

## Needs, Values and true Prosperity

Good morning, Today I want to talk about Value and Prosperity.

What is Prosperity?

Well according to the dictionary it is a successful Flourishing or thriving condition.

In our modern society when we think of Prosperity we often associate it with a financial aspect of one for or another. We often here of the prosperity Gospel in a negative format. What is meant is that IF one serves God they will prosper. This is true yet it does not necessarily mean financially... We will come back to this point.

Let me let you in on a little secret regarding financial prosperity that many people miss. In fact, what I will reveal to you this morning is why prosperity gospel has such a bad reputation. It is often called blab it and grab it or name it and claim it gospel.

Jesus came to give us life and life more abundantly, didn't he? In Jeremiah 29:11 we are told: *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.* From this phrasing it seems obvious that the prosperity spoken about is all inclusive not just financial. So we must ask ourselves what prosperity are we to receive as christians and why is there such a negative view of prosperity gospel.

Well, let's take a closer look at what I have found to be the differentiating factor in between the prosperity in the gospel and the so called Prosperity Gospel? It all comes down to our motivations and heart relationship with God...

Do you serve because you want to prosper financially?

Or

Do you serve God because he is God; He is worthy and because of his promises He prospers you for your faithfulness?

What is the motivation of the heart? Is it to serve God with all your heart, mind and soul and as a result all that you need will be given unto you or Is it to serve God in order to receive financial blessings.

This I have found is the fundamental difference between the two. Heart relationship and motivation.

Am I serving God for what I can gain or am I serving God and living in his grace, blessing and prosperity?

What is the value of Something?

Let us ask ourselves what things that we value?

Scripture tells us in Matthew 6:21: *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"*  
So... what do we truly value?

Are the things we value asset based such as:

- House
- Car

- Bank account

or is it less asset based such as:

- Family
- Friends
- Health
- Relationships

Let's take a quick look at what Psychologist Abraham Maslow said in 1943 regarding human motivation.

In brief, we are told that at the most fundamental level we need our psychological needs met: These would be things like:

- breathing
- Food
- Water
- Shelter
- Clothing
- Sleep

On top of those basic needs we then look towards safety and security. This would include such items as:

- Health
- Employment
- Property
- Family
- Social Stability

Once met we will look towards those ideals of love and belonging

- Friendship
- Family
- Intimacy
- Sense of connection

When achieved we start to work on self-esteem

- Confidence
- Achievement
- Respect of Others
- Individuality

And finally at the highest level our needs relate to self-actualization

- Morality
- Creativity
- Spontaneity
- Acceptance
- Purpose
- Meaning

- Inner Potential

So if we have this hierarchy of needs... assuming for the moment it is correct and I believe it to be a valid model and when we look at how things are valued from a human perspective we can then compare and contrast this with a Godly perspective. Let's take a few moments and try to isolate the differences in what we need and value.

Without breathing for just a few minute we would die  
Without water for three or four days we would die  
Without food for a month or so we would die  
Without sleep for three or four days we would begin to have a psychotic break and die  
Without shelter from the heat or cold and clothing we will become ill and die

Do you see a common theme here?  
In case you missed it without these basic needs we will die

Are we prosperous when we can draw a breath?  
Are we prosperous when we have enough food to eat?  
Are we prosperous when we have clean water to drink?  
Are we prosperous when we are warm and comfortable?  
Are we prosperous when we can sleep?

Kind of shakes our perspective on prosperity doesn't it? It expands our definition of prosperity from money and stuff to the barest of necessities of life.

Do we consider our selves prosperous when we have our health?  
How about when we have a job that we might not like or consider dead end?  
What about property?  
When we have family and are respected in our community Is that a form of prosperity we should consider?

Moving up the hierarchy: Do we value friendship, do we nurture it?  
How about family, Is family important to us? What if family is going to cost us and take away from financial prosperity; do we consider the richness that we have in family?  
What about your sense of belonging? Do you feel like you are wanted and needed? Do you feel like you have a part to play? Do you feel that you are valued by others?  
What is more important to you: A sense of belonging to something worthy of your time or a new quad?  
Or whatever thing you may want can be inserted here...

Is it possible that we can see prosperity as the familial and relational connections in our lives

Moving up...  
What about successes and accomplishments... Is it prosperity when others respect us and value us? Do we feel prosperity when we are ourselves and we are accepted despite our quirks or sense of humour?

Now we are at the top of Maslov's hierarchy of needs...

Do we consider our morality, especially the Godly choices that we make prosperity?

How about the unique creative and distinctive things that God has given us that we bring to the table... do we consider the sharing of these things prosperity? God has given each of us a purpose, we are all called in his kingdom. Do we value this acceptance? Do we embrace this purpose?

Psychology can be useful in that it looks at the human condition. When we consider the prosperity of the Gospel are we truly considering what "prospering us" means? Is our definition too narrow?

This world is wrapped up in the acquisition of goods. You know the old saying: "He who has the most toys when he dies wins." Well today, even psychology tells us that our needs are greater than just wealth. Don't get me wrong, we all need to plan and provide for our families, but that is not what the prosperity of the gospel is pointing us towards.

Now that we can see that prosperity is far greater in scope than merely the financial aspects. Let's embrace real prosperity and what God has told us in his word .

Don Carson, the great New Testament scholar from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, tells the story of one of his colleagues who was a foster parent. He and his wife would take children into their home and keep them until they could be placed permanently in other loving homes. And one day he received a call from the agency. And the agency said, "We want you to keep two twin boys." And he and his wife said, "We've never kept twins before. How old are they, and how long are we going to keep them?" "Well, they're 18 months old. And we'd like for you to keep them for just 6 weeks. "OK. As long as it's just for six weeks, send them on over." It turned out that those little boys had been in 9 different homes in their first 18 months. And they had been severely abused in most of them. The first night they put the little boys down, they didn't make a sound. Perry and his wife were curious. They went into the room and they found the boys in the bed weeping uncontrollably but muffling the sound of their cries into the pillow, because in some of the previous homes where they had stayed, they had been beaten when they cried. The psychologist told them that these children would never, ever be psychologically and emotionally normal and whole. They were irremediably affected by this experience. Two years later a home was found for those twins. And the social worker who provided the psychological analysis before the boys were sent on to their new home said that, "Inexplicably and miraculously those boys were now normal, having experienced the love of a family that cared."

How much did that cost that family in time and in energy?

This morning, ask yourself "Was that stewardship worth it?" what value do you put on a human life? These boys that the analyst had written off as damaged goods were healed... Is this prosperity?

Now that a foundational understanding of the scope of prosperity has been established we can start the sermon... lol

We have looked at the hierarchy of needs... What does God Say?

Philippians 4:19 – My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

That is all your needs my friend. God has you, in the palm of his hand and whatever your needs are he will meet them. As we have discovered this is much broader in scope than money.

3 John 1:2

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospers

prosperity of health  
Prosperity of the soul

2 Corinthians 9:8 – And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

God blesses his people abundantly with what we need for a purpose

2 Corinthians 8:9-12 – For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need.

This prosperity speaks of not just our personal wealth, but the prosperity shared to the benefit of the Lord's people. This speaks of utilizing our financial prosperity and blessings that we have received from God to help less fortunate brothers and sisters and bringing purpose and meaning to our faith. This required tremendous faith and a Godly perspective.

Hebrews 11:6 – And without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that he exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. \

God wants to prosper us in all ways, but mankind teaches us to look out only for number one.

God's word says in Psalms 1:1-3 - Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.

Proverbs 3:27 – Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.

Like 3:11 - And he would answer and say to them, “The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.”

When we as Christians see others needs, they may not be on the same level as our needs, but it is Godly for us to help them prosper. If a brother hasn't got a coat and you have a storehouse full of coats, do you meet his need and prosper him or her or do we ignore the need?

You see God understand our needs at whatever level they may be. And he asks us to help others prosper in his kingdom. Whether that need is food and water or helping a brother or sister in Christ find a purpose. Whether that need is simply friendship or a sense of connection, we need to see things from God's perspective, we need to value their needs, because in taking their needs as our own, we meet our own needs. Our prosperity comes from God and his grace and love. He has shown us the road.

Today we have looked at what psychology has said are the basic needs of people. We have reconciled this to what God has asked of us and surprisingly they are the same. The strategies may be different but we can clearly see that God's view of prosperity and need is more than financial. He has shown us in his word that as we meet the needs of other we meet our own. God wants to bless us and prosper us, but unlike some teachings it is not about serving God to get something. It is about serving God with all our hearts, minds and souls and living in the abundance of his blessing.

What is truly revelatory is that when we prosper others who's needs may be more basic than our own, we actually prosper ourselves. When we study Jeremiah 29:11 let us consider not limiting our understanding to me and my future.

You see, when we read the two previous chapters we realize that these are God's words to a people who are hopeless. They are in exile. They've been completely stripped of their homeland, their temple and their king. So without taking away from this wonderful promise, I must ask, is it possible that God is speaking both individually and corporately to us as a people, as a body of believers. Is it possible that our prosperity is in some way linked to each other? Individually, this promise is wonderful, but in the context it is also to a people...

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a future and a hope.

1 John 4:7,8

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

Matthew 25:40

And the King answering, will say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did it to Me.'

The world would rob us of the truth of prosperity but John 10:10 tells us: The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

So yes, there is a Prosperity Gospel we need to embrace, it just isn't the one where we simply serve **TO GET**, its the one where we truly and faithfully serve **AND GET** all the abundance that Christ has promised us.