

The Path To Prosperity – Reimagined

1. Warm-up Question: One of our most basic human impulses is the desire to prosper and thrive. We often tend to associate prosperity with financial abundance. If you were more financially prosperous than you now are, what's something nice – some kind of new luxury – that you'd love to add to your life?
2. One of TV's best known "prosperity preachers" is Joel Osteen. He says, "God wants you to prosper in your health, in your family, in your relationships, in your business, and in your career."
 - a. Do you believe that to be true? Why or why not?
 - b. In Matthew 7:11, Jesus says, "If you, being flawed, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask." What do you think that means? Does God want us to have lots of good things?
 - c. In Luke 6:20, Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God." What do you think that means? Does God want us to be poor?
3. On Sunday, we continued our study of the book of Psalms by focused on the very first psalm. Psalm 1 is popular because it contains a Biblical formula for prosperity. Let's take a look. Read Psalm 1:1-6, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. The phrase "law of the Lord" is an old fashioned way of referring to what we now call the Bible. Verse 2 tells us that we should "delight" in the law of the Lord. What do you think that means? What does it look like to delight in the Bible?
 - b. How would you describe your relationship with the Bible? Do you feel like you "delight" in the Bible? (No need to sugar coat; let's be honest. ☺)
 - c. Verse 2 exhorts us to "meditate" on God's word "day and night." What do you think that means? What are some different ways to meditate on God's word?
 - d. Have you ever known someone who exemplified what it means to delight in the Bible and to meditate on it day and night? Describe how that person related to the Bible.
4. Psalm 1 is often interpreted as a promise that people who delight in God's word will experience success in everything they do. In your experience and observation, have you found that to be true? Have you ever known someone who delighted in God's word, but faced lots of adversity in life? Tell us about that person.
5. For most of us, a fluffy interpretation of Psalm 1 as promising success in everything we do is not true to life. So on Sunday, Jeff pressed us to step back and think more deeply about what Psalm 1 actually says. Note that the promise of verse 3 applies to

ALL that we do. The Bible makes clear that there are a lot of things we have to do in life that are hard, painful, and unpleasant. Ecclesiastes 9:11 says, “Time and chance happen to all.” Ecclesiastes 3:1 says there will be times when we all have to pluck up or break down or mourn or go to war – and that eventually we’ll all have to die. So Jeff challenged us to consider what it means to *prosper in adversity* and how putting our roots deep into the Bible can help us do that.

- a. Jeff told the story of Steve Pirelli, the founder of Other Sheep, a global organization that shares spiritual hope with LGBTQ+ people and their families in some of the world’s most dangerous places. Because of Steve’s work, many vulnerable people have found life in Christ. But now, though only in his 50s, Steve is dying of brain cancer. Yet Steve told Jeff, “I’m experiencing so much sweetness right now, and what I’m going through is driving me even deeper into God’s word. I’m focusing on the hope of heaven, and I’m reviewing the beautiful experiences of my life, and I’m seeing things in God’s word I’ve never seen before.” Steve is an example of how we can thrive even when we’re facing the pain of dying. Have you ever known someone who experienced sweetness even in death? Describe what that looked like and how it affected you.
 - b. Psalm 23:5 says, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” Jeff illustrated what that means by having our pastoral staff pretend to make war against him while he peacefully enjoyed a sumptuous meal. That’s the image of Psalm 23. Where in your life right now is “war” raging around you? Are you feasting and experiencing sweetness even as hostilities rage around you? What helps or hinders you in that process?
 - c. Sunday’s sermon closed with a couple stories illustrating how, when we apply the principles of God’s word to difficult circumstances, those circumstances almost always turn out better than if we respond in less spiritual ways. Tell us about a time in your life when you consciously tried to respond to a difficult situation in God’s way, rather than your own way, even though that was hard. What happened? Do you think the situation turned out better because you responded God’s way?
6. Reduced to its essence, Psalm 1 tells us that life is SO MUCH BETTER when we internalize and apply the high values and principles found in God’s word. That means, the deeper we put down roots in the scriptures, the more we will thrive in life.
- a. For you, what’s the biggest obstacle to Bible study and meditation?
 - b. Do you feel like you’re internalizing God’s word to the point that it’s becoming part of the fabric of who you are and how you respond? Explain your answer.
 - c. What are some ideas for things we can do to better internalize the scriptures?

Quick Reminder: We’re currently in the midst of a Stewardship Drive at LifeJourney. If you’d like to participate, go to LifeJourney.church/links and click on “Stewardship Form.”

Psalm 1

- ¹ Blessed are those
 who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
 or sit in the seat of scoffers;
- ² but their delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and on this law they meditate day and night.
- ³ They are like trees
 planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
 and their leaves do not wither.
In all that they do, they prosper.
- ⁴ The wicked are not so,
 but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
- ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement,
 nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
- ⁶ for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked will perish.