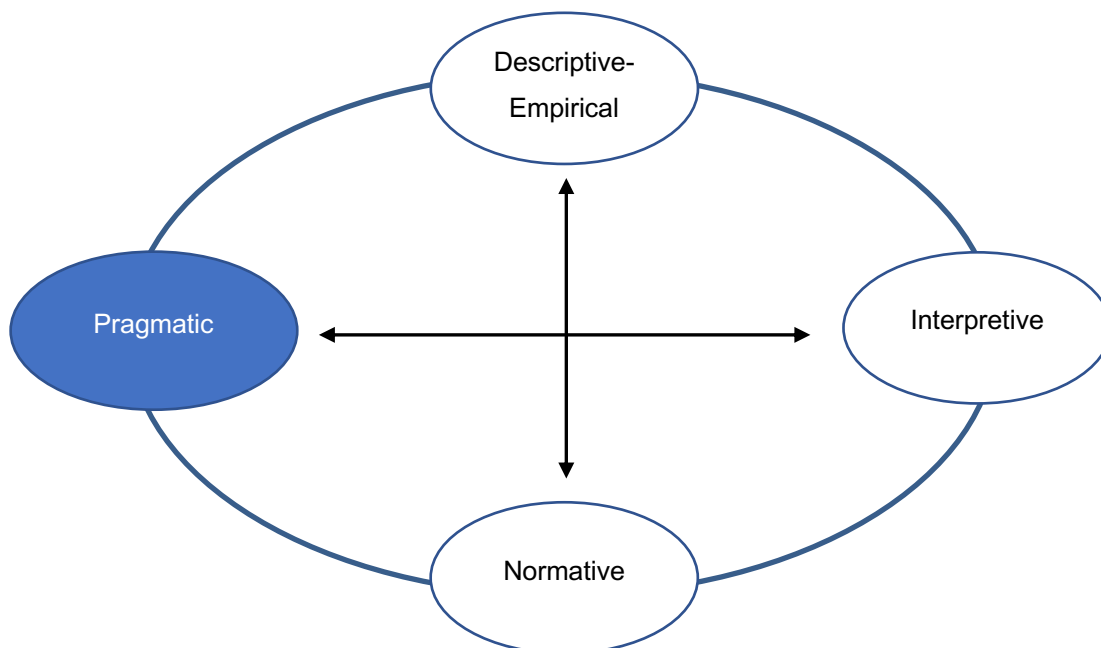


**Diagram 5-1: Osmer's Pragmatic task**

## 5.2 The objective and pastoral approach for the pragmatic task

### 5.2.1 Objective

Osmer's (2008:4) pragmatic task's focus is on the dynamics of 'How might we respond?'. The pragmatic task's objective, therefore, is to propose a Petrine paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". By convergence and paring of critical perspectives from the descriptive-empirical task (chapter 2) with the interpretive task (chapter 3) and normative perspectives from 1 Peter (chapter 4), a Petrine paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" is proposed.

In the chapter on the pragmatic task, Osmer (2008:175ff) neither prescribes nor even suggests a particular model for the pragmatic task to form and enact strategies of action that influence events in ways that hold desirable outcomes (Osmer, 2008:176). Regarding this study, it is necessary to choose a pastoral guidance approach (amongst various pastoral models) that would best serve as a framework/point of departure towards its aim (refer 5.2.2 and 5.2.3).

The Petrine paradigm that will act as the new praxis as proposed by the study will utilise a *nouthetic* counselling approach in the paradigm. The normative principles of 1 Peter utilised for the paradigm of this study would be appropriate – Peter writes from his own experience as he, too, once had prosperity expectations (cf. Martin, 1972:152; Telford, 1995:36; Culpepper, 2007:286). He was delivered from his folly as the Master guided him to the way of probable suffering (Brooks, 1991:137; France, 2002:340). The Lord did this from a *nouthetic* paradigm (compare explanation on *nouthesia* below, 5.2.2. and the discussion on the Apostle Peter above, 4.3.1.1, 4.3.1.2, 4.3.1.4) as He firstly informed Peter of his error (Mk 8:33 " ... you are not setting you mind on God's interest, but man's"); then confronted the disciple with correct teaching (Mk 8:34 " ... If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me") and lastly, in a resounding application, Jesus warned Peter of the dangerous, eternal consequences of chasing after the temporal (Mk 8:35-37 " ... for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?").

The three steps provide the *nouthetic* outline for the model and serve as the basis for the pastoral paradigm presented in this study. In the context and objectives of this study, *nouthesia*, as such, is the vital aspect of pastoral counselling of persons seeking guidance regarding their belief in a "Prosperity Gospel." Adams' (1970:44) description of a *nouthetic* methodology as a process of 'admonishing', 'warning' and 'teaching' fits the pastoral bill for

this study and *noutheteō* (νουθετέω) tellingly denotes pastoral admonishment and warning to encourage believers to turn away from a wrong direction (Louw, 1993:28). The most prominent pastoral term in 1 Peter is παρακαλέω (1 Pt 2:11, 5:1 and 5:12) which indicates Peter's intent to urge/exhort/comfort his suffering audience, but from the content of the epistle, Peter urges (παρακαλέω) his audience by confronting, teaching and warning. The *paraclete*-metaphor refers to 'comfort, care and help' that enacts the will of God in crisis and suffering (Louw, 1999:34-35) and could be considered the central motif in all pastoral work which must aim to bring the body of Christ to maturity in the faith (Louw, 1993:29). Such would be the intent of the Petrine paradigm for the pragmatic task in this study.

## 5.2.2 Explanation and motivation for the *nouthetic* counselling model as the point of departure for the new praxis/pragmatic task

The choice of the *nouthetic* counselling as the departure point for the pastoral paradigm of this study seems most fitting considering the research objective: To formulate a pastoral paradigm for the task of caring for those who are hurting and doubting due to a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". Adams (1970:41), the so-called father of the *nouthetic* counselling model<sup>46</sup>, explains that the model is designed to confront/warn believers and caringly guide them. The aim of the *nouthetic* approach certainly is not to affront, but to confront – to make someone aware of the reality that they are faced with a real problem. Consequently, an understanding and submission to relevant Biblical teachings will lead to positive change (Adams, 1973:45).

The *nouthetic* counselling model emphasises the Reformed Evangelical principle of *Sola Scriptura* (cf. Adams, 1986:29; MacArthur, 1994:20), which avails the paradigm under which this research is conducted and is, therefore, also appropriately labelled 'Biblical Counselling' (cf. MacArthur, 1994:3ff). The proposed Petrine paradigm for remedial pastoral care is established chiefly on the Biblical teachings of 1 Peter and thus the *nouthetic* approach is appropriate for the pragmatic task.

The foundation of the *nouthetic* counselling's model towards praxis is the four words used by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16, namely teaching (διδασκαλία), rebuking (ἐλεγμός), correcting (ἐπανόρθωσις) and training (παιδεία) (Adams, 1986:10-13). These words point to the intended

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<sup>46</sup> It could be argued that Adams did not originate the *nouthetic* counselling movement but systematically articulated its principles – this practice has been in use since Biblical times (Adams, 1970:50-51; MacArthur, 1994:3). Peter, in fact, seems to be a pastor who applied *nouthetic* counselling for the Christians in the areas of northern Asia Minor.

usage of the Scriptures to guide Christians away from error by means of instruction in the truth (Rousseau, 2010:12) and where the truth of Scripture is especially the intent. Appropriately, Peter's first epistle is a 'teaching epistle' that meets the practical needs of the suffering first audience with Christian truth (Ladd, 1974:595). Understandably then, Peter exhorts his readers to " ... long for the pure milk of the Word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation" (1 Pt 2:2 – emphases added). It could be said that Peter himself instructs/admonishes (νουθετέω – '*noutheteo*') his suffering audience to heed the teachings of truth/Biblical theology. The *nouthetic* counselling approach would then serve excellently as an appropriate framework for implementing Peter's pastoral guidance of suffering believers.

The verb νουθετέω ('*noutheteo*') refers to correct teaching, and, as such, Louw and Nida (1993:415, 436, 437) classify it under the domain 'Communication' and subdomains 'Teach', 'Rebuke' and 'Warn' – all three verbs are relevant for pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". Louw and Nida's (1993:415, 436, 437) defining of νουθετέω under the three sub-domains illustrates the remedial aim of the research:

- Teach: " ... to provide instruction as to correct behavior [*sic*] and belief" (Louw & Nida, 1993:415),
- Rebuke: " ... to admonish someone for having done something wrong" (Louw & Nida, 1993: 436), and
- Warn: " ... to advise someone concerning the dangerous consequences of some happening or action" (Louw & Nida, 1993:437).

Considering the error in a "Prosperity Gospel's" so-called teaching and its consequences for believers, νουθετέω is considered a particularly appropriate method to guide and warn about false belief and its potential dangers, to correct it with right belief, and to lead to the change in behaviour/spiritual growth/protection/remedial care of the believer. People who are/have been adversely affected by prosperity proclamations need pastoral support to resolve any possible harm. In the sequence of 1 Timothy 3:16-17 people must be taught what is right, be confronted with what is wrong, corrected where their perspectives are at fault and trained to walk in the light. To this end, a *nouthetic* approach provides an appropriate model for the remedial Petrine paradigm suggested in the pragmatic task of this study.

It was indicated above (refer 4.3.2; 4.3.3) that the hermeneutical approach of a "Prosperity Gospel" is (euphemistically), at the very least, 'questionable'. The unfulfilled promises



pastorants suffer, based on the phenomenon's reckless (ab)use of Scripture, can and do leave believers bewildered, confused and in despair. The trustworthiness of the Bible comes into question and thus a believer's faith in its teachings could waver due to a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". From a recent testimony of a former "Prosperity Gospel" adherent circulated in a Protestant Journal in South Africa (Hadjirousou, 2016:13), the former 'victim' states that deliverance from the grip of a "Prosperity Gospel" came through the right treatment of Scripture: an adequate reading, studying and exegetically true teaching. A pastoral approach that emphasises the usage of the Bible (cf. 2.4.19.1 Theme 2, Sub-theme A – the pastorant who recalled that the Bible is never read at public worship services) and responsible interpretation and application of the Bible, are not only appropriate but also imperative for the task of remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

The warning against Biblicism and fundamentalism within a *nouthetic* approach (cf. De Wet & Pieterse, 2013:4) is duly taken cognisance of by the researcher. With due care, the Biblical focus, therefore, of the paradigm will converge and be supplemented with meta-theoretical data obtained from the empirical study (compare Louw, 1999:46-47) as well as relevant interpretive perspectives gained from the sociological, psychological and missiological disciplines on particularly why people fall for the attraction to a "Prosperity Gospel". However, Louw's (1999:88) insight that the theology of the pastorate cannot be reduced to only the experiences and needs of people, for the pastorate is more than unlocking inner potential, is relevant for this study. This means that the empirical research of human experiences can act as supplemental to the pastoral task of helping people, but it cannot stand by itself. Biblical principles must therefore be considered the more normative and directional tool in the pastorate.

Also noted is the criticism that the *nouthetic* model's kerygmatic approach to counselling is too narrow<sup>47</sup> (cf. for example Welch, 1992) and it allows the sin-perspective to dominate theological anthropology (cf. Louw, 1999:161). This criticism has its merits and does not assuage the *nouthetic* counselling model's alleged shortcomings, but Rousseau's (2010:13)

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<sup>47</sup> Adams is criticised for ignoring, even discarding social sciences like secular psychotherapies (compare Collins, 1988:22; Louw, 1999:49-50, Newman, 2008:10). Adams (1973:92), however, has acknowledged that secular sciences could stumble over God's truth in creation and, therefore, the *nouthetic* counsellor should take note of, evaluate, and reclaim the truth dimly reflected by secular theories, but warns that this must take place in a manner that is consistent with Biblical principles and methodologies. In the *nouthetic* counselling model, the Bible as the starting point is paramount and whatever other sciences may contribute must not override the authority of the Scriptures (compare Adams, 1973:92; Newman, 2008:14).

dictum that the *nouthetic* model's point of departure – that the Bible is the foundation and purpose of counselling – provides solid pastoral counselling ground. In the context and for the proposed outcomes of the pastoral objectives for this study the Scriptural paradigm remains imperative. It is precisely the recklessly wrong, unscriptural manner in which God's Word is treated by promoters of a "Prosperity Gospel" that necessitates the right counter measures namely to respectfully apply God's Word to rectify the damage done to believers (and very often to people not yet believers). The "Prosperity Gospel's" error (or even heresy) comes from the non-hermeneutical use (or abuse) of Scripture and the logical counter measure to rectify those unscriptural beliefs is the right treatment of Scripture by responsible hermeneutics in sound exegesis. The right way to exegete and apply the Bible is, therefore, the foundation for pastoral guidance, and with Scripture as the solid foundation, pastorants can be remedially guided (comforted, cared for and helped) (cf. Louw, 1999:34) from the compassionate pastoral attitude of love and patience (1 Tm 4:2) (Louw, 1993:29).

The choice of a *nouthetic* approach for the pragmatic task neither discredits other counselling models, nor is it an attempt to exonerate the *nouthetic* counselling model's perceived shortcomings. A brief review of other pastoral approaches is treated to support the *nouthetic* approach for the paradigm proposed in this study as the best suited.

### **5.2.3 Review of other pastoral models for new praxis**

A wide range of models is available for pastoral care, ranging from secular sciences to more specific pastorally focussed approaches. To justify and support the choice for the *nouthetic* approach as the framework for the new praxis for this study, attention was afforded to survey the suitability of other prominent models. A sample of Newman's (2008:4-10) analysis of psychotherapies along with Louw's (1999:358-377) analysis of methods regarding pastoral diagnosis provided an adequate scope for the survey.

#### **5.2.3.1 The biological model**

This model's focus is on the physical processes like the (mal)function of the brain and/or genetic factors which ascribe certain disorders to family inherited conditions (Newman, 2008:4). Treatment, therefore, focuses on medical procedures ranging from medication to restore chemical imbalances in the brain to psychosurgery, which involves the removal of brain tissue (Newman, 2008:4).

This medical scientific approach to helping people could be useful for certain conditions like depression, bi-polarity, et cetera, but would not serve a purpose in the objectives of this

study. Vulnerability to a “Prosperity Gospel” due to the suffering that believers endure is not a ‘condition’ of physical processes and to the researcher’s knowledge no view exists that could attribute it to a malfunction of the brain or because of a person’s genetic makeup.

### **5.2.3.2 The psychodynamic model**

The ‘father’ of this model is Sigmund Freud whose methods were incorporated into various disciplines in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Freud’s basic premise is that there are three parts of human personality, namely the Id, the ego and the superego. The ideal is for these three parts to function together (Newman, 2008:6). The ‘Id’ represents the adventurous, irrational part of a person who wants to push the limits, so to speak; the ‘ego’ considers reality and leads to proper/controlled behaviour; and the ‘superego’ is the part which acts as the conscience and thus allows a person to feel good when they have done the right thing (Newman, 2008:5).

These three parts develop over various stages of growing up and an imbalance that is brought between them due to past experiences, such as trauma or parent-child relationships, is deemed to be the cause of human behavioural problems (Newman, 2008:6). The self-defence mechanism of the ego to control the “ ... unacceptable and fearful Id impulses and to avoid or reduce the anxiety they arouse, as they try to burst into our conscious awareness” (Newman, 2008:6) results in resistance strategies like repression of emotions, denial, fantasy, et cetera.

The treatment under the psychodynamic model requires a professional psycho-analyst that can explore the unconscious (which lies beyond the resistance of these defence mechanisms) to explore a person’s ‘childhood development conflict’ (Newman, 2008:6). The psycho-analyst seeks to discover the relationship between these past experiences during the developmental stages of life and present behaviour. Treatment focuses on reliving past repressed feelings to settle internal conflicts to release the unconscious emotions that dominate the problematic behaviour (Newman, 2008:6). This is done by the verbal release of “ ... secrets hidden deep within our soul that cause us inner conflict and torment” (Newman, 2008:6).

This model has made its way into the Christian counselling world in various ways, particularly in what is labelled Christian Psychology. *Nouthetic* counsellors like Adams (1970:15-17) and MacArthur (1994:10ff) criticise attempts to harmonise Freud’s secular psychological approach with Scripture-based Christian counselling. Other scholars

nonetheless see a place for psychological approaches in Christian counselling (e.g. Collins, 1988:21-23; Newman, 2008:13-14), but only if the primacy of the authority of Scripture is upheld.

This model focuses on mental and emotional health and could be workable for the present study as those who have been disappointed, hurt or psychologically manipulated by a “Prosperity Gospel” and are left emotionally unstable, spiritually unfulfilled and to cope with the suffering from which they have found no relief. Pastoral counsellors must heed the warning, however, that social sciences like psychology are unacceptable when they contradict the clear teachings of Scripture.

### **5.2.3.3 The behavioural model**

Unlike the psychodynamic approach (which focuses on past experiences), the behavioural model aims at rectifying behaviour by considering present symptoms. Behaviour, per this approach, is formed by life experiences and wrong behaviour should be unlearned by methods such as reward and punishment (Newman, 2008:7). The treatment requires the analysis of the current behaviour in order to determine procedures to accomplish goals and to ensure that the outcomes are properly evaluated (Newman, 2008:7).

With the model’s focus on learning principles to be implemented towards achieving new/correct behaviour, it seems an appropriate model for the present study at face value. Louw (1999:157) warns, however, that the aim of pastoral care is not merely to change behaviour but to understand a person in the normative dimension of their existence. The behaviour model’s focus is on actions rather than beliefs. The latter is the primary focus when it comes to pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. The aim is not primarily to change behaviour in counselees, but to transform (and warn against) views regarding an erroneous belief system which would lead to a preferred change of behaviour, namely to find their purpose in God and not anything temporal.

### **5.2.3.4 The cognitive model**

This model is built on the premise that a person’s flawed irrational beliefs about themselves are what cause behavioural problems. To treat the behaviour a person must be assisted to eliminate a self-defeating outlook on life and replace it with a rational view of life (Newman, 2008:8).

The model does focus on an incorrect belief system on cognition, but relates mainly to the belief about self, rather than the belief about a religious system. The latter is what must be rectified in this study.

#### **5.2.3.5 The socio-cultural model**

The model relies on the sociological and anthropological disciplines. It approaches the problems of people with the understanding that one's social and cultural environment play a significant role in behaviour. The model emphasises family or community norms and how these social networks influence a person (Newman, 2008:9).

Group therapy, family and couple therapy are all common treatment forms within this model. These create an environment where people with similar problems are guided by a therapist to discuss their experiences, problems and possible solutions.

This model is relevant to the study regarding its consideration of cultural influences on a person's behaviour. For the interpretive task of Osmer's (2008) model, the research focussed on socio-cultural influences regarding prosperity on a believer's expectations for the Christian life and, therefore, aspects of this model help shape the paradigm presented in this study.

#### **5.2.3.6 The thematic metaphor model**

This model aims to determine the relationship between a person's psychosocial development and important theological themes (Louw, 1999:358). Like Freud's view above (refer 5.2.3.2), this model embraces the idea that people go through different growth phases during their life cycle, but adds that these are psychosocial conflicts experienced at various stages of growth, which promote a certain virtue (Louw, 1999:358). By drawing correlations between the psychosocial themes and corresponding theological themes, people could be helped to deal with their 'conflict situations' by a better understanding of the corresponding theological themes (Louw, 1999:359). This would lead to changing the thinking process to enable people to change their previous (wrong) behaviour.

The remedial counselling of believers regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" could benefit from a theological-themes-based-model, yet Louw's (1999:362) critique that the theological themes that relate to various growth phases might not be sufficient, could indicate that this model would come up short to effectively guide suffering believers regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". A further weakness of this model is that it seems

more focussed on helping counsellors in understanding their own identity, than helping the counselees with their problem(s) (compare Rousseau, 2010:17).

#### **5.2.3.7 The holistic growth model**

Louw (1999:362) refers to Clinebell's (1979:55) formula: 'growth = care + confrontation', as an explanation of this model. This care (love, grace, acceptance, etc.) and confrontation (openness and honesty) can have a positive effect on a person's inner strength and potential. Clinebell (1979:19ff) suggests that a person's inner potential to handle a crisis can be increased by focussing on six dimensions of growth. These dimensions are stimulating the intellect, bringing a greater awareness of the outer person (body), expanding in loving relationships, cultivating an awareness of relationship to the cosmos, promotion of the involvement with community institutions and broadening life values (Louw, 1999:362-363). The broad focus of these principles will nurture wholeness in a person.

This model has merit in its articulated principles. It has merit for the implementation for this study due to its focus upon helping people as Clinebell (1984:117) articulates it " ... [to] face the deeper problems of inadequate meanings, distorted or destructive values and lifestyles that are hidden sources of many of their problems in living". This might be a valuable realisation for suffering people trapped in, hurt by or tempted toward a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". However, the absence of Scripture in the principles of this model makes it less suitable for this study than a *nouthetic* approach.

#### **5.2.3.8 The narrative model**

In this model, the events of a person's life (their narrative) influence their religious perceptions. Furthermore, religious experiences influence how people deal with problems (Louw, 1999:365). The use of case studies, which help the pastor understand a person in the context of their life narrative, is of paramount importance, as it will give the pastor insight into a person's religious history. The five focus areas of the pastoral diagnosis are: the amount of pain and suffering a person has experienced, a person's ability to make decisions, components that indicate binding and liberation, the strength or weakness of a person's identity, and the current perception of reality (translated from Louw, 1999:365-366).

This model's aims are to understand two vital components of a believer's life that are relevant to this study, namely, experiences of suffering and religious history. The narrative analysis which was used in the qualitative research of this study (refer 2.4.18; 2.4.19) indicates the need to understand a believer's past experiences. The diagnostic methodology

of this model is incorporated in the feedback of participants in the empirical study, but as for the praxis/treatment a *nouthetic* approach completes the full circle of pastoral care of people with a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

#### **5.2.3.9 The rational-analytical model**

Louw (1999:366) considers Crabb (1977) a good example for this model. The real, required change is not simply external behaviour but inward renewal/maturity (Crabb, 1977:27). The goal is to promote Biblical counselling through which wrong belief can be corrected (Louw, 1999:367). As per the Scriptural imperative for positive change (cf. Rm 12:2), the continual renewal of the mind is both the paradigm and the ‘working space’ for transformation (cf. Crabb, 1977:108). En route toward such a ‘mind’ change, Crabb (1977:148ff) suggests a phase model with the following six components: identify problem feelings, identify problem behaviour, identify problem thoughts, enlighten Biblical thoughts, strengthen commitment, plan and execute Biblical instructions, and identify spirit-controlled feelings (Louw [1999:368] provides a good diagrammatical presentation of Crabb’s phase model).

Crabb’s phase model shares many similarities with the *nouthetic* approach that will be implemented in this study, such as identifying wrong belief (“Prosperity Gospel” beliefs and practices) and unrealistic goals amid suffering (abundant wealth and excellent health), and thus could also be implemented for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

#### **5.2.3.10 The correlative development model**

Based on the premise that faith influences human behaviour, this model claims that there is a correlation between God’s dealings and human dealings (Louw, 1999:369). Fowler (1987 – as indicated by Louw, 1999:369) could be a good example of how this model is implemented. Fowler (1981:33) does not deny the transcendent nature of faith but focuses on faith as a human phenomenon. The different phases of this faith are summarised by Louw (1999:370-371) as: incorporative self-phase (faith as a form of living trust – mother-child relationship), impulsive self (faith as an acceptance of religion – toddler age), the empirical self-phase (as one gets older you develop a sense of morality but do not yet understand your internal workings), the synthetic conventional phase (discovery of interpersonal relationships), the individualistic reflective phase (the critical mindset of the adolescent), the conjunctive faith (new discovery and meaning of reality), and the decentralised self (a new openness for life in general).

This model can assist the pastoral diagnosis but cannot act as the final criterion for the assessment of the nature and degree of a person's maturity in faith (Louw, 1999:372). It would also not be suitable for praxis in this study which focuses on a paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance.

#### **5.2.4 Summary of the suitability of surveyed models for new praxis**

Models such as the biological (Newman 2008:4), cognitive (Newman, 2008:8) and correlative development (Louw, 1999:37) seem unfit for the study due to their emphases that do not relate to the research topic at hand.

Models that seem workable but less appropriate than the *nouthetic* counselling model include:

- the psychodynamic model (Newman, 2008:5-6) – Although scholars see a place for psychological approaches in Christian counselling (e.g. Collins, 1988:21-23; Newman, 2008:13-14, contra Adams, 1970:15-17; MacArthur, 1994:10ff), the warning should be heeded that social sciences like psychology must not be accepted when they contradict the clear teachings of Scripture;
- the behavioural model (Newman, 2008:7) – The aim of the study at hand is not merely to change behaviour but to transform views regarding a belief system, which will lead to a change of behaviour;
- the thematic metaphor model (Louw, 1999:358) – This model could come up short as it seems more focussed on helping counsellors in understanding their own identity, than helping pastorants with their problems (Louw, 1999:362; Rousseau, 2010:17);
- the holistic growth model (Clinebell, 1979:55; Louw, 1999:362) – This model has merit for implementation for this study due to its focus upon helping people to face the deeper problems of inadequate meanings and distorted or destructive values and lifestyles that hid and are sources of many of the problems they encounter in life (Clinebell, 1984:117). This might be a valuable realisation for suffering people trapped in, hurt by or tempted toward a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". However, the absence of Scripture in these principles makes this approach less suitable than a *nouthetic* approach for this study.

Models incorporating certain aspects in the study include:



- the socio-cultural model (Newman, 2008:9) – For the interpretive task the research focussed on cultural influence regarding prosperity on a believer's expectations for life;
- the narrative model (Louw, 1999:365) – This model aims to understand two vital components of a believer's life relevant to this study, namely experiences of suffering and religious history. The narrative analysis model is implemented in the qualitative research of this study, which aims at understanding a believer's past experiences. The diagnosis methodology of this model is incorporated in the descriptive and interpretive tasks (Osmer, 2008) of this study, but as for the praxis/treatment a *nouthetic* counselling approach completes the full circle of pastoral care unto a new praxis;
- The rational-analytical model (Crabb, 1977; Louw, 1999:366) – This model shares many similarities with the *nouthetic* counselling approach that is implemented in this study, such as identifying wrong belief (prosperity beliefs) and unrealistic goals amid suffering (abundant wealth and excellent health), and thus could be implemented just as effectively for pastoral care as elucidation to prosperity beliefs.

After consideration of the various pastoral models, the *nouthetic* approach is considered to provide the most suitable framework for a paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

### **5.3 Empirical findings towards pastoral guidance in beliefs in a "Prosperity Gospel"**

The empirical question required participants to explain the nature of the pastoral guidance they offered to their pastorants regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". The required input had to indicate:

- the nature of the pastoral assistance/aid/intervention rendered to a pastorant/s;
- suggestions and/or recommendations towards the development of a remedial pastoral 'model' to assist pastorant/s who were affected by a "Prosperity Gospel".

The responses yield useful data that can be included in the proposed remedial pastoral paradigm for this study. As would be expected, the themes and sub-themes from the empirical data regarding pastoral guidance show marked correspondence with the themes and sub-themes identified under the problems pastorants encountered (refer 2.4.19.1) regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

### **5.3.1 Pastoral guidance rendered by participants regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

The following themes and sub-themes emerge as research findings:

#### **Theme 1: Pre-counselling**

The first theme identified out of the research data is pre-counselling. Adams (1977:45) posits the dire necessity of making sure that the person you counsel is in a definite Saviour-believer relationship with Christ. All the participants engaged their pastorants in making sure of this vital aspect and where necessary, evangelised their pastorants or made sure that the basic concepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as taught by Scripture were understood and believed by a pastorant. All five participants explain this as one of the first steps in their pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

The approach of “ ... finding out what their relationship is to God” (Participant E) and clarifying the Gospel for pastorants (or evangelising them) proved beneficial, as can be deduced from Participant B’s pastorant’s response after coming to an understanding of the Gospel: “ ... nursing [be spiritually nourished] from the doctrines of grace did a herculean job in removing the prosperity gospel out of my heart (and) quenched my greed-stricken heart. You can’t nurse from [spiritually ‘drink from’] the doctrines of grace and remain the same way you came” – an obvious turn around occurred in the life of this pastorant.

The same can be said of Participant A’s pastorant who acknowledged that grace was a “ ... completely foreign concept (and) such a comfort when understood”, and the pastorant even described understanding the Gospel as “liberating”. Participant D elaborated extensively on the pastorant’s relief when his greatest problem, namely, his sinfulness, had been solved for all eternity and that brought a sense of being “ ... fulfilled/satisfied and at peace for there is nothing bigger and better for him to still obtain”.

#### **Theme 2: Make aware of false teaching and false teachers**

Raising the pastorants’ awareness of the reality of false teaching and false teachers emerges as a second vital theme. While there is no motive or intention to denigrate any preacher, some participants consider it vitally important to inform pastorants about, and elaborate on the details of, false teaching.

The particular participants did not shy away from naming who and why they consider someone to be a false teacher. Participant B considers it an imperative in pastoral guidance

regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” to “... raise the names of popular false teachers and let (pastorants) know clearly that these men have denied the gospel, and ask them to publicly reject them as false prophets ... [to p]ublicly mark Prosperity pastors as unbelievers, children of Satan, and objects of our pity.” While the researcher would concur with the necessity to set facts straight, the particular Participant’s approach and verbalisation – given the personal harrowing experience with such pastor/s – is considered overly aggressive. Moreover, a name-and-shame campaign might put someone in harm’s way when a ‘false teacher’ might litigate against being identified as such.

It is nonetheless deemed necessary to “... rebuke error” (Participant A) and “... warn them [pastorants] against ... such preachers” (Participant E). An admirable approach is well articulated by Participant D: “[d]iscuss the nature of the PG [“Prosperity Gospel”] teaching and Scripturally point out their misinterpretation of Scripture” and “... discuss the Scriptural warning against false teachers and Scriptural instructions to avoid teachers/leaders in the church who distort the truth of God for personal gain.”

Due to Participant D’s pastorant’s battle with trusting any church leader again after being disappointed by his prosperity preacher and stopped going to church as a result, Participant D endeavoured to “... help the counsellee to renew his trust in godly leaders and fellow believers in the church”. At the same time, Participant E’s counsel is necessary to remedially guide pastorants: “... we need to warn these individuals against going back to the individuals who are leading them astray.”

### **Theme 3: Sound Biblical teaching**

The most dominant theme that emerged from the empirical research regarding pastoral guidance relates to teaching/instructing pastorants with sound Biblical teaching. Participant E emphasises this important facet: “[w]e need to help people to see what the Bible says about their current struggle because more often than not they are approaching it from a cultural perspective.” The cultural perspectives alluded to by Participant E give insight into why people are attracted to a “Prosperity Gospel” and are treated in chapter 3 (refer 3.3.2 and sub-divisions, 3.3.3 and sub-divisions).

The approach of sound Biblical teaching proved effective in remedial pastoral guidance as reported by Participant D that “... sound teaching” was the determining factor to “rescue” the pastorant from a “Prosperity Gospel”. Fostering the ‘rescue’ is an aspect that probably would not occur overnight and Participant A extends a valid warning that a pastoral guide should take into consideration that it takes time for former prosperity adherents “... to

develop a hunger for God's word faithfully and sequentially taught" for there is " ... always a fight for the sufficiency of the Scriptures in people recovering from the PG ["Prosperity Gospel"]".

***Sub-theme 1: Hermeneutics: empower pastorants to read Scripture with discernment***

The first sub-theme extracted from the research data is the participants' approach to impart a level of hermeneutical skill to their pastorants. Hermeneutics has the accurate interpretation of Scripture in view (Zuck, 1991:19-22). As such, the interpretation of the words, statements, imperatives and promises of Scripture (that are often quoted [repeated back] by "Prosperity Gospel" acolytes) is of specific concern in the context of the study, as well as the situation followers of that 'gospel' might encounter. The empowerment of pastorants to read Scripture with discernment in order to understand what Scripture conveys about prosperity et cetera cannot be over-emphasised. Coupled to this aid, it should also be pointed out how prosperity preachers neglect, and may even shun/disregard sound hermeneutical practice to proclaim what they do. Encouragement of pastorants to logically think through what they are being taught and to ensure that it agrees with what the Bible teaches would greatly assist in their liberation from such teaching.

The first important guidance participants give to pastorants is simply to urge and encourage them to read their Bibles. Participant A's approach was non-threatening, as he " ... gently [sic] challenged [his pastorant] to read the Bible ... " and he, too, " ... read the Bible with [his pastorant]". This is a wise approach as reading the Bible can be intimidating for people who are not accustomed to reading and to responsibly interpret/understand it. The approach to read the Bible with a pastorant provides occasion for pastors to elicit questions and to explain when a pastorant might be confused. This could give pastorants confidence to do more personal Bible reading, as Participant C did to " ... [take] them [the pastorant and his family] through [a] Bible study process" and encouraged them to read and study the Bible for themselves. The method proved effective and Participant C reports that after helping them with a Bible study method " ... they are better able to understand the Bible on their own ... [this] has been helpful [to the pastorant]." Other participants mention hermeneutical aspects such as the author's intent (Participant A and D) and context (Participant A) as hermeneutic pointers, which proved beneficial to their pastorants.

Two of the participants, B and D, mention that it was helpful to study popular verses used by prosperity preachers to support their views with a pastorant to explain what these passages

actually mean when sound hermeneutical principles are applied. Participant B's pastorant was greatly assisted by this and discovered that " ... when I reread the Bible I came across verses that so plainly condemn the prosperity gospel" (*sic*).

### ***Sub-theme 2: Submission to God's sovereign control over life circumstances***

Pastorants had problems with their views of God and that He is sovereign, and participants endeavoured to address aspects relating to God's sovereign control over all life circumstances. Therefore, they encouraged the participants towards submission and seeking comfort in God. Participant A saw it as crucial to show the pastorant that God is " ... not a force to be bent to the will of the believer, but it is God who bends the believer to His will", while Participant C was eager to teach the pastorant to " ... trust God through (his) problems". Participant D considered it very important to encourage pastorants towards humility and submission " ... for such people will receive and be sustained by God's grace (1 Pt 5:5-6)".

This trust in God can, however, only become real when a pastorant gains an accurate understanding of the character, and in particular, the sovereign control of God. Participant E, therefore, emphasised that " ... we need to teach them (pastorants) something of the sovereignty of God" while Participant D's guidance to the pastorant focussed on working through Biblical passages which teach the sovereign control of God over life circumstances, defined specifically as " ... riches and poverty, health and sickness", and to show the pastorant that " ... God's plan for the life of a believer can include suffering". This is not a case of just accepting that life is tough, but of understanding that through trouble one can know that " ... God is still in control and cares for believers who suffer" (Participant D) and will " ... [work] all things for good – i.e. to conform the believer into the image of the Son (Rom 8:28-29)" (Participant D).

### ***Sub-theme 3: Explain the meaning of Christ's atonement***

In their response to the empirical question, participants revealed that a Biblical understanding of what the atoning work of Christ accomplished is vital to remedially guide people who were misled to believe that 'the fruit of the cross' concerns mainly material blessings. Participant D is outspoken about the fact that the pastorant had to understand that " ... Jesus did not die to make anyone rich or healthy but to reconcile sinful man to a God." Participant D, therefore, suggested a thorough study with the pastorant on passages which speak about the atonement as a means of forgiveness of sins, such as Matthew 26:28, Acts 2:38 and Romans 5:5-10.

Participant A states it as a non-negotiable aspect of remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” to recapture “ ... the meaning of the cross ... for those recovering from the PG [“Prosperity Gospel”]”. One way in which this can be achieved is suggested by Participant B: “[t]he sufficiency of Christ continues to be taught using Colossians and Hebrews”. This teaching on the sufficiency of Christ assisted the pastorant to find comfort when he understood the spiritual blessings that he already has in Christ. Participant D’s approach to emphasise the “ ... value of ... eternal spiritual blessing (which) outweighs the temporal value of possessions, success and health (1 Pt 1:17-21)” could assist those who built their meaningfulness upon what they have in material possessions rather than in who they are in Christ. This is testified to by Participant D’s pastorant who was comforted when he understood “ ... that his greatest need, namely the forgiveness of sins and a restored relationship with God ... is (solved) in Christ ... (then) he finally felt fulfilled/satisfied and at peace ... ”.

#### ***Sub-theme 4: Understanding suffering***

A crucial aspect of participants’ pastoral guidance as revealed by the empirical feedback is to help pastorants to understand suffering from a Biblical perspective. Pastorants’ confusion regarding the reality of suffering and perplexing circumstances led four of the five participants to include an explanation of suffering in their pastoral guidance of their pastorants. Participant E posits this is the first step he takes towards remedial pastoral guidance of pastorants regarding their belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

As to the specific approaches taken by participants to affect the way their pastorants view and/or understand suffering, Participant B utilised critical questions to guide a pastorant in thinking for him/herself. An effective question, for instance, is “ ... if all Christians are supposed to be rich, then how can you explain those in persecuted countries today and in history?” He then points out that a teaching that denies suffering effectively “ ... contradicts the lives of the many godly but poor believers in the Bible and history.” This proved to be an effective approach/strategy. Simultaneously, specific Biblical passages can be implemented to explain important Biblical teachings, such as God’s comfort during suffering, as Participant D demonstrated:

- God is in control and cares for believers who suffer (1 Pt 5:6-7);
- God works all things for good – i.e. to conform the believer into the image of the Son (Rm 8:28-29);

- God uses the life of a believer as a testimony to the world that belonging to God is worth more than the passing comforts of this world (Mat 6:20; 1 Pt 1:17-21, 2:12);
- Believers can view their suffering as temporary and light considering God's promise of eternal glory which awaits them (2 Cor 4:17).

#### ***Sub-theme 5: Biblical teaching on wealth (materialism vs. spiritual blessings)***

The "Prosperity Gospel" emphasis on wealth and the resulting problems it can lead to for pastorants requires Biblical teaching on wealth as a fundamental aspect of a paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance. From the empirical data it is clear that pastorants required extensive teaching on what the Bible says about wealth and how it compares in value to the spiritual blessings believers have in Christ. Participant B's pastorant's testimony is striking: "[a]nd the Spirit of the Lord led me to a life that seeks to find Christ most satisfying than health and wealth".

Biblical teachings on wealth, as mentioned by Participant B and D, include: 'not laying up treasure on earth' (Mt 6:19) and 'not desiring money' (1 Tm 6:10) but rather as Participant C instructed the pastorant to consider " ... contentment [as] a Christian virtue". Participant D specifically discussed the 'sow-and-reap' principle of a "Prosperity Gospel" with the pastorant to " ... point out that there is no Biblical correlation between how much one gives and how much God is obligated to give in return."

Apart from Biblical teaching on wealth, Participant B adds that " ... logical teaching on wealth and economics ... " is helpful and relevant to point out the irrational arguments of a "Prosperity Gospel" to pastorants. Participant B articulates the argument thus: "[i]f everyone was miraculously given money, the wealth would soon run out. Prosperity teachers don't try to explain economic realities."

#### **5.3.2 Further suggestions by participants for a pastoral paradigm regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel"**

Participants were afforded the opportunity to add additional suggestions for a pastoral paradigm regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" not already included in their answers. A few significant themes which can assist the proposed pastoral paradigm of this study were extracted from the empirical research data. These themes are now discussed.

## **Theme 1: Be patient with pastorants**

One has to bear in mind that people who require remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” come from an extremely volatile situation. An important aspect when seeking to remedially guide pastorants and one that is specifically highlighted by participants is patience.

From the research data, it transpired that some pastorants might be slow/reluctant/unwilling to change or give up their convictions. Their obtuseness drew out the process of remedial guidance and, therefore, Participant D suggests that pastoral guides “ ... be patient with counsellees [pastorants] and commit to spending sufficient time [towards] understanding their struggles and what they believe.” This is an important aspect taken into consideration for the discussion sessions (refer 5.4) of the pastoral paradigm. It could be presumptuous, even hazardous, to assume that one ‘understands’ everything that a pastorant believes and what struggles they must contend with, without properly gathering the necessary information from the pastorant’s experience. This discretion requires time and good sense and Participant A states that “ ... [many] hours ... are required for them [pastorants] to talk and ask questions”. Participant B, therefore, cautions pastoral guides to “ ... be patient with those who are slowly coming to the light.” Participant E’s comment sums up the pastoral situation and process: “ ... there are no quick fixes” towards solving the sometimes deep-seated problems caused by a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” and requires that “ ... a number of counselling sessions (must) be spaced out with time.”

## **Theme 2: Practice pastoral care and encourage ongoing Christian discipleship**

People who have broken away from a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” require ongoing pastoral care. They require and need to grow in the (for them ‘new’) ‘non-Prosperity Gospel’ belief. In their suggestions for a pastoral paradigm regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” participants included certain aspects that could assist the proposed paradigm of this study. This information is collected into three sub-themes (A-C) discussed below.

### ***Sub-theme A: Encouraging Christian fellowship and association with a Bible teaching church***

Someone who comes out of a “Prosperity Gospel” context requires what could be labelled ‘*paracletic*’ after-care. A fellow believer or group of believers should ‘embrace’ such former “Prosperity Gospel” acolytes and encourage them to embrace, and remain in the new ‘non-Prosperity Gospel’ (actually, Biblically sound) belief. The danger of avoiding church altogether was emphasised as a problem when disillusioned people leave their prosperity



churches. From the empirical responses of some respondents the necessity is clear that former “Prosperity Gospel” followers who now rightly understand what they formerly believed must be taught and encouraged to form a strong bond with a Bible teaching (non-“Prosperity Gospel”) church. To this end, Participant C considers “ ... formal church membership” a necessity and the pastorant should engage in what Participant A suggests: “ ... [to] assimilate ... into groups of other believers who study the Bible ... (where they can be) introduced to others who had walked a similar journey ... ”. This is considered “ ... a powerful pastoral tool” (Participant A).

***Sub-theme B: Encouraging regular personal Bible reading; exposing pastorants to sound preaching of the Bible and theologically reliable books***

Participants identified Biblical knowledge as a crucial intervention towards the discipling of former “Prosperity Gospel” adherents. To train such former “Prosperity Gospel” followers in knowledge of Scripture must begin with personal Bible reading. Participant C emphasises that “ ... every Christian should read their Bible” but also help other people (for instance, someone from or following a “Prosperity Gospel”) with “ ... how to read the Bible.” In other words, interpretation of the Bible is a fundamental skill obtained through discipleship where, as stated by Participant B, a more mature believer can “ ... model the right use of Scripture so that they learn how to read their (own) Bibles.”

Participant A further suggests that the growth in discipleship can be facilitated by “ ... feed[ing] them [pastorants] with books. Often, they come to realise how undernourished they are spiritually, and have an insatiable appetite for truth.” Pastors should, therefore, maintain a good library not only about the phenomenon under discussion (“Prosperity Gospel”), but especially books on the Bible, the cross, the Christian life/practical sanctification and obedience/submission to the Holy Spirit. People struggling with/suffering under the prosperity phenomenon must be encouraged and guided to read “ ... Christian books that contain sound Biblical teaching instead of the ‘prosperity dribble’ and motivational feel-good ‘theology’” (Participant A).

***Sub-theme C: Ongoing pastoral care***

Deep-rooted problems related to a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” require ongoing pastoral care. Participants focus on continuous, sound Biblical teaching and Participant B extends sound advice to preachers and pastoral workers: “ ... master and preach the Gospel, preach verse by verse.” Participant C espouses the same sentiments in the statement: “I truly believe in pastoral preaching. This is where a pastor/preacher preaches to a local

congregation sermons that were prepared with this congregation in mind (and make) appropriate applications.”

Another sound suggestion (and which may in some cases prove to be an imperative) is personal visitation and counselling of pastorants at their abode. Participant C thus articulated this necessity: “[a]s a church member I offer him and (his) wife regular pastoral oversight visits in their home. In the context of their home I can address particular issues from time to time”. Regular contact with pastorants while being freed from what they mistakenly believed should be considered a necessary aspect of ongoing pastoral care.

Finally, pastoral care requires pastors to be practical in their guidance of pastorants. Participant E mentions a fundamental aspect regarding the approach to help pastorants with their problems, and which must not be neglected: “[s]ometimes, I handle them at a very practical level, such as passing on their curriculum vitae to a potential employer or sending them to a Christian doctor (or psychiatrist) and helping with the medical fees.” This could indicate to the pastorant the lack of pastoral care offered in a quick fix approach to problems by prosperity preachers and assist the pastoral guide to build a relationship of trust with the pastorant.

### **5.3.3 Empirical perspectives on pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

Results from the empirical research data show that people with a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” require pastoral guidance due to a variety of problems associated with such a belief. The following findings summarise the descriptive-empirical task undertaken in the empirical study as it relates to pastoral guidance offered by the participants:

- The need exists to identify whether a pastorant is in a definite Saviour-believer relationship with Christ and where necessary a pastorant should be evangelised (leading someone to faith in the basic Scriptural concepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ);
- It is important to inform pastorants about and warn them against the reality of false teachers in the church and to elaborate on the details of false teaching;
- Sound Biblical teaching is a remedy to a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”;

- Teaching of a basic level of hermeneutical skill to pastorants is required. Personal Bible reading, and critical thinking in what they read and what they are taught by others are required;
- An accurate understanding of the character of God as revealed in the Scriptures can lead pastorants to a trust in God amidst difficulties;
- A Biblical understanding of what the atoning work of Christ accomplished is vital to remedially guide people who have been misled to believe that 'the fruit of the cross' that Jesus Christ gained for believers concerns mainly material blessings;
- Pastorants require a Biblical view on suffering and its purposes in God's plan for the believers;
- Pastorants require extensive teaching on what the Bible says about wealth and how it compares in value to the spiritual blessings believers have in Christ;
- People who require remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" come out of an extremely volatile situation and thus patience is a key aspect of the pastoral approach;
- People who broke away from a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" require ongoing pastoral care to grow in their new (non-"Prosperity Gospel") belief;
  - The necessity exists for former "Prosperity Gospel" followers, who now rightly understand what they formerly believed, to be taught and encouraged to form a strong bond with a Bible teaching (non-"Prosperity Gospel") church;
  - Bible knowledge obtained by personal Bible reading, ongoing equipping towards improvement in sound interpretation of the Bible, and sound Christian resources like books can assist the discipling process of former "Prosperity Gospel" adherents;
  - Exposure to regular preaching which exposes the intended meaning of the original author of a Biblical text, regular visitation and counselling in problems related to a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" and practical assistance in life issues are aspects of ongoing pastoral care which former "Prosperity Gospel" adherents require.

### **5.3.4 Summary of empirical research findings on pastoral guidance offered regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

The themes and sub-themes that emerge from the empirical research data are essential for the paradigm presented in this chapter. It reveals perspectives of acting pastoral guides who are required to remedially guide people regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. These perspectives supplement and complement the Petrine paradigm presented below (refer 5.4).

### **5.4 A Petrine paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

As indicated above (refer 5.2.2), the *nouthetic* counselling approach chosen as framework for this study includes the facets of confrontation, instruction and warning for remediation of people with a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Faul and Hanekom’s (2008:5ff) life-vision model can be utilised for the pastoral guidance rendered to a pastorant who has/had a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Rousseau (2010:229) effectively applied Faul and Hanekom’s (2008:5ff) model in the presentation of *Noutetiese berading van persone met piëtistiese mistastings oor lewensheiligheid* (free translation by researcher: *Nouthetic* counselling of people with pietistic misconceptions regarding sanctification/holiness). As was the case in Rousseau’s (2010) study, the focus in this study also is on an erroneous religious teaching in the modern-day Evangelical church which results in negative consequences for those with a belief in such a dogma. Rousseau’s (2010:229) summary of how Faul and Hanekom’s (2008:5ff) model for *nouthetic* counselling can be implemented, is slightly adapted for a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” as follows:

- Someone with a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” becomes aware of the problems associated with such a belief and seeks remedial pastoral guidance;
- Identify the nature and extent of the problem, namely prosperity dogma and its consequences for the pastorant. All counselling sessions must begin with data gathering. A helpful tool to be utilised in the data gathering process is a ‘Personal Data Inventory’ (PDI) (cf. Adams, 1970:271-274; and for the benefits of a PDI cf. Mack, 1994:222). This step is crucial, and attention must be paid to “core data” (Adams, 1986:259ff) in the pastorant’s narrative;
- Assist the pastorant to see the problem in perspective. Pastorants need to be made aware of the error of a “Prosperity Gospel” and for this task the *nouthetic* aspect of

confrontation is required – a pastorant is confronted with the problem of a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel’s” value system. Giving hope to the pastorant at this early stage in the pastoral guidance process is of crucial importance (cf. Louw, 1982:34-35);

- The pastorant requires instruction/teaching to be guided towards a belief (embracing/ acceptance/conformity) in a Biblical value system. Maddox’s (1991:650-672) comment on Practical Theology is important in the instruction of pastorants: A Practical Theology aims not merely at understanding problems, but at guiding towards correct Christian life. Aspects of Petrine normative perspectives aid this part of the paradigm;
- Pastorants must be enabled to make an informed decision. Patiently support the pastorant to critically evaluate aspects of a “Prosperity Gospel’s” value system and aspects of a Biblical value system. Encouragement towards ongoing pastoral guidance under a loving shepherd and the avoidance of dangerous prosperity preachers are relevant in this regard.

The *nouthetic* aspects of confrontation, instruction and warning serve as the outline for the pastoral paradigm presented. These three *nouthetic* aspects also feature interchangeably in each section of the paradigm where necessary.

Tables with key perspectives from the empirical-descriptive, interpretive and normative tasks are used to provide an overall picture of the research findings as it applies to the specific section of the paradigm presented (cf. Table 5-1, 5-2 and 5-3). These tables can be used by pastoral guides as a basis from which the pastoral guidance can take place in a series of discussion sessions (cf. Rousseau, 2010:230-236). Appropriate discussion sessions are suggested in the paradigm below (refer 5.4.1, 5.4.2, 5.4.3).

#### **5.4.1 Awareness of the problems of a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel’s” value system (confrontation)**

An integration of the descriptive-empirical, interpretive and normative perspectives obtained from the research data, and as it relates to the problems of a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, are outlined in Table 5-1 below. These perspectives are considered essential knowledge for pastoral guides regarding the discussion sessions 1, 2 and 3 of the paradigm presented.

**Table 5-1: Confrontation with the problems of a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

| Descriptive-empirical perspectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Interpretive perspectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Normative perspectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to a lack of understanding key aspects of the Gospel in the Scriptures, “Prosperity Gospel” adherents might not be in a personal saving relationship with Jesus Christ. The need is, therefore, to identify whether a pastorant is in a definite Saviour-believer relationship with Christ. Where necessary, a pastorant must be evangelised (leading someone to faith in the basic Scriptural concepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ);</li> <li>• Within the framework of a “Prosperity Gospel”, all believers have the right to abundant wealth and perfect health, and when this does not materialise believers are considered outside God’s will for their life;</li> <li>• Little (or no) skill is owned or acquired in prosperity churches to interpret the Bible accurately and, therefore, prosperity teachers are rarely or never held accountable by their church members/followers;</li> <li>• The lack of hermeneutical ability and the lack of sound Biblical teaching in prosperity churches result in:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ignorance among prosperity adherents regarding the sovereign control and supremacy of</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interaction with human sciences provides the following reasons as to why a pastorant could be susceptible to a ‘gospel’ message of health and wealth:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The aim of a “Prosperity Gospel” to bring about social change towards betterment is commendable, yet by simply claiming that suffering cannot and does not affect believers is an ineffective methodology towards positive social change;</li> <li>- The dire state of poverty and sickness (and the failures of government to meet those pressing needs) in Africa makes a “Prosperity Gospel” an appealing message for those who are desperate for some kind of intervention for their pressing needs;</li> <li>- A skewed cognitive development can lead to a skewed religious conviction; If a person’s pre-existing belief is skewed due to manipulation it could lead to a skewed social <i>schema</i>;</li> <li>- Psychological manipulation can result in cognitive distortion which influences people’s understanding of other people and life circumstances. Certain beliefs and practices of a</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Christian believer’s hope and meaningfulness lies in the Biblical teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the resulting spiritual blessings;</li> <li>• There is a lack (even absence) of a responsible exegetical and hermeneutical approach among “Prosperity Gospel” leaders/preachers;             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The quasi-gospel proclaimed by a “Prosperity Gospel” is not founded upon the accurate interpretation of Biblical teaching;</li> <li>- Adherents to the prosperity movement are not exposed to any sound exegetical method of Biblical interpretation;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• As God would determine, Christians believers are exposed and susceptible to various forms of suffering during their earthly lives and belief in God does not acquit them of persecution, poverty, sickness, death, et cetera, yet a “Prosperity Gospel” denies suffering as God’s will for the believer.</li> </ul> |

| Descriptive-empirical perspectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Interpretive perspectives                                        | Normative perspectives |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <p>God, which could lead to unfounded expectations from God, arrogance towards and belittling of God;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a misunderstanding of the present results/benefits of the atoning work of Christ, which could lead to a shallow, unfulfilled Christian experience;</li> <li>- the belief that the Scriptures encourage (even demand) believers to love money and possessions, which could lead to spiritual competition among believers, dissatisfaction with one's life circumstances and, if the wealth does not materialise, bitterness toward God;</li> <li>- simplistic views regarding suffering, which could lead to confusion and bitterness when suffering is encountered;</li> <li>- viewing prayer as a way of forcing God to work one's material and physical well-being and viewing corporate worship and giving practices as a way of convincing God you deserve more blessing, which could lead to self-centredness rather than God-honouring worship and care for fellow-believers.</li> </ul> | <p>"Prosperity Gospel" result in psychological manipulation.</p> |                        |

Problems associated with a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" stem from erroneous teaching on God's will for the believer – a 'gospel' of prosperity. This results in an (almost exclusive) expectation and pursuit of temporal, material prosperity by means of unbiblical practices

such as irrational 'tithing' to prosperity preachers' ministries, uttering of arrogant demands to God in prayer and the hermeneutically-flawed abuse of Scriptural passages towards claiming prosperity promises for every individual believer. With the emphasis on a 'gospel' of temporal (earthly) prosperity, the "Prosperity Gospel" believer is left ignorant of the eternal spiritual prosperity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which brings the believer into a relationship with God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ unto eternal spiritual blessings. Confusion regarding identity, meaning and meaningfulness in life when the promises of a "Prosperity Gospel" do not materialise (when suffering is experienced), can be remedied by a comprehension and embracing of the true Gospel and having hope in the midst of suffering circumstances. Accurate interpretation of the Scriptural proclamation of the Gospel is a non-negotiable necessity.

Three foundational discussion sessions are suggested towards remedial pastoral guidance as it relates to confronting a pastorant with the problems of a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

## **DISCUSSION SESSION 1**

### **Identify the nature and extent of the problem**

This first discussion session effectually coincides with Osmer's (2008:31ff) descriptive-empirical question: "What is going on?".

1. Establish a meeting between the pastoral guide (counsellor) and the pastorant.
  - It is crucial from the outset of the remedial pastoral guidance that care is taken in building a trust-relationship with the pastorant. This can be accomplished by clarifying the pastoral guide's commitment to ethical conduct and to treat all information with utmost privacy and confidentiality. Clarification of the pastoral guide's reliance upon the Holy Spirit as *paraclete* (Adams, 1970:20; Louw, 1982:13-15) in the pastoral guidance process provides hope (cf. Adams, 1970:76) to the pastorant and builds trust with the pastorant for the pastoral guide shows dependence on God. Requesting permission for note-taking (or voice recording) during discussion sessions and explaining the intention with note-taking (or voice recording) as a commitment to thoroughness can also build trust with the pastorant.
  - As evidence of reliance on the Holy Spirit, prayer is an essential component (McMinn, 1996:61f) and each session should be opened and closed with prayer that expresses dependence upon God, His Spirit and the Word of God to guide in all truth.



- Clarification on the emphasis on the Bible as the main focus in the pastoral guidance process could build further trust as the reliance is not on the pastoral guide but on the Word of God.
2. Request the completion of, or obtain a completed Personal Data Inventory (PDI) (for an example of a detailed PDI cf. Adams, 1970:271-274; MacArthur & Mack, 1994:222-223, 387-390). The PDI could identify the need for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.
  3. Allow time for the pastorant’s narrative while making notes of ‘core data’ (explain the importance and purpose of note-taking to the pastorant). With the pastorant’s permission, the pastoral guide could make a recording of the narrative for future detailed observation, or for the purpose of reviewing information the pastoral guide may have forgotten. ‘Core data’ to note includes aspects relating to the pastorant’s:
    - view (understanding) of God, Jesus and the Gospel;
    - expectations, disappointments;
    - view of pain and suffering;
    - Biblical knowledge and accuracy/comprehension of exegesis;
    - view of church and view of church leaders/preachers;
    - view of self (joy, success, hope, sense of meaning/meaningfulness).
  4. Questions can facilitate the process of obtaining full details from the pastorants regarding their problems with a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Should any question make a pastorant uncomfortable, it would then be best to leave it and return to it at a later stage when the pastorant is more at ease (cf. Rousseau, 2010:231). Relevant questions could include *inter alia*:
    - How would you explain the message of the Gospel?
    - Describe your relationship with God?
    - What are your expectations of God?

- On what basis/why do you have those expectations? Why are these expectations important to you?
- Do you have joy in life and in your Christian experience? What brings you joy – what robs you of joy?
- Do you feel like a failure or do you consider yourself successful – why/why not?
- How would you define a successful/satisfied/blessed Christian?
- In your view, how do you measure up against other Christians? Why do you say so?
- Explain your relationship with your prosperity church leader?
- What are the qualities that make a good spiritual leader?
- What value do you attach to Jesus Christ? Why?
- Is your Christian experience fulfilling – why or why not?
- What hope do you have for the future?
- What do you believe about heaven? Do you ever think about heaven? If so, when are you most likely to think about heaven?
- What do you value in life? What is valuable and why do you attach value to it?
- How have you experienced suffering?
- What are your views on suffering? What is your (emotional) response to suffering (i.e. fear, bitterness, anger, resentment, sadness)?
- Does suffering affect your view of God, Jesus or the Christian experience? If so, in what way?
- What is your view of yourself? Why?
- How do you think other people view you? Why do you think they view you that way?
- How do you think God views you? Why do you think He views you in that way?

## **DISCUSSION SESSION 2**

### **Placing the problem into perspective (PART 1)**

Pastoral guides should interpret the data gathered in the first discussion session and identify, to the best of their ability, whether the pastorant gives evidence of being in a personal Saviour-believer relationship with God through Jesus Christ. In this regard, Adam's (1970:67) remark concerning the need for 'redemptive counselling' (evangelistic counselling) applies directly to a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". Pastorants cannot be remedially guided regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" if they are not confronted with the false ideas of a "Prosperity Gospel" on redemption and confronted with the true Biblical Gospel of redemption in the sense of what God did for sinners through Jesus Christ.

The empirical research revealed that participants identified the lack of clarity (even ignorance) on the Gospel as a major component of the problems related to a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". In their pastoral guidance, participants indicated that their first contact with a pastorant with a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" required an attempt to lead the pastorant to understand the basic Scriptural concepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to faith in Him.

Due to the pre-condition this sets for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" to follow, an entire discussion session should be allocated to this vital aspect. Adams' (1970:68) observation is clear: " ... man cannot be helped in any fundamental sense apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ ... (unsaved) counselees are neither capable of understanding God's revealed will ... nor capable of doing it ... ". It is, therefore, a fundamental premise in pastoral guidance, to remedy the problem of a 'false gospel' with a clear presentation and invitation of the true Gospel.

The following discussion points can be suggested:

1. Ask the pastorant if they can explain their understanding of the Gospel.
2. Discuss the pastorant's personal relationship with God.
3. Confront the pastorant with the concept of a false 'gospel' (cf. Gl 1:6-7; 2 Cor 11:4) and categorise the ideas of a "Prosperity Gospel".
4. Present the pastorant with the liberating (redemptive) Biblical truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Mk 10:45; Rm 3:21-26; etc.).

5. Provide the pastorant with any sound Gospel tract or a short paperback which clarifies key aspects of the Gospel, for example Gilbert's *What is the Gospel* (2010) which is also available in a condensed form as a Gospel tract. Reading a section of such a resource could be given as a homework assignment.

It cannot be assumed that at a first presentation of the Gospel a pastorant will come to saving faith in Jesus' redemptive work of forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God (although this is not impossible). It is not the exclusive aim of this second discussion session but rather a discussion on the Gospel confronts a pastorant with new standards and values (Adams, 1970:68). The importance of this session lies in laying a foundation for the following discussion sessions which will continuously emphasise, and re-emphasise, important Gospel truths for the purpose of solidifying the Scriptural Gospel message (refer Diagram 5-2) as countermeasure to the error of a "Prosperity Gospel". The extent of the various aspects of the Gospel is also too substantial to fit into one discussion session.

Due to the nature of the "Prosperity Gospel" missing the mark of 'gospel', it is pivotal that the true Biblical Gospel features throughout the discussion sessions. This focus on the Gospel which continues throughout the various discussion sessions in a remedial paradigm, coincides with Adams' (1970:70-73) concept of *nouthetic* evangelism. For a pastorant who has not yet come to saving faith by the true Gospel the ultimate remedy lies in faith in and repentance towards the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (which requires forsaking all other quasi-gospels), while the pastorant who has come to saving faith needs to be grounded in the depths of the glorious truths of the spiritual and eternal blessings of the Gospel.

The aim of the second discussion session is to confront the pastorant with the universal invitation of the Gospel (cf. Adams, 1970:70) and introduce the concepts of the Gospel and 'false gospel'.

### **DISCUSSION SESSION 3**

#### **Placing the problem into perspective (PART 2)**

With the clarification of distinguishing between the concepts of the Gospel and false 'gospel' as the basic point of departure (discussion session 2), the importance of accurate/sound exegesis of Scripture must follow. The teaching of a "Prosperity Gospel" is characterised by a complete lack of hermeneutic treatment of Scripture, or, at the very best, it might be said it has a severely flawed exegetical methodology. "Prosperity Gospel" preachers show little

regard (if any) for the Bible and an accurate interpretation of Scripture (refer 4.3.3). No trace of recognised sound hermeneutical principles and a reliable exegetical process can be identified in prosperity preachers' usage of Scripture. Resultantly, the average churchgoer with a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" is mostly ignorant about the importance of sound interpretation of Scripture and unable to accurately interpret Scripture for themselves. This state of affairs results in little (or no) accountability by prosperity preachers to their audience on their claims of what the Bible teaches.

The following discussion points are suggested to facilitate a perspective on the pastorant's problem:

1. Discuss the homework of session 2. Determine whether the pastorant has a clear grasp on the difference between a false 'gospel' and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Answer any questions the pastorant may have on the homework assignment.
2. Have a brief discussion on Bibliology – clarify the Bible as the communicated Word of God and its implications (such as God wants His people to understand His message and we have a responsibility to understand that message accurately) (cf. 2 Tm 2:15; 2 Tm 3:16-17; 2 Pt 1:19-21).
3. Clarify the concepts: hermeneutics and exegesis.
4. Deal with the importance of sound hermeneutics and exegesis (an exercise of 'walking' the pastorant through a passage of Scripture popular with prosperity preaching might be especially helpful in this regard).
5. Deal with the basics of a historical-grammatical approach to exegesis (Bible interpretation). Discuss the following principles as it applies to sound exegesis:
  - Understanding the historical context (original author and original audience's life circumstances);
  - Consideration for the literary context;
  - The importance of following the normal rules of grammar and syntax;
  - Distinguishing between different genres and their effect on interpretation and application of the text;
  - Seeking for the original author's intent – i.e. What the author meant by the text;

- It might be helpful to provide the pastorant with a good resource on Bible interpretation for self-study, for example Duvall and Hays' (2012) *Grasping God's Word: A hands-on approach to reading, interpreting, and applying the Bible* or any other source which expounds on sound exegesis, but which is suitable for a lay person. Reading a section on the importance of sound hermeneutics/exegesis could be given as a homework assignment.

#### 6. Deal with the faulty hermeneutics and exegesis of a "Prosperity Gospel".

It would be overwhelming to require from a pastorant to comprehend the full extent of, or be fully equipped with sound hermeneutics and exegesis in one discussion session. The aim is similar to that of discussion session 2 – as the Gospel is foundational to all the other discussion sessions, likewise sound hermeneutics/exegesis is foundational to, and flows into the other discussion sessions (refer diagram 5-2). Coming to grips with a sound hermeneutical/exegetical approach takes time and, therefore, the aim in discussion session 3 is to solidify the importance of accurate Bible interpretation rather than to equip a pastorant with a scholarly ability to apply accurate hermeneutics/exegesis.

Getting this hermeneutic 'exercise' right is vitally important as it sets the tone for the discussion sessions to follow in which Scripture plays the definitive role. Empowering the pastorant, therefore, to discern what is in accordance with Scripture will have a long-term result.

#### 5.4.2 Remedial guidance towards a Biblical value system (instruction)

The convergence and integration of data obtained from the descriptive-empirical, interpretive and normative perspectives and as it relates to remedial pastoral guidance for a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel", are outlined in Table 5-2 below. Cognisance of these perspectives can be considered essential for pastoral guides regarding the discussion sessions 4 and 5 of the paradigm.

**Table 5-2: Remedial instruction on a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel"**

| Descriptive-empirical perspectives                                                                                                                                  | Interpretive perspectives                                                                                                                              | Normative perspectives                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sound Biblical teaching is a remedy to a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel";</li> <li>- <b>Continuous focus</b> on</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The individualism promoted by a "Prosperity Gospel" could be harmful to the social order and moral</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Christian believer's value system should be founded upon the Biblical teaching of what God reveals as precious and</li> </ul> |

| Descriptive-empirical perspectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Interpretive perspectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Normative perspectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>hermeneutical skill is required. Personal Bible reading, and critical thinking in what is read and taught by others are required;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>An accurate understanding</b> of the character of God as revealed in the Scriptures can lead pastorants to a trust in God amidst difficulties;</li> <li>- A <b>Biblical understanding</b> of what the atoning work of Christ accomplished is vital to remedial guidance for people who were misled to believe that 'the fruit of the cross' that Jesus Christ gained for believers, essentially concerns material blessings;</li> <li>- Pastorants require a <b>Biblical view</b> of suffering and its purpose in God's plan for believers;</li> <li>- Pastorants require <b>extensive teaching</b> on what the Bible teaches about wealth and how it compares in value to the spiritual blessings believers have in Christ.</li> </ul> | <p>behaviour which benefit the community;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People find meaning in religious beliefs and promises of abundant wealth and excellent health which resonate with societies who are in need of social-economic change;</li> <li>• People are influenced by their social-cultural context and the prosperity movement seems to exploit people's social-cultural influence to attract them to a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel";</li> <li>• A "Prosperity Gospel" espouses the social-cultural norm that every individual is entitled to a better, more comfortable and wealthy lifestyle. In fact, as followers of Christ it is considered their right;</li> <li>• Possessions can be a symbol of someone's ability and qualities and an indicator of someone's social standing and, therefore, people often find meaning and seek their identity in material wealth;</li> <li>• African Traditional Religion's influence on African communities can create an obsession with the supernatural world of good versus evil and the dependence upon superstition-practices to overcome obstacles in life.</li> </ul> | <p>valuable (spiritual, eternal) rather than on what unbelievers (the world) consider precious and valuable (temporal, material);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By the will of God, Christian believers are exposed and susceptible to various forms of <u>suffering</u> during their earthly lives and belief in God does not acquit them of persecution, poverty, sickness, death, etc. Suffering does not mean believers are in conflict with God's will for their life or that they have a lack of faith. Believers can have the assurance that God is in control over suffering and cares for them in suffering;</li> <li>• Believers must value God's control over their lives, even in suffering, and that God cares for them (past, present and future) and is present in their suffering;</li> <li>• Believers must trust God in their suffering and this 'genuine faith' in God proves meaning in life which leads to meaningfulness and hope;</li> <li>• Believers must value the atoning work of Christ on their behalf and the secure, eternal spiritual blessings which result from it;</li> <li>• Believers should imitate Christ's meek submission to the will of God in suffering for it will be</li> </ul> |

| Descriptive-empirical perspectives | Interpretive perspectives | Normative perspectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                    |                           | recompensed by glory when Christ returns;<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believers must value their connectedness with God's people and the security it brings in a suffering world;</li> <li>• Believers must dedicate themselves to self-sacrificial service to God and His people and value the mutual love between fellow believers.</li> </ul> |

People with a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" can be drawn into a value system which is radically different from the value system Peter presents to suffering believers toward their hope and meaningfulness. It is not uncommon for people who seek pastoral guidance due to a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" to struggle with hope and meaningfulness in life and their Christian/religious experience. This possibly results from a value system which leads to a yearning for/obsession with earthly, material prosperity (similar to that of the world/unbelieving society) but which fails to render true, lasting hope and meaningfulness. Remedial pastoral guidance requires teaching/instruction on the value of the spiritual, eternal blessings which the believer already possess in Jesus Christ and which will certainly find final fulfilment at the future revelation of Jesus Christ.

Two remedial discussion sessions are suggested as it relate to teaching/instruction to pastorants on the hope and meaningfulness that is found in the value system of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Louw (1982:34) makes the crucial observation that without the dimension of hope there can be no true pastoral care when it comes to the question of suffering. It is hope that provides victory when pain and suffering cannot be relieved. Thus, the focus in the teaching/instruction of a pastorant during the two suggested discussion sessions (4 and 5) is on building true Biblical hope that the Gospel of Jesus Christ offers, and the assurance to believers of a secure relationship with God, an eternal position in Christ and being part of the body of Christ.



## **DISCUSSION SESSION 4**

### **Placing the Biblical value system into perspective (PART 1)**

1. Discuss the previous homework assignment. Determine whether the pastorant has grasped the importance of accurate Bible interpretation. Answer any questions the pastorant might have on the homework or the concepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and accurate Bible interpretation. Recap core verses of Scripture regarding 'prosperity' and use them to introduce verses of our blessing in Christ.
2. Enquire about the pastorant's view on suffering.
3. Discuss a Biblical understanding of suffering as it relates to the believer.
  - Inform on Jesus' instruction to Peter on Christian discipleship – Mark 8:34-38.
  - Inform about and discuss the suffering circumstances of New Testament believers – the original audience to 1 Peter serves as an example.
  - Present Christ's example of suffering – 1 Peter 2:21-25; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 4:1-2; 1 Peter 4:12-19.
  - Share some teaching about the suffering circumstances of faithful Christians throughout church history – a biographical discussion of any Christian who suffered pain, loss, illness, poverty and/or death for the Gospel could be discussed. Many such biographies are available in oriented form and it is suggested that the pastoral guide who seeks to remedially guide someone regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" familiarise themselves with such material. Examples are biographies on John Bunyan, Hudson Taylor, John Paton, et cetera.
  - Discuss God's will for suffering and His purposes for suffering – 1 Peter 1:6-7; 1 Peter 3:14-18; 1 Peter 4:12-19; 1 Peter 5:6-10 (as a cross-reference, refer Rm 8:18-39).
4. Enquire about the pastorant's view on value. What does the pastorant consider valuable and why?
5. Deal with a temporal, material focus versus an eternal, spiritual focus.

- Discuss the Petrine value system in the light of that which is perishable versus that which is imperishable – 1 Peter 1:4, 7, 18, 23; 1 Peter 3:4.
  - Discuss the Petrine value system in light of positive desire versus negative desire – 1 Peter 1:12-14; 1 Peter 2:2, 11; 1 Peter 4:2-3.
  - Discuss the Petrine value system in light of what God considers/declares precious and valuable – 1 Peter 1:7, 19; 1 Peter 2:4-7; 1 Peter 3:4.
6. Assign the following homework aimed at solidifying aspects dealt with in discussion session 4 and to prepare the pastorant for discussion session 5: Request the pastorant to read 1 Peter and to write down their understanding with regard to:
- God's control over suffering and care for the believer in suffering;
  - Christ's atoning work and the position of the believer in Christ;
  - The gift/privilege of belonging to the body of Christ.

The homework should be timeously submitted to the pastoral guide before discussion session 5 at a time established between the pastoral guide and the pastorant.

For discussion sessions 4 above (and 5 below), it is important for the pastoral guide to show empathy and compassion toward a pastorant who might be hurting due to suffering circumstances. Avoid providing the pastorant with false hope, such as: "God will relieve your pain or improve your circumstances if you listen to/follow my counsel" – in actual fact the pastor's practice then proceeds along the same methodological lines as purveyors of a "Prosperity Gospel" namely to make his word/advice normative for and a guarantee for the pastorant's dealing with the problem at hand. Also, do not give false information to 'be thankful that your circumstances are not as bad as ...' – the very fact that someone must seek pastoral intervention is a clear statement that their circumstances are anything but favourable. Quasi-advice and clichés like these must be avoided as this sets the pastorant up for failure. In principle, it is not different to the teaching of a "Prosperity Gospel". It is not the pastoral guide's task 'to talk a pastorant out of his suffering' but to express our salvation in Christ to bring personal hardship, even pain, into communion with the suffering Christ (cf. Louw, 1982:37). Above all, the pastorant must be guided in a relationship of faith in Christ.

Louw (1982:27-40) offers wise advice and praxis for the pastoral guide in presenting five aspects of the pastoral tasks regarding suffering. These tasks can be effectively utilised in discussion session 4:

- **Pisteological integration:** Faith acknowledges God's presence in suffering, not that God wills the suffering of a person *per se*, but He wills what happens in the heart of the person through the suffering, that a person will keep believing (and clinging to) God's loving compassion in the midst of suffering. The task of the pastoral guide is to help the pastorant make sense of suffering;
- **Soteriological communication:** The presence of God in suffering becomes a reality on the basis of the atoning work of Jesus Christ. The comfort in suffering lies in the assurance that a believer suffers in communion with Christ. A believer is never alone in suffering;
- **Pneumatological activity:** The acceptance of suffering for Christ is only possible due to the work of the Holy Spirit unto the strength and endurance of the believer. A believer's own strength fails, but the resurrection power bestowed by the Holy Spirit in them provides sufficient strength for every trial;
- **Eschatological focus:** Hope for the future is essential in pastoral care regarding suffering. This hope lies essentially in the resurrection of the believer, in other words that they already possess life in Christ and this resurrection life puts suffering into perspective. The aim of the pastoral task is to place the focus of a person's existence on the reality of the resurrection life on the basis of faith, through love;
- **Existential mood:** There is joy in suffering, not that the suffering brings joy, but the joy makes the suffering bearable. The loving comfort of God worked in the heart of the believer in suffering leads to a doxology. The joy in suffering is the grateful song of victory.

## DISCUSSION SESSION 5

### Placing the Biblical value system into perspective (PART 2)

1. Discuss the previous homework assignment. Commend the pastorant's effort and progress. Where pastorants might misinterpret the/a text provide them with the right interpretation – it serves a dual purpose to inform on what is right and would help to sharpen a pastorant's own exegetical 'working' with Scripture. Answer any questions the

pastorant might have on the reading of 1 Peter. Review discussion session 4 and spend time answering any questions the pastorant might have on suffering and a Biblical value system. Afford the pastorant enough time to unburden anything/everything that might confuse proper understanding.

2. Enquire about pastorants' view of God and whether their reading of 1 Peter (with an attempt to apply sound hermeneutics/exegesis) influenced their view of God.
3. Deal with the value of God's love, compassion and care for the believer.
  - Discuss God's sovereignty and grace in salvation – 1 Peter 2-9.
  - Discuss God's sovereignty and grace in suffering – 1 Peter 1:6-9.
4. Enquire about the pastorant's view of Christ and their position in Christ and whether their reading of 1 Peter (with an attempt to apply sound hermeneutics/exegesis) influenced their view.
5. Deal with the value of Christ and being in Christ.
  - Discuss the value of the blood of Christ to a believer – 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Peter 1:18-19.
  - Discuss the value of the resurrection of Christ to the believer – 1 Peter 1:3; 1 Peter 3:21-22.
  - Discuss the value of the example of Christ to the believer – 1 Peter 2:21-25.
6. Enquire about the pastorant's view of what it means to belong to the people of God and whether their reading of 1 Peter (with an attempt to apply sound hermeneutics/exegesis) influenced their view.
7. Deal with the value of belonging to the new people of God.
  - Discuss the work of God in Christ to join the believer to the body of Christ, and its accomplished privileges – 1 Peter 2:4-10.
  - Discuss the privilege and responsibility of the mutual love between members of the body of Christ – 1 Peter 4:7-11.

8. Assign the following homework aimed at solidifying aspects dealt with in discussion session 5 and to prepare the pastorant for discussion session 6:
  - (a) Request the pastorant to re-read 1 Peter and to write down how their understanding has changed with regard to the following concepts:
    - God's control over suffering and care for the believer in suffering;
    - Christ's atoning work and the position of the believer in Christ;
    - The gift/privilege of belonging to the body of Christ.
  - (b) Request the pastorant to write down their understanding of church (and church practices) and their view of church leaders/preachers.

The homework should be timeously submitted to the pastoral guide before discussion session 6, as established between the pastoral guide and the pastorant.

Sound Scriptural guidance is imperative in the remedial process to liberate someone from an erroneous belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". The need for teaching/instruction of a pastorant regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" is addressed in discussion sessions 4 and 5. Problems encountered by pastorants under the influence of a "Prosperity Gospel" stem from the unbiblical/erroneous teaching of prosperity preachers on key components of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This provides the need for discussion session 6 which will focus on the discernment of the pastorant regarding church leaders/preachers.

The instruction during sessions 4 and 5 is designed to solidify the two foundational aspects which provide the basis for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel", namely, the Gospel of Jesus Christ and sound Bible interpretation (see flow in Diagram 5-2).

#### **5.4.3 Making an informed decision on church and church leaders (warning)**

Outlined below in Table 5-3 is an integration of the descriptive-empirical, interpretive and normative perspectives obtained from the research data which relate *firstly* to warning pastorants against "Prosperity Gospel" preachers and churches, and *secondly* to encourage pastorants towards integration into the ministry of (a) godly Bible-teaching, Gospel-preaching church leader(s). These perspectives reflected in Table 5-3 are considered essential

knowledge for pastoral guides with regard to the discussion session 6 of the paradigm presented.

**Table 5-3: Warnings on discernment of submission to church leaders/preachers**

| Descriptive-empirical perspectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Interpretive perspectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Normative perspectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Prosperity Gospel” adherents can develop an unhealthy admiration for their prosperity preachers which could lead to a lack of accountability of prosperity preachers and a tendency toward adherents being manipulated and misused;</li> <li>• It is important to inform pastorants and warn them against the reality of false teachers in the church and to elaborate on what false teaching entails;</li> <li>• People who broke away from a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” require ongoing pastoral care to grow in their new (non-“Prosperity Gospel”) belief. People who require remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” come out of an extremely volatile situation and thus patience is a key aspect of the pastoral approach.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Africans’ admiration and respect for prominent tribal leaders and ancestors contribute to the ease with which Africans can admire and submit to ‘successful’ dynamic prosperity leaders;</li> <li>• “Prosperity Gospel” adherents are exposed to various cognitive manipulation tactics and are abused for the financial benefit of prosperity preachers;</li> <li>• Pastorants may fear questioning or holding a “Prosperity Gospel” preacher accountable. Being labelled as an outcast (‘unsaved’) makes it difficult to break ties with the prosperity movement.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believers must only submit to godly, faithful, self-sacrificial shepherds who minister God’s compassionate care to them in times of suffering;</li> <li>• Believers would be wise to evaluate a leader’s character before they decide to follow someone – preachers who faithfully serve God’s people are a gift to the church, but those who selfishly abuse God’s people should be avoided.</li> </ul> |

A “Prosperity Gospel” environment can be toxic, and this can affect a person’s judgment and make someone susceptible to being manipulated. A ‘blind’ confidence and trust of any church leader, without any room for questioning and keeping a preacher accountable both in

practice and teaching, creates a platform for such manipulation. Criteria by which a church leader/preacher can be assessed is required in order for a pastorant to make a wise decision regarding which church and church leader/preacher they commit to or choose to be influenced by.

A crucial element of the remedial process is to assist pastorants in this exacting process of discerning between God-provided shepherds for the protection, care and growth of believers and dangerous, self-appointed leaders who abuse God's people for personal gain. Remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" requires pastorants to break away from a former prosperity church and to integrate into a Bible-preaching, Gospel-believing church under the shepherding care of a compassionate and loving under-shepherd of Jesus Christ.

The focus in discussion session 6 is to present the pastorant with Biblical (Petrine) principles toward discerning between God-provided shepherds and a self-appointed false teacher. Instead of considering church leaders/preachers as untouchable and above questioning, pastorants need to apply informed discernment in choosing which leaders are worthy of following. Every believer has the freedom and responsibility to choose their local church fellowship and to discern which church leaders prove themselves accountable to the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and, therefore, worthy of submission.

## **DISCUSSION SESSION 6**

### **Making an informed decision on church commitment and church leaders/preachers**

1. Discuss the previous homework assignment. Commend the pastorant's effort. Answer any further questions the pastorant might have on the concepts covered in the previous discussion sessions.
2. Enquire about the pastorant's church experience and views on church leadership.
3. Discuss the tactics and dangers of psychological manipulation.
4. Deal with the characteristics revealed in the Bible concerning the type of church leaders /preachers to avoid – 2 Peter 2.
  - Discuss the aspect of greedy leaders – 2 Peter 2:3; 2 Peter 2:14-17.
  - Discuss the aspect of deceptive promises made by leaders – 2 Peter 2:17-19.

- Discuss the aspect of arrogant leaders – 2 Peter 2:10-11.
5. Deal with the Biblical qualifications and the task of God-provided under-shepherds of Jesus Christ – 1 Peter 5:1-5.
- Discuss the Biblical instruction for shepherds not to serve under compulsion but voluntarily – 1 Peter 5:2.
  - Discuss the Biblical instruction for shepherds not to seek selfish/sordid gain but to serve with eagerness – 1 Peter 5:2.
  - Discuss the Biblical instruction for shepherds to not lord it over people but to serve as examples – 1 Peter 5:3.
  - Discuss the Biblical instruction for shepherds to focus on the imperishable eschatological reward which will be received at the second coming of Christ above perishable earthly riches and status – 1 Peter 5:4.
6. Discuss the importance/value of integrating into a Bible-teaching, Gospel-believing local church.
- Dever (2013) provides helpful insights for decision-making regarding commitment to a local church and some of these principles on a healthy local church should be shared with the pastorant.

Discussion session 6 presents an opportunity to guide a person toward a Bible-teaching, Gospel-believing local church. This can be considered a crucial aspect/step in the remedial process. As was indicated by participants in the empirical study (refer 5.3.2 – Theme 2), it can develop into a lengthy process for pastorants to come to grips with the reality that they have been deceived all along. The specific consequences of the deception might, or might not, be fully turned around or remedied in the six discussion sessions envisaged above. It is not uncommon for former prosperity churchgoers to withdraw from church altogether and to hesitate in trusting church leaders, and, therefore, stressing the importance of committing to a Bible-teaching, Gospel-believing local church is vital. Ongoing shepherding care is imperative towards effective remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” (refer Diagram 5-2).



#### 5.4.4 Diagrammatic illustration of a Petrine paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”

Diagram 5-2 below summarises and shows the flow of the various discussion sessions of the Petrine paradigm:

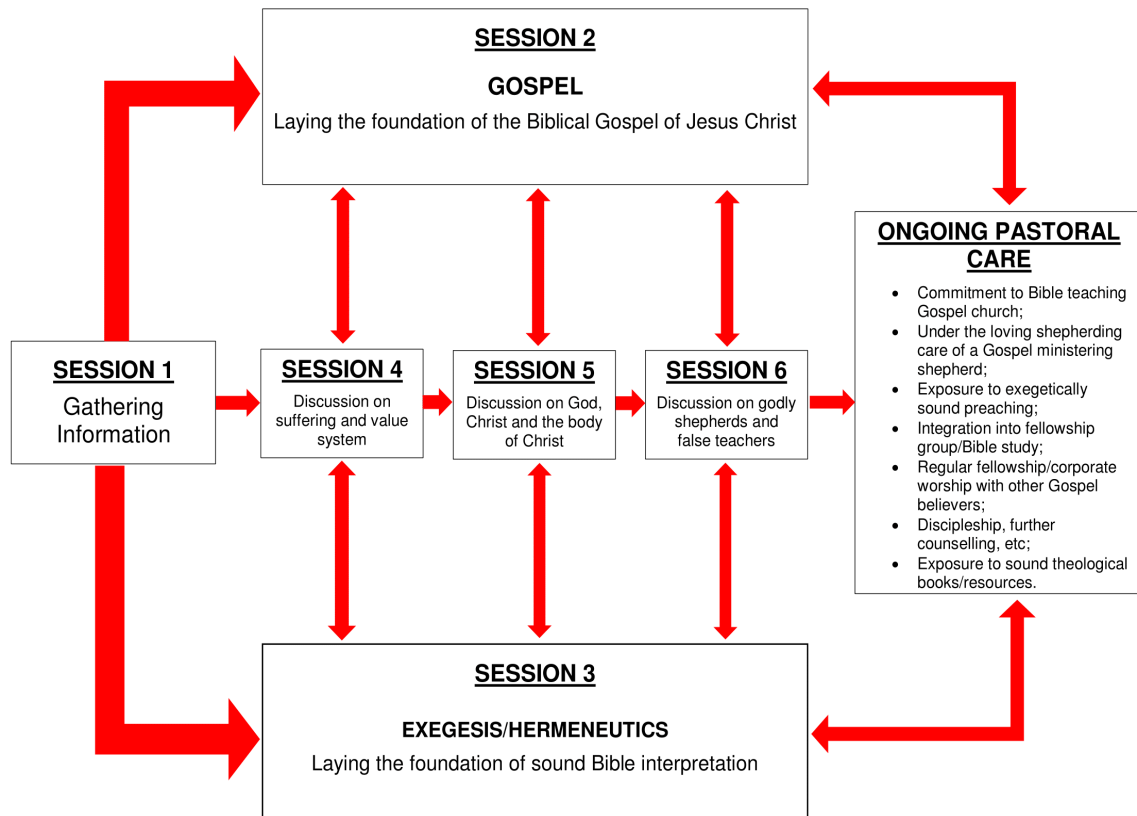


**Diagram 5-2: Remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

In discussion session 1 information is gathered which assists the pastoral guide to identify the pastorant’s problem as relating to a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. A twofold problem must be placed into perspective for the pastorant with a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, namely, confusion/ignorance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and an inability/ignorance of sound Bible interpretation. Thus, session 1 flows firstly into discussion session 2 on the ‘Gospel’ and secondly into discussion session 3 on ‘hermeneutics/exegesis’.

The instruction of a pastorant on key Biblical teachings relating to a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” in discussion sessions 4 and 5, flows out of the discussion on the Gospel (discussion session 2) and sound Bible interpretation (discussion session 3). At the same time, it also aims at solidifying (referring back to) the concepts of the Gospel and sound Bible

interpretation. Detail obtained from the information gathered in discussion session 1 can also aid effective instruction in sessions 4 and 5 on key (Biblical) teachings relating to a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

Discussion session 6 is a culmination of the previous discussion sessions. Due to the ‘false gospel’, the lack of sound Bible interpretation in a “Prosperity Gospel”, and the unbiblical teaching of a “Prosperity Gospel” church/“Prosperity Gospel” preacher, a pastorant must be cautioned to act with discernment and make a wise decision to commit to a Bible-teaching local church. Discussion session 6 flows out of the problems of ignorance of the Gospel and ignorance of accurate Bible interpretation, while it also aims at solidifying the concepts of the Gospel and sound Bible interpretation.

The paradigm is designed to work towards the final aspect focussed on ongoing pastoral care. In a Bible-preaching, Gospel-believing church, the new convictions of a pastorant relating to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and sound Bible interpretation can be continuously nurtured and solidified under the loving guidance of an under-shepherd of Jesus Christ. In this new (non-“Prosperity Gospel”) church a pastorant finds the protection, care and compassion of a Gospel-ministering, Bible-preaching shepherd’s oversight and the fellowship shared with other Gospel believers.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

Due to an unbiblical understanding of ‘gospel’, “Prosperity Gospel” adherents who are left without true Biblical hope and struggling with meaningfulness in life and their Christian/religious experience might require remedial pastoral guidance. In the pragmatic task of this chapter, a Petrine paradigm is presented towards such remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

The unbiblical teaching of a “Prosperity Gospel” requires a solid antidote, and, therefore, the remedial paradigm approaches the pastoral guidance with an emphasis on the importance of the use of Scripture. Six discussion sessions are suggested for the paradigm. The discussion sessions *firstly* confront the pastorant with the problems of a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”; *secondly* with Biblical teaching it instructs a believer on concepts of God’s value system, and *finally* warns the pastorant against church leaders/preachers who abuse God’s Word for personal gain at the expense of their followers. The paradigm is designed towards the goal of integrating a pastorant into a new (non-“Prosperity Gospel”) church for ongoing loving pastoral care.

The final chapter (chapter 6) will focus on summarising the research findings by evaluating whether the various research questions were adequately answered and whether the aims posited for this study were successfully achieved.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Introduction

The modern-day religious phenomenon known as a “Prosperity Gospel” and in particular its influence on people within the wider African church community was scrutinised in this study. This ‘gospel’ is probably one of the most popular and fastest growing religious phenomena worldwide but academic research for pastoral guidance for people who are/have been influenced by a “Prosperity Gospel” is limited. For remedial pastoral guidance to assist believers who have experienced/are experiencing problems in their belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, nothing is available (refer 1.1.1 and 1.1.2). Over and above the real need of pastorants, Christian believers (and in many cases not-yet-Christians) caught up in the teachings of this quasi-gospel, the lacunae of pastoral guidance for such believers served as the motivation for the study. The study then set out with the intention to address such lacunae within Practical Theology. The study’s focus is verbalised in the research question: *What is the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” and what paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” can be found in 1 Peter?* (refer 1.3.1).

The methodological approach towards praxis utilised Osmer’s (2008) four tasks to address the research question. *Firstly*, to understand ‘what is going on’ the descriptive-empirical task was concerned with the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” and its influence on professing African Christians (chapter 2). The *second* part of the interpretive task (‘why it is going on’) focussed on possible causes why people are attracted to and adopt a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” (chapter 3). The *third* task states normative principles on the Biblical-based guidance of pastorants with a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” (‘what ought to be going on’) (chapter 4). *Finally*, the pragmatic task presented a new praxis in the form of a proposed pastoral paradigm (‘how should we react’) to facilitate remedial guidance for pastorants towards a (problematic) belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” (chapter 5).

In the final chapter the research findings are summarised to evaluate whether the research aim and objectives set out in chapter 1 (refer 1.3.2) were achieved. No study is perfect and in conclusion, possible limitations of the research are put forward. Some suggestions towards further studies that could contribute to better serve the pastoral needs of people who have been/are influenced by this religious phenomenon are made. The chapter closes with a conclusion on the research.

## **6.2 Descriptive-empirical research findings**

The ambit for the research necessitated firstly to investigate the praxis of the “Prosperity Gospel”. Closely aligned are the possible effects of its praxis on people who believe in this “Gospel”. The objectives in chapter 2 are to determine what the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” is and what influence a “Prosperity Gospel” has on believers and the pastoral guidance being offered (refer 1.3.2.2). The objectives are addressed by a literature study and a descriptive-empirical study.

### **6.2.1 Research findings on the descriptive perspectives on a “Prosperity Gospel”**

The quest to identify what the “Prosperity Gospel” is, brought to light that the praxis of this belief system has not yet been adequately defined from a Practical Theology perspective. Two specific Practical Theology aspects, namely people’s search for meaningfulness and the age-old theodicy question showed the relevance of understanding a “Prosperity Gospel” from a Practical Theological perspective (refer 2.3.1.1).

From a Church Historical view, the “Prosperity Gospel” is a relatively young or recent phenomenon to the religious field. Over the course of the last six decades, a “Prosperity Gospel” has reached borders far and wide and in the particular context of this study, it is noteworthy that this ‘gospel’ has been exceptionally well received on African soil (refer 2.3.2). The founding ‘fathers’ of this ‘gospel’, pastors (mostly) from the Evangelical stream in North America, were active in the mid-twentieth century (refer 2.3.1.2). Their preaching centred on three main tenets, namely supernatural faith, abundant wealth and perfect health for all believers. A “Prosperity Gospel” then promotes the idea that believers can (and must) utilise this/their supernatural faith by means of positive confession to ‘speak into existence’ abundant wealth and perfect health (refer 2.3.1.3). Concomitantly, deficit in a believer’s financial status or a poor physical condition is ascribed to the lack of such faith – financially strapped and sickly believers are, logically according to these beliefs, opposing the will of God and are therefore living in sin (refer 2.3.1.4).

### **6.2.2 Research findings on the empirical perspectives on a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”**

In careful compliance to the ethical requirements for a study of this kind, a qualitative empirical study was conducted. Five participants with experience in pastoral guidance of pastorants who were/are influenced by a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” were selected and they agreed to participate. Their experience defines their selection to participate.

The aim of the empirical research was to obtain research data on:

- The nature of problems a pastorant/s encountered with a “Prosperity Gospel”;
- The nature of the pastoral assistance/aid/intervention rendered to a pastorant/s; and
- Suggestions/recommendations towards development of a remedial pastoral ‘model’ to assist pastorant/s that were affected by a “Prosperity Gospel”.

Findings on bullet one above are reported in chapter 2 which focus on the problems people experience regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Findings on bullets two and three, which focus on the pastoral guidance rendered and suggested, are incorporated into the pragmatic task (chapter 5).

The research findings indicate that various negative consequences can result from a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” and pastorants actually need remedial pastoral guidance (refer 2.4.19 and sub-divisions). Faith-related problems for “Prosperity Gospel” believers result mainly from ignorance of the Biblical Gospel of Jesus Christ and are exacerbated by the erroneous teachings of a “Prosperity Gospel” which claim to be Biblical, but are loaded with faulty Bible interpretation. “Prosperity Gospel” adherents were traumatised by confusion and despair as expectations of the promised prosperity did not materialise.

### **6.2.3 Summary of the descriptive-empirical research findings**

The findings on the descriptive-empirical research conducted in chapter 2 define the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” and outline the influence of a “Prosperity Gospel” on people with a belief in its teachings. The final aspect of the empirical research conducted, namely what pastoral guidance is being offered was incorporated into the pragmatic task (chapter 5). A set of descriptive-empirical perspectives (refer 2.5) indicates that the first objective relating to the descriptive-empirical task was successfully achieved.

### **6.3 Interpretive findings**

The second objective is to determine the possible/probable reasons why African believers (both of European and African descent) are attracted to/adhere to/express a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” (refer 1.3.2). By means of an interpretive pastoral study (chapter 3) it is approached in an inter-disciplinary dialogue with two human sciences, namely Sociology (refer 3.3) and Psychology (refer 3.4). Further interpretive insights from the theological sub-discipline Missiology (refer 3.5) are included.

### **6.3.1 Interpretive perspectives from Sociology**

The research findings indicate that religion affects people's social interaction (refer 3.3.1) and what emerges from the research is that a "Prosperity Gospel" has an influence on societies. In this perspective, a "Prosperity Gospel" might hold possibilities for bringing social change to communities that are facing numerous socio-economic challenges. However, a 'gospel' that distorts ethical values such as hard work and contentment and makes prosperity promises which fail to come to fruition, is no more than an illusion for believers who in vain profess 'faith' in a "Prosperity Gospel".

Socio-economic and socio-cultural themes of both the Western world's influence (refer 3.3.2 and sub-division) in Africa, as well as specifically African related social themes (refer 3.3.3 and sub-divisions) play a role in the attractiveness of a "Prosperity Gospel" for African communities. Themes such as materialism, consumerism and individualism, and poverty et cetera influence a person's concept of meaning and meaningfulness and a "Prosperity Gospel's" offers/promises/claims to have the potential to change people's dire, unwanted circumstances. The inclination for people to find hope and meaningfulness in their social status, which is often measured by someone's success (wealth and health), is a sure driving force behind why people are attracted to a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

### **6.3.2 Interpretive perspectives from Social Psychology**

The research shows that psychological manipulation can oftentimes be present in the methodology of religious phenomena such as a "Prosperity Gospel". Methods and effects such as a positive portrayal of the prosperity preacher, emotionally orchestrated music and the flamboyant (mis)use of Scripture are engaged by prosperity churches to cognitively manipulate parishioners (refer 3.4).

Utilisation of Lifton's (1989) principles of psychological manipulation (refer 3.4.1), provide insights into the mind control tactics of a "Prosperity Gospel" (refer 3.4.2 and sub-divisions). The idealistic utopia portrayed by a "Prosperity Gospel" cemented through specific, repeated doctrinal mantras and enforced by fear and intimidation of unaccountable, untouchable prosperity church leaders/preachers, provide insight into why people not only embrace, but cannot break free from a "Prosperity Gospel" church when they are disappointed and hurt.

### **6.3.3 Interpretive perspectives from Missiology**

A literature study on Missiologists' views concerning the reasons for the receptivity of a "Prosperity Gospel" in the African Church landscape coincides with perspectives obtained from Sociology (refer 3.5.1). Missiologists attribute the popularity of a "Prosperity Gospel" on African soil to various sociological aspects of the capitalistic society of the Western World, and to which most Third World countries aspire. Specific African socio-cultural themes contribute to a successful mission of a "Prosperity Gospel" on African soil.

### **6.3.4 Summary of interpretive findings**

The findings on the interpretive research conducted in chapter 3 provide reasons from an inter-disciplinary dialogue on why African believers (of both European and African descent) are attracted to/adhere to/express a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". A summary of interpretive perspectives was put together (refer 3.6) to evidence that the second objective relating to the interpretive task was effectively reached.

## **6.4 Normative findings**

Chapter 4 sought to discover normative principles from Scripture for Christians to seek, and to find meaning in God for life, and to discover how believers without the means and the fabulous health promised/offered by a "Prosperity Gospel" can live in hope. The objective of the normative task is an exegetical analysis of Peter's pastoral guidance for suffering disciples in 1 Peter (refer 1.3.2). Relevant textual data from other Petrine teachings (i.e. 2 Peter and Mark's Gospel) support the task of reaching the stated objective.

A grammatical-historical hermeneutical approach is applied in the exegetical analysis of the Biblical text (refer 4.3.1). The grammatical-historical exegesis renders responsible theological remedies as the answer to the irresponsible, 'non-exegetical' and even reckless approach to Scripture of a "Prosperity Gospel".

### **6.4.1 Findings on introductory exegetical aspects in 1 Peter**

From the research it is shown that Peter is a fitting pastoral guide to address prosperity expectations and suffering. He, too, once harboured prosperity expectations, but was confronted by Jesus and enlightened about suffering discipleship (Mk 8:34-39). Post-Pentecost, it was a transformed disciple who embraced suffering for/with Christ according to the will of God (refer 4.4.1.1, 4.4.1.2, 4.4.1.3).



From the scholarly literature on the exigency for 1 Peter and the original audience's circumstances, it was discovered that Peter's audience found themselves in a context of suffering. As a result, they were possibly confused and discouraged believers (refer 4.4.2 and sub-divisions). This context gave rise to the pastoral guidance rendered in 1 Peter. Clear discrepancies exist between a "Prosperity Gospel" and its resultant preaching that God wills no suffering other than persecution for believers, and the situation Peter's original audience faced. These discrepancies touch on the value of Peter's pastoral guidance to Christians who are currently experiencing suffering in ordinary life.

#### **6.4.2 Findings on Peter's pastoral guidance regarding suffering**

The research focuses on the pastoral guidance Peter renders in his first epistle. He presents an opposing Christian value system to what a "Prosperity Gospel" proposes. A thrice repeated concept in 1 Peter clearly indicates this contrast (refer 4.5.1 and sub divisions):

- that which is perishable versus that which is imperishable (1 Pt 1:4, 7, 18, 23; 3:4),
- positive desire versus negative desire (1 Pt 1:12, 14; 2:2, 11; 4:2, 3) and
- what is and must be considered precious or valuable (1 Pt 1:7, 19; 2:4, 6, 7; 3:4).

An exegetical analysis of the passages in the bullet points above shows Peter's intent to conform the audience's value system (and, concomitantly, also the present historical reader of the epistle) from temporal, material benefits towards social stability, unto the eternal, spiritual benefits of those who belong to God in Christ Jesus. Specific values are presented as normative principles unto the transformation of a believer's value system, away from the temporal and material, unto the eternal and spiritual.

*Firstly*, the value of **God's control and compassion** (refer 4.5.3 and sub-divisions) in the midst of suffering comforts the believer and guides them towards trust in their faithful Creator (1 Pt 4:19). God's sovereign control and mercy/grace extended to the believers in salvation (refer 4.5.3.1), assures the believer of the same control over and mercy/grace in suffering (refer 4.5.3.2).

*Secondly*, the value of **Christ and the believer's position in Christ** (refer 4.5.4 and sub-divisions) emerge as a central theme to 1 Peter's theology. The blood of Jesus that was shed for believers (refer 4.5.4.1), and the resurrection of Christ unto the new resurrected life

of the believer (refer 4.5.4.2) is the basis of the believer's spiritual position and resultant eternal, spiritual blessings. By knowing, acknowledging and valuing one's association with Christ, believers are encouraged to follow the example of Christ in suffering (refer 4.5.4.3). By the renewed status of believers in Christ they become part of the people of Christ who are meant to 'be' again, i.e. they have value and meaning by who they are and what they eternally possess in Christ.

*Thirdly*, the value of **belonging to the new people of God** (refer 4.5.5 and sub-divisions) emphasises the loving unity shared between fellow believers in the church of Jesus Christ. This gracious work of God through Jesus Christ encourages the believer in the knowledge that the church is the evidence of the effectiveness of God's mercy. The spiritual blessings of those who belong to the new people of God (refer 4.5.5.1) serve as comfort to believers that although they might lack social acceptance from the world/unbelievers, or fall short of the socially acceptable status, they are eternally united to God and fellow believers through Jesus Christ. The body of Christ to which the believer is joined, provides a safe haven for those who suffer according to the will of God. The mutual love among believers (refer 4.5.5.2), evidenced in self-sacrificial service to one another, brings group solidarity and serves as a source of strength to suffering believers.

*Fourthly*, the value of **God-provided leadership to the people of God** (refer 4.5.6 and sub-divisions) outlines the importance of shepherds who care for God's flock in times of danger, pain and suffering. Shepherds who are worthy of submission, minister to God's flock with compassionate love and sincere mercy through selfless acts as per the example of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who came 'not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many' (cf. Mk 10:45). The criteria for godly, faithful shepherds set out by Peter (cf. 1 Pt 5:1-4) provide believers with the wisdom to discern whether a church leader/preacher is worthy of submission (cf. 1 Pt 5:5) (refer 4.5.6.1), while the characteristics of false teachers (cf. 2 Pt 2) warn the believer to avoid certain self-appointed, selfish and dangerous church leaders/preachers (refer 4.5.6.2).

The exegetical analysis of Petrine passages, related to the four values listed above, shows that in the context of Peter's first epistle (supported by 2 Peter and Mark's Gospel), the author presents a value system to his audience that guides them towards meaning, value and hope in their suffering and persecution. The significant conclusion from the exegetical analysis of God's value system as described by Peter, is that it is contrary to the value system of the world (unbelievers) (1 Pt 1:13-14; 4:2; cf. Jas 4:4). Whereas the world seeks meaning, value and hope in temporal possessions and (sinful) pleasure, believers are urged

to find their meaning, value and hope in their eternal security under the sovereign rule of God who blessed them abundantly in His Son. God joined believers to a body where they can live and serve meaningfully under the care and protection of the faithful shepherds in God's service.

### **6.4.3 Summary of the normative research findings**

The findings on the normative research conducted in chapter 4 as summarised in the normative perspectives (refer 4.6), provide exegetical insight into Peter's pastoral guidance of suffering disciples in 1 Peter. The third objective relating to the normative task was achieved.

## **6.5 Pragmatic research findings**

The final study objective for the pragmatic task would propose a Petrine paradigm *cum* model for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". In chapter 5, this objective is approached by converging the perspectives from the descriptive-empirical (chapter 2 – refer 2.5), interpretive (chapter 3 – refer 3.6) and normative tasks (chapter 4 – refer 4.6) to develop the paradigm for the pragmatic task.

After consideration of the research findings on the praxis and influence of a "Prosperity Gospel" (chapter 2 and 3), and the Scriptural normative perspectives obtained from 1 Peter (chapter 4), the *nouthetic* approach to counselling provides the best framework for the proposed Petrine paradigm for the pragmatic task (refer 5.2.2). A literature review of various pastoral models (refer 5.2.3), confirms the choice of a *nouthetic* counselling approach to the pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

### **6.5.1 Findings on the empirical data related to pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel"**

Participants in the empirical study were requested to contribute to the proposed paradigm for this study by including in their answers to the research question:

- The nature of the pastoral assistance/aid/intervention rendered to a pastorant/s, and
- Suggestions/recommendations towards development of a remedial pastoral 'model' to assist pastorant/s that were affected by a "Prosperity Gospel".

The research data obtained from participants as it relates to the two questions above is incorporated into the pragmatic chapter 5. The themes and sub-themes which were assembled from the participants' interaction with pastorants (refer 5.3.1 and 5.3.2) provide supplemental and complementary perspectives to the Petrine paradigm presented for the pragmatic task.

### **6.5.2 Findings on the Petrine paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding belief in a "Prosperity Gospel"**

The Petrine paradigm presented (refer 5.4) is outlined according to the *nouthetic* aspects of confrontation (refer 5.4.1), instruction (refer 5.4.2) and warning (refer 5.4.3). A series of six discussion sessions provide a model for pastoral guides unto remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel". The six discussion sessions focus on guiding a pastorant to Christ (or back to Christ), and to find meaning in God and live in hope again. The discussion sessions are set out as follows:

- **Discussion Session 1:** Gathering information and identifying the problem as related to a pastorant's belief in a "Prosperity Gospel";
- **Discussion Session 2:** *Confronting/informing* the pastorant with the "Prosperity Gospel's" unbiblical teaching and extend the invitation of belief in the Biblical Gospel of Jesus Christ;
- **Discussion Session 3:** *Confronting/informing* the pastorant with the un-hermeneutical approach to Bible interpretation of a "Prosperity Gospel" and guiding towards an understanding of the importance of responsible Bible interpretation;
- **Discussion Session 4:** *Teach/guide* the pastorant in a Biblical understanding of suffering and of God's value system;
- **Discussion Session 5:** *Teach/guide* the pastorant in a Biblical understanding of God's sovereign control over and care for the believer in suffering as well as the value of Christ and being in Christ, and the value of belonging to God's people;
- **Discussion Session 6:** *Warning* the pastorant against false teaching and false teachers, and guidance to understand the importance of submission to the loving, shepherding care of a Bible-preaching, Gospel-believing church.

In summary, a diagrammatical illustration of the flow between the six discussion sessions is presented (refer 5.4.4).

### **6.5.3 Summary of the pragmatic research findings**

The six discussion sessions of the Petrine paradigm presented in Diagram 5-2 (refer 5.4.4), fulfil the objective set for the pragmatic research task of proposing a Petrine paradigm *cum* model for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.

### **6.6 Possible limitations of the research**

Research reports – dissertations and theses – are prone to limitations, and likewise for this study possible limitations must be identified. The following aspects pertaining to this study are possibilities:

- Out of nine possible candidates that were approached, five people participated in the study. The requirement set in the research methodology namely between five and eight participants (refer 2.4.5.2) is met, but from a critical perspective the sample size for the empirical study might be considered as relatively small. It is conceded that more participants might have yielded a wider variety of and maybe more detailed results. However, in any empirical study the point of saturation must be identified and in the results obtained from the participants, the clear pattern of feedback is suggestive of the common aspects that can plague people caught up in the prosperity phenomenon.
- Due to stringent ethical requirements that hampered the empirical research, it was preferable not to engage people directly involved with a “Prosperity Gospel”. The potential risk of discomfort for such directly involved participants, although they no longer engaged with a “prosperity church” and actually were being pastorally assisted to understand what they are coming free from – limited the empirical research to pastoral guides who counsel people with a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. This limitation, however, has the positive spin-off that it provided feedback and afforded insight into helpful pastoral practice and counselling contents regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. The valuable feedback from participants is, where fitting, incorporated into the counselling paradigm.
- The study was done from a Reformed perspective with a strong emphasis on Biblical principles unto remedial pastoral guidance. It is considered that due to the misuse, even abuse, of Scripture it is precisely by the right information and correct application of

Scripture that remedial pastoral guidance should be affected. Osmer's (2008:161) 'ethical reflections' and 'good practice' unto normative principles, therefore, did not receive detailed attention in this study.

- The focus on Petrine teaching barred a full Biblical scope for pastoral theological application in counselling for this particular problematic praxis ("Prosperity Gospel"). An inclusive approach that would incorporate other Biblical material would yield more informative and possibly more effective results for pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel".

## **6.7 Recommendations for further research**

Considering the possible limitations pointed out above along with other aspects identified within the research process, the following topics for further research and publication in scholarly articles, a dissertation and/or doctoral thesis might prove viable and beneficiary to the pastoral topic and effective counselling of believers coming out from a "Prosperity Gospel":

- A quantitative study could be undertaken (with a list of investigative/definitive questions related to problems with a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel") to determine the extent of the problems highlighted in this research.
- In an attempt to better understand the strong influence of a "Prosperity Gospel" on people and why they find it difficult to break away from the movement, more comprehensive and definitive research is necessary on the psychologically manipulative tactics prevalent in a "Prosperity Gospel".
- The Petrine paradigm in this study can be reviewed and re-presented with improvements. This could be achieved by implementing the paradigm and logging the results of its effectiveness towards improvement for remedial and, possibly, preventative pastoral guidance regarding a "Prosperity Gospel".
- A comparative model using different New Testament writings (for instance Pauline material) could be drawn up for a similar research aim as was set in this study to compare and integrate the results unto an improved (Biblical) counselling paradigm.

- Research must be done towards presenting a similar paradigm as the one presented in this study, with the specific focus of preventative pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. Prevention is still better than cure.
- It would be interesting to see how, or to what extent the model presented in this study could act as a blueprint to be utilised for remedial pastoral guidance regarding other unbiblical movements/phenomena/dogmas in the Evangelical church. With the focus on hermeneutical ability and clear Gospel preaching as foundational prerequisites, other movements which claim to be Evangelical yet radically differ from Biblical Gospel teaching could utilise a similar model. Discussion sessions 4, 5 and 6 could be altered to handle topics related to the particular movement with the aim to let the pastorant recover and move on to a Bible-teaching, Gospel-believing church for ongoing pastoral care.

## 6.8 Conclusion

This study set out to answer the following overarching research question: *What is the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” and what paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” can be found in 1 Peter?*

The research results verify that the praxis of a “Prosperity Gospel” results in problems for people’s faith. Various other aspects of meaningfulness and hope are negatively affected by a belief in said religious phenomenon. It can be more certainly stated that a “Prosperity Gospel” is not a ‘gospel’ and the foundation of the prosperity movement’s dogma is a far cry from what the Bible teaches about how people can live in hope and find/realise their meaningfulness in Christ Jesus. This quasi-gospel is a dangerous movement in the modern-day Evangelical church and the need for Biblically sound remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” cannot be overstated.

Due to the popularity and attractiveness of the prosperity ‘message’, the need for such remedial pastoral guidance will most likely increase, and, therefore, it is imperative for shepherds of God’s flock to recognise this need. The requirement to be well equipped for the task at hand speaks for itself.

It is the researcher’s earnest prayer that the Petrine paradigm presented in this study shall be an effective tool that aids pastoral guides in their crucial task.

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## ADDENDUM A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM PARTICIPANTS (SAMPLE)



### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM FOR .....

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:** Remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”: A Petrine paradigm

**ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS:** NWU-00235-18-A6 dated 1/2/2018

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Dr. P.A. Rousseau

**POST GRADUATE STUDENT:** Mr. G.C. van Emmenes

**ADDRESS:** Christ Baptist Seminary, Polokwane

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 015 296 9920 or 084 581 4499

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of our Doctoral (Ph.D.) research in the discipline of Practical Theology. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to say no to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, without any negative consequences, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the **Research Ethics Committee of the North-West University (NWU-00235-18-A6)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

#### What is this research all about?

- *This study will be conducted in your area of residence, in a private venue of your choice and at a time suitable to you. The study will involve a short questionnaire with the following in-depth unstructured question:*

***Describe the nature of pastoral guidance you offered to people regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.***

**Please structure our answer to the question along the following lines:**

- Explaining the nature of the problems encountered with a “Prosperity Gospel”
- Explaining the nature of the pastoral assistance/aid/intervention rendered to the pastorant
- Recommend suggestions towards development of a remedial pastoral ‘model’ to assist pastorants that are/were affected by a “Prosperity Gospel”

*This could be followed, if necessary, by a further questionnaire on your interaction with pastorants regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.*

*The researcher is assisted throughout the research by the promoter, Dr PA Rousseau, and co-promoter Prof FP Kruger who are experienced in promoting similar research.*

*The researcher and promoters jointly attended a research ethics seminar conducted by Prof M. Greeff at the NWU Potchefstroom campus in June 2016 and are equipped on the ethical requirements for research that involves questionnaires with adult human participants.*

**Why have you been invited to participate?**

- *You have been invited to be part of this research because you are believed to be experienced in pastoral counselling, knowledgeable regarding “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs and have possibly interacted with pastorants (counselee’s) who have required pastoral guidance due to a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.*
- *You also fit the research because you are an adult residing in Southern Africa who are considered competent to understand the process and purpose of the research, have an adequate knowledge of “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs and could provide possible informed information regarding believers’ life experiences with a “Prosperity Gospel” and regarding what appropriate/effective pastoral guidance believers require regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.*
- *You will not be able to take part in this research if you are not an experienced/qualified Christian/Pastoral counsellor, and do not have experience with pastorants regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.*

**What will be expected of you?**

- *You will be expected to complete the initial short questionnaire, aimed at learning from you concerning your experience in working with believers/pastorants who were/are expressing a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” and where there were consequences for the pastorant’s life and Christian faith to such an extent that they required pastoral guidance. As stated above, the question for this questionnaire consist of a single in-depth unstructured question (encouraging the formulation of participants’ own response) on the nature of the pastoral guidance you offered to people who express/once expressed a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”. The length of time involved in completing the questionnaire might vary but should not take more than one hour to complete. The answer to the question will be returned to the researcher via e-mail.*
- *If necessary, a further questionnaire, based on your answer in the initial short questionnaire, will be drawn up which you will be requested to complete from which further necessary information could be obtained regarding believers’ concept of, and experiences with a “Prosperity Gospel” and what pastoral guidance they required. This questionnaire will comprise mainly open-ended questions to encourage*

*description and discussion narrative. The questionnaire will be provided by and returned to the researcher via e-mail.*

- *You will be expected to **obtain permission from your client-pastorant(s), whose life experiences regarding prosperity beliefs will be used to answer questionnaires.** This will be done by means of a Consent Form which is provided by the researcher, simultaneously with this Consent form. It is therefore requested that you print a consent form/s and have it completed by your pastorant/s. **It is further requested that you keep this/these consent form/s in a secure mode.** This step is mandatory before questionnaires are completed and feedback is given to the study leader.*

### **Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?**

- *A brief survey of literature on “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs revealed lacunae regarding substantial material to address remedial pastoral guidance related to believers’ encounter with a “Prosperity Gospel”. Available material is not only limited, but what is available appear to be inadequate for remedial pastoral guidance purposes. As a participant, you will not only be afforded the opportunity to contribute to a pastoral paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, but will benefit from the final research findings aimed at constructing such a pastoral paradigm by which pastorants can be offered pastoral guidance regarding “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs.*
- *The Church in its various denominations and very often more specifically African communities are overrun with prosperity preachers and their teaching. Health and wealth are promised to those who have so-called sufficient faith and accept prosperity’s teaching and exemplify their faith cum obedience by their financial support of a/the prosperity preacher’s ministry. Invariably, the financially strapped or poor and sickly communities suffer. When prosperity and health promises are not realized, it could lead to anxiety, distress, anger, bitterness, uncertainty of one’s faith, disappointment and even turning away from God. The outcomes of the study could aid in equipping pastoral counsellors to offer pastoral guidance to their pastorants who are, or were influenced by a “Prosperity Gospel”.*

### **Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?**

- *Participation is voluntary and you can terminate your participation at any stage without obligation to submit reasons for termination. You only have to inform the researcher about your decision.*
- *Participation poses no substantial risks. To ensure that confidentiality under which your pastorant(s) divulged information to you is not breached, you will be required to obtain permission from your client-pastorant(s), whose life experiences regarding belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” will be used to answer questionnaires.*
- *The only potential risk is that your and/or your pastorant’s identity be revealed. See the following question below which explains the privacy and confidentiality of your, and your pastorant’s, identity.*
- *The gains for you in participating in this study exceed any possible risks.*

### **How will we protect your (and your pastorant’s) privacy and confidentiality and who will see your findings?**

- *Names/identity of your pastorants whose life experiences regarding belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” is used to answer the questionnaires, will be known only to you*

*as participating counsellor. The name and/or identity of the pastorants will not, under any circumstances, be divulged to the researcher/study leader by you the participant.*

- *Anonymity is compulsory and your name or anything that might reveal your, or your pastorant's, identity in any aspect of formal documentation in the research findings will be avoided at all costs. Your privacy will be protected by identifying you as for instance 'Participant A' and 'Participant A's pastorant'.*
- *Results obtained from your participation will be kept confidential by blocking any access to confidential research documents to anyone other than the involved participant and the promoters, should a need for that arise. Research data obtained from you will be disclosed to, and discussed with the promoters only to promote appropriate, adequate and relevant presentation of results of the research.*
- *Research findings will be kept safe by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in the researcher's office and for electronic data it will be password protected. Data will be stored for five years. Only the researcher will have access to the research documents.*

#### **What will happen with the findings or samples?**

- *The findings of this study will be used for only this study.*

#### **How will you know about the results of this research?**

- *If so required by you and/or your pastorant(s), the result of this research will upon completion of the documented research be available to you and/or your pastorant(s) either in printed form or electronically via e-mail, whichever you may prefer, to ensure anonymity, privacy and confidentiality in the final documented research findings.*
- *You will be informed of any new relevant findings by e-mail correspondence.*

#### **Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?**

- *Participation will not incur any personal expenditure for you, and you will not be paid to take part in the study.*
- *The study is not funded by any third party.*

#### **Is there anything else that you should know or do?**

- *You can contact the principal investigator, Dr Pieter Rousseau, at 20170041@nwutheology.co.za if you have any further questions.*
- *You can also contact the Faculty of Theology Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Nadine Havenga at [Nadine.Havenga@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Nadine.Havenga@nwu.ac.za) if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.*
- *You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.*

### Declaration by participant

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in the research study titled: Remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel": A Petrine paradigm.

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....  
**Signature of participant**

### Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (*name*) ..... declare that:

- I clearly and in detail explained the information in this document to  
.....
- I did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged him to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I gave him time to discuss it with others if he wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....  
**Signature of person obtaining consent**

**Declaration by researcher**

I (name) ..... declare that:

- I had the information in this document explained to the participant by ..... who I trained for this purpose.
- I did not use an interpreter
- I was available should he want to ask any further questions.
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that he adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that he had time to discuss it with others if he wished to do so.

Signed at (place) ..... on (date) ..... 20....

.....  
**Signature of researcher**



## ADDENDUM B: PASTORANT-CLIENT CONSENT LETTER (SAMPLE)



### CONSENT FORM PASTORANT-CLIENT

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:** Remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”: A Petrine paradigm

**ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBER:** 00235-18-A6 dated 1/2/2018

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Dr. P.A. Rousseau

**POST GRADUATE STUDENT:** Mr. G.C. van Emmenes

**ADDRESS:** Christ Baptist Seminary, Polokwane

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 015 296 9920 or 084 581 4499

Your pastoral counsellor was invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of our Doctoral (Ph.D) research in the discipline of Practical Theology. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how your pastoral counsellor might be involved. Also, your permission to your pastoral counsellor is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to say no to your pastoral counsellor using your life experience regarding prosperity beliefs to partake in this study. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw your permission at any point, without any negative consequences, even if you do agree that your pastoral counsellor take part now.

This study has been approved by the **Research Ethics Committee of the North-West University (NWU Potchefstroom Campus)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

#### **What is this research all about?**

- *This study will be conducted in your pastoral counsellor’s area of residence, in a private venue of his/her choice and at a time suitable to him/her. The study will involve a short written questionnaire with the single in-depth unstructured question: **Describe the nature of pastoral guidance you offered to people regarding belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.** This could be followed, if necessary, by a further written questionnaire on his/her interaction with you regarding belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”.*

*The researcher will be assisted throughout the research by the promotor, Dr PA Rousseau, and co-promotor Prof FP Kruger who are experienced in promoting similar research.*

*The researcher and promotors jointly attended a research ethics seminar conducted by Prof M. Greeff at the NWU Potchefstroom campus in June 2016 and are equipped on the ethical requirements for research that involves questionnaires with adult human participants.*

**What will be expected of you?**

- *You are required to give your permission to your pastoral counsellor allowing him to use your life experiences regarding belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” to answer the questionnaires for this study.*

**Will you and/or your pastoral counsellor gain anything from taking part in this research?**

- *A brief survey of literature on “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs revealed lacunae regarding substantial material to address pastoral guidance related to believers’ encounter with a “Prosperity Gospel”. Available material is not only limited, but what is available appear to be inadequate for remedial pastoral guidance purposes. Your pastoral counsellor, as a participant, will not only be afforded the opportunity to contribute to a pastoral paradigm for remedial pastoral guidance regarding belief in a “Prosperity Gospel”, but will benefit from the final research findings aimed at constructing such a pastoral paradigm by which pastorants can be offered pastoral guidance regarding “Prosperity Gospel” beliefs.*
- *The Church in its various denominations and very often more specifically African communities are overran with prosperity preachers and their teaching. Health and wealth are promised to those who have so-called sufficient faith and accept prosperity’s teaching and exemplify their faith cum obedience by their financial support of a/the prosperity preacher’s ministry. Invariably, the financially strapped or poor and sickly communities suffer. When prosperity and health promises are not realized, it could lead to anxiety, distress, anger, bitterness, uncertainty of one’s faith, disappointment and even turning away from God. The outcomes of the study could aid in equipping pastoral counsellors to offer pastoral guidance to their pastorants who are, or were influenced by a “Prosperity Gospel”.*

**Are there risks involved in you giving permission for your pastoral counsellor to partake in this research and what will be done to prevent them?**

- *The use of your life experiences regarding belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” by your pastoral counsellor to answer questionnaires is voluntary and you can withdraw such permission at any stage without obligation to submit reasons. You only have to inform your pastoral counsellor about your decision.*
- *Allowing your pastoral counsellor to participate in the study using your life experiences regarding belief in a “Prosperity Gospel” to answer questions poses no substantial risks to you. To ensure that confidentiality under which you divulged information to your pastoral counsellor is honoured, your pastoral counsellor is required to obtain your permission to partake in this study by using information pertaining to pastoral guidance offered to you.*
- *The only potential risk is that your and/or your pastoral counsellor’s identity be revealed. See the following question below which explains the privacy and confidentiality of your, and your pastoral counsellor’s, identities.*

- *The gains for your pastoral counsellor in participating in this study exceed any possible risks.*

**How will we protect your (and your pastorant's) privacy and confidentiality and who will see your findings?**

- *Your name/identity is known only to your pastoral counsellor and will not, under any circumstances, be divulged to the researcher/study leader by your pastoral counsellor.*
- *Anonymity is compulsory and your name or anything that might reveal you or your pastoral counsellor's identity in any aspect of formal documentation in the research findings will be avoided at all costs. Your privacy will be protected by identifying your pastoral counsellor as for instance 'Participant A' and you as for instance 'Participant A's pastorant'.*
- *Results obtained from your pastoral counsellor's participation will be kept confidential by blocking any access to confidential research documents to anyone other than the involved participant and the promoters, should a need for that arise. Research data obtained from you will be disclosed to, and discussed with the promoters only to promote appropriate, adequate and relevant presentation of results of the research.*
- *Research findings will be kept safe by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in the researcher's office and for electronic data it will be password protected. Data will be stored for five years. Only the researcher will have access to the research documents.*

**What will happen with the findings or samples?**

- *The findings of this study will be used for only this study.*

**How will you know about the results of this research?**

- *If so required by you and/or your pastoral counsellor, the result of this research will upon completion of the documented research be available to you and/or your pastoral counsellor either in printed form or electronically via e-mail, whichever you may prefer, to ensure anonymity, privacy and confidentiality in the final documented research findings.*

**Will you be paid for allowing your pastoral counsellor to use your life experiences regarding prosperity beliefs to answer questionnaires?**

- *Nothing is required from you other than giving permission to your pastoral counsellor to use your life experiences regarding belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" to answer questionnaires for this study and you will not be paid in any form.*
- *The study is not funded by any third party.*

**Is there anything else that you should know or do?**

- *You can contact Dr Pieter Rousseau at [20170041@nwutheology.co.za](mailto:20170041@nwutheology.co.za) if you have any further questions.*
- *You can also contact the Faculty of Theology Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Nadine Havenga at [Nadine.Havenga@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Nadine.Havenga@nwu.ac.za) if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.*
- *You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.*

### Declaration by pastorant-client of participant

By signing below, I ..... agree to allow my pastoral counsellor ..... to use my life experiences regarding belief in a "Prosperity Gospel" to complete questionnaires in the research study titled: Remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel": A Petrine paradigm.

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by my pastoral counsellor in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that allowing my pastoral counsellor to partake in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to give such permission.
- I may choose to withdraw my permission at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to withdraw my permission before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if my pastoral counsellor do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....  
**Signature of pastorant-client**

### Declaration by person obtaining consent (PARTICIPANT)

I (*name*) ..... declare that:

- I clearly and in detail explained the information in this document to  
.....
- I did/did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I gave him/her time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

.....  
**Signature of person obtaining consent (Participant)**

## ADDENDUM C: ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom,  
South Africa, 2520

Tel: (018) 299-4900

Faks: (018) 299-4910

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

**Research Ethics Regulatory Committee**

Tel: +27 18 299 4849

Email: [Ethics@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics@nwu.ac.za)

### ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF PROJECT

Based on approval by **Research Ethics Committee of Theology (TREC)** on **13/02/2018** after being reviewed at the meeting held on **13/02/2018**, the North-West University Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-RERC) hereby **approves** your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-RERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

|                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Project title:</b> Remedial pastoral guidance regarding a belief in a "Prosperity Gospel": A Petrine paradigm. |                                                                                                                                                                                           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Project Leader/Supervisor:</b>                                                                                 | Dr PA Rousseau & Prof Dr FP Kruger                                                                                                                                                        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Student:</b>                                                                                                   | GC van Emmenes                                                                                                                                                                            |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Ethics number:</b>                                                                                             | <table border="1"><tr><td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>5</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>8</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>6</td></tr></table> | N | W | U | - | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 | - | 1 | 8 | - | A | 6 |
| N                                                                                                                 | W                                                                                                                                                                                         | U | - | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 | - | 1 | 8 | - | A | 6 |   |   |
|                                                                                                                   | <small>Institution Project Number Year Status</small>                                                                                                                                     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|                                                                                                                   | <small>Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation</small>                                                                                |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Application Type:</b> Full Single Application                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Commencement date:</b> 2018-02-01                                                                              | <b>Expiry date:</b> 2019-02-01                                                                                                                                                            |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Risk:</b>                                                                                                      | <b>Minimal</b>                                                                                                                                                                            |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

#### Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the TREC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the TREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

#### General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

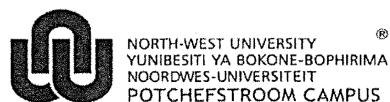
- The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-RERC via TREC:
  - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project
  - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the TREC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-RERC via TREC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-RERC and TREC retains the right to:
  - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project;
  - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
    - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,
    - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the TREC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
    - the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
    - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- TREC can be contacted for further assistance via [Rudy.Denton@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Rudy.Denton@nwu.ac.za) or 018 299 1600.

The RERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the RERC or TREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

**Prof Refilwe Phaswana-Mafuya**  
Chair NWU Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (RERC)

## ADDENDUM D: PROOF OF ETHICS TRAINING



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research,  
Training and Support  
Tel: 018 299 2092  
Fax:  
Email: [minrie.greeff@nwu.ac.za](mailto:minrie.greeff@nwu.ac.za)

6 June 2016

Dear Mr Gerhard van Emmenes

### PROOF OF ATTENDANCE

This letter certifies that you have attended the 2 day ethics training, entitled:

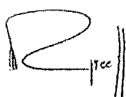
#### The Basics of Health Research Ethics

(Accreditation number: UP1163 from University of Pretoria CPD accreditation department)

presented by Prof Minrie Greeff (Head of the Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support) on **2 and 3 June 2016**.

This proof of attendance, as recognised by HREC and the Ethics Office, NWU, is valid for 3 years and expires on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2019. Where applicable, Ethics CEUs awarded: **27 Ethics CEUs**

Yours sincerely



Prof Minrie Greeff  
Head of Health Sciences Ethics  
Office for Research, Training and Support



Prof Awie Kotzé  
Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences

## ADDENDUM E: LANGUAGE EDITING DECLARATION

This is to certify that I, Fiona Matier (ID number 7706160013087), copywriter, editor and translator, have performed a linguistic review on the following PhD thesis:

### REMEDIAL PASTORAL GUIDANCE REGARDING A BELIEF IN A “PROSPERITY GOSPEL”: A PETRINE PARADIGM

Submitted by Gerhard van Emmenes  
NWU University (Potchefstroom)

**Date:** 18 September 2018

**Signed:**



**Fiona Matier**

(BJourn (1998), Rhodes University)

**Fiona Matier**

Freelance Copywriter  
Linguistic Editor  
Translator

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