

# Prosperity and Success

By Bill Scheidler

**God wants us to prosper and to be successful.**

**God is very interested in the prosperity of His children (Jer. 29:11).**

*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11*

*You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess. Deuteronomy 5:33*

*David's advise to Solomon, Keep the charge of the LORD your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn...*

I Kings 2:3

**What does it mean to be prosperous? How can we measure one's success?**

**Prosperity and success mean many things to many people.**

In the Bible prosperity and success do not just refer to how much money that we have or do not have.

Joseph was referred to by God as a successful man even when he was a slave in the house of Potiphar (Gen. 39:1-5).

*Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, and **he was a successful man**; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to **prosper** in his hand. So Joseph found **favor** in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority. So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and **the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field.***

Notice the words that describe Joseph in this passage: successful, prosperous, favored and blessed.

If someone is prosperous and successful it means many things including the following:

**Eleven marks of prosperity and success.**

**1. Having godly offspring (Gen. 32:12).**

*For You said, "I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude."*

God's promise of many children was always interpreted by the patriarchs as one of the greatest blessings that could be on a person's life. Though Abraham had great wealth and material blessings, he did not consider himself fully blessed or fulfilled without children.

## **2. Having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:11-13).**

*For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."*

Without Christ every man is a poor man. Without Christ the richest man on the face of the earth only has temporal riches. The believer in Christ has treasures in heaven that never fade and endure forever.

## **3. Meeting godly goals in life (Ezra 6:14; Ps. 20:4).**

*So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. Ezra 6:14*

*May He grant you according to your heart's desire, and fulfill all your purpose.*

Psalm 20:4

## **2. Experiencing rest from personal enemies (II Chr. 14:7b).**

*"Because we have sought the LORD our God; we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered.*

## **3. Having favor with and high esteem before God and man (Pro. 3:3-4).**

*Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man.*

## **4. Having good friendships (Eccl. 4:7-12, NLT).**

*I observed yet another example of meaninglessness in our world. 8 This is the case of a man who is all alone, without a child or a brother, yet who works hard to gain as much wealth as he can. But then he asks himself, "Who am I working for? Why am I giving up so much pleasure now?" It is all so meaningless and depressing. 9 Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor. 10 If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble. 11 And on a cold night, two under the same blanket can gain warmth from each other. But how can one be warm alone? 12 A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.*

Sometimes people who are very rich are also very lonely. Riches do not satisfy if there is no one with whom to share them.

**5. Being free from bondages that enslave (Rom. 8:21; Gal. 5:1).**

*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Galatians 5:1*

There are many rich alcoholics. Think of all of the rock stars, professional athletes and movie stars who seem to battle with addictions even to the point of ruining their career.

**6. Knowing a deep inner peace and rest in the spirit (Ps. 4:8; 29:11; Pro. 3:2, 24; 17:1).**

*I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.*  
Psalm 4:8

*The LORD will give strength to His people; the LORD will bless His people with peace.*  
Psalm 29:11

*My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you. Proverbs 3:1-2*

*When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet. Proverbs 3:24*

*A dry crust eaten in peace is better than a great feast with strife. Proverbs 17:1, NLT*

**7. Having physical health and strength (III John 2).**

*Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.*

**8. Having an abundance of material goods (Deut. 28:1-14).**

To have an abundance means that we have more than what we need for our own sustenance.

**9. Having respect from those who know you (Pro.11:16 NIV).**

*A kindhearted woman gains respect, but ruthless men gain only wealth.*

**10. Having a long, enjoyable and satisfying life (Ps. 91:14-16; Pro. 10:27).**

*“Because he loves me,” says the LORD, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. 15 He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. 16 With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.” Psalm 91:14-16, NIV*

*The fear of the LORD prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.*  
Proverbs 10:27

## 11. Having personal security for the future (I John 2:16-17).

*For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-- is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

All of these factors add something to the quality of our life and the absence of any of them will give us cause for concern.

Illustration: "Daddy are we rich?"

### **In order to release God's prosperity in our lives we must put ourselves in a position to be blessed.**

What are some of the ways to release material prosperity in our lives? Is there any way I can put myself in a position to be blessed?

There are many things that God indicates help to release prosperity into our lives. It is surprising that many of these things are not directly related to financial areas. Yet God deals with us on all levels at the same time. Just as surely as these things will release prosperity into our lives, the opposite things will hinder prosperity and even bring calamity at times.

<b>KEYS TO PROSPERITY</b>	<b>HINDRANCES TO PROSPERITY</b>
Righteousness (Ps. 37:25)	Immorality (Pro. 5:10)
Putting the Lord first (II Chr. 31:21; Pro. 3:9)	Not seeking the Lord (Jer. 10:21)
Trusting in God (Jer 17:7-8)	Trusting in human strength (Jer. 17:5-6)
Being planted in the house (Ps. 92:12-15)	Being uncommitted to the Lord (Ps. 1:4-6)
Fearing the Lord (Ps. 112:1-3; 128:1-6)	Not fearing the Lord (Pro. 17:20)
Keeping the Lord's commands (Ps. 19:11)	Disregarding the Lord's commands (Dt. 28:45)
Seeking wisdom and counsel (Pro. 8:18; 11:14)	Refusing counsel (Pro. 15:22; 13:18)
Generosity (Pro. 11:24-25; 13:7; 22:9)	Greed and stinginess (Pro. 28:22)
Giving to the poor (Pro. 28:27)	Oppressing the poor (Pro. 22:16; 21:13)
Associating with wise persons (Pro. 13:20)	Associating with fools (Pro. 28:19)
Being discerning in speech (Pro. 10:19)	Talking too much (Pro. 14:23)
Diligent labor (Pro. 13:11)	Laziness (Pro. 6:11; 19:15; 20:4, 13)
Planning for the long term (Pro. 21:5)	Seeking to get rich quick (Pro. 28:22)
Temperance (Pro. 10:4)	Intemperance (Pro. 23:21; 21:17)
Honesty (Is. 33:15-16)	Dishonesty (Pro. 1:10-19; 10:3; 28:13)
Training for tasks (Eccl. 10:10; Pro. 10:14)	Hating knowledge (Pro. 1:20-33, esp. 22)

### **What causes people to be tempted to seek prosperity through unjust means?**

**Perhaps the biggest thing that will cause a Christian to fail in this area is:**

## **Making riches their goal**

If riches are the goal then people will seek many methods of attaining riches that will hurt them in the long run. Our goal should be to please the Lord and extend His kingdom here on earth. We must make a daily choice in this arena of our life.

- **We should not be motivated by a desire to be rich (I Tim. 6:3-10).**

When you are, you fall into many snares; you justify all kinds of wrong doing and you end up jeopardizing your relationship with God and others.

- **We should not set our heart on riches (Ps. 62:10b).**

*If riches increase, do not set your heart on them.*

The example of Job: Job was a man who had riches but riches did not have him (Job 1:21; 36:18, NIV).

*Be careful that no one entices you by riches; do not let a large bribe turn you aside.*  
Job 36:18, NIV

**Another thing that can cause a Christian to be tempted to lower their standards for the sake of prosperity is:**

## **Seeing the prosperity of the wicked**

When we see the wicked, unprincipled people making large sums of money and enjoying “the good life,” we are tempted to question our standards.

God’s word makes it clear that we are not to fret concerning this (Ps. 37:7).

*Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.*

**There are nine things that will cause us to envy the wicked.**

We will envy the wicked:

1. **If we only look at material things as a measure of prosperity (Ps. 106:1-5; Pro. 11:16, NIV).**

*Praise the LORD! Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever. 2 Who can list the glorious miracles of the LORD? Who can ever praise him half enough? 3 Happy are those who deal justly with others and always do what is right. 4 Remember me, too, LORD, when you show favor to your people; come to me with your salvation. 5 Let me share in the prosperity of your chosen ones. Let me rejoice in the joy of your people; let me praise you with those who are your heritage. Psalm 106:1-5, NLT*

*A kindhearted woman gains respect, but ruthless men gain only wealth.*

Proverbs 11:16. NIV

What about the other ten marks of prosperity?

**2. If we only look at this earth as our inheritance (Ps. 49:16-20 NIV).**

*So don't be dismayed when the wicked grow rich, and their homes become ever more splendid. 17 For when they die, they carry nothing with them. Their wealth will not follow them into the grave. 18 In this life they consider themselves fortunate, and the world loudly applauds their success. 19 But they will die like all others before them and never again see the light of day. 20 People who boast of their wealth don't understand that they will die like the animals.*

**3. If we do not realize that the heathen are storing it up for the righteous to enjoy (Is. 60:5; Pro. 28:8; 13:22; Job 27:16-17).**

*A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous. Proverbs 13:22*

*Though he heaps up silver like dust, and piles up clothing like clay--he may pile it up, but the just will wear it, and the innocent will divide the silver. Job 27:16-17*

Think of the Children of Israel inheriting the homes of the Canaanites.

**4. If we do not realize that God is the rewarder and He is keeping perfect record (Mal. 3:13-18; Jam. 5:1-6).**

*"You have said terrible things about me," says the LORD. "But you say, 'What do you mean? How have we spoken against you?' 14 "You have said, 'What's the use of serving God? What have we gained by obeying his commands or by trying to show the LORD Almighty that we are sorry for our sins? 15 From now on we will say, "Blessed are the arrogant." For those who do evil get rich, and those who dare God to punish them go free of harm.'" 16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke with each other, and the LORD listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and loved to think about him. 17 "They will be my people," says the LORD Almighty. "On the day when I act, they will be my own special treasure. I will spare them as a father spares an obedient and dutiful child. 18 Then you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not." Malachi 3:13-18, NLT*

**5. If we do not see the final destiny of the wicked (Ps. 73:1-28, especially verse 17; Ps. 92:7; Pro. 11:4).**

In Psalm 73 David describes the wicked who succeed as boastful, worry-free, proud. He couldn't understand it. In fact he said,

*So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper. But what a difficult task it is! Then one day I went into your sanctuary, O God, and I thought about the destiny of the wicked.*

Psalms 73:16-17, NLT

*Although the wicked flourish like weeds, and evildoers blossom with success, there is only eternal destruction ahead of them. Psalm 92:7, NLT*

*Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.*

Proverbs 11:4

**6. If we judge the matter before the end (Jer. 17:11; Ps. 37:35-38). What we see how is not the end to the story.**

*Like a bird that hatches eggs she has not laid, so are those who get their wealth by unjust means. Sooner or later they will lose their riches and, at the end of their lives, will become poor old fools. Jeremiah 17:11, NLT*

*I myself have seen it happen--proud and evil people thriving like mighty trees. 36 But when I looked again, they were gone! Though I searched for them, I could not find them! 37 Look at those who are honest and good, for a wonderful future lies before those who love peace. 38 But the wicked will be destroyed; they have no future.*

Psalm 37:35-38, NLT

In 1923 a group of the world's most successful financiers met at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Collectively, these tycoons controlled more wealth than there was in the entire US Treasury and for years newspapers and magazines had been urging the youth of the nation to follow their examples.

As we check in on them at the year 1950, twenty-seven years later, this is what you will find:

- Charles Schwab, the president of the largest independent steel company, lived on borrowed money the last five years of his life and died penniless.
- Arthur Cutten, the greatest wheat speculator, died abroad totally bankrupt.
- Richard Whitney, the president of the New York Stock Exchange, was released from spending several years in prison.
- Albert Fall, a member of the President's cabinet, was let out of prison so that he could die at home.
- Jesse Livermore, the greatest trader on Wall Street, committed suicide.
- Leon Frazer, the president of a large national bank, committed suicide.
- Ivan Kruger, the head of the world's largest monopoly, committed suicide.

All of these men had learned how to make money, but not one of them had learned how to make a life.

**7. If we do not realize that the wicked only have inheritance in this life (Ps. 17:14a).**

*O LORD, by your hand save me from such men, from men of this world whose reward is in this life. -NIV*

**8. If we do not see the sorrow that comes with it (Pro. 15:6, cf. Pro. 10:22).**

*In the house of the righteous there is much treasure, but in the revenue of the wicked is trouble. Proverbs 15:6*

*The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.*

Proverbs 10:22

**9. If we do not see that riches do not bring satisfaction (Eccl. 5:10-15, NLT).**

*Those who love money will never have enough. How absurd to think that wealth brings true happiness! 11 The more you have, the more people come to help you spend it. So what is the advantage of wealth--except perhaps to watch it run through your fingers! 12 People who work hard sleep well, whether they eat little or much. But the rich are always worrying and seldom get a good night's sleep. 13 There is another serious problem I have seen in the world. Riches are sometimes hoarded to the harm of the saver, 14 or they are put into risky investments that turn sour, and everything is lost. In the end, there is nothing left to pass on to one's children. 15 People who live only for wealth come to the end of their lives as naked and empty-handed as on the day they were born.*

**God wants to bless every Christian, but He wants to do it His way. (Is. 61:1-11, NLT)**

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, because the LORD has appointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to announce that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. 2 He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the LORD's favor has come, and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies. 3 To all who mourn in Israel, he will give beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning, praise instead of despair. For the LORD has planted them like strong and graceful oaks for his own glory. 4 They will rebuild the ancient ruins, repairing cities long ago destroyed. They will revive them, though they have been empty for many generations. 5 Foreigners will be your servants. They will feed your flocks and plow your fields and tend your vineyards. 6 You will be called priests of the LORD, ministers of our God. You will be fed with the treasures of the nations and will boast in their riches. 7 Instead of shame and dishonor, you will inherit a double portion of prosperity and everlasting joy. 8 "For I, the LORD, love justice. I hate robbery and wrongdoing. I will faithfully reward my people for their suffering and make an everlasting covenant with them. 9 Their descendants will be known and honored among the nations. Everyone will realize that they are a people the LORD has blessed." 10 I am overwhelmed with joy in the LORD my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a bridegroom in his wedding suit or a bride with her jewels. 11 The Sovereign LORD will show his justice to the nations of the world. Everyone will praise him! His righteousness will be like a garden in early spring, filled with young plants springing up everywhere.*