

Introduction

Some time ago I was teaching in our church on divine prosperity. I believe it is the will of God to prosper His children according to III John 2.

²Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

This verse makes it clear that true prosperity is not just a matter of money, but of the soul. Indeed, to be truly prosperous we must first be rich in our relationship toward God. Matthew 6:33 tells us that if we seek first the “Kingdom of God and His righteousness,” then all other forms of prosperity will follow.

While it is important to keep balance, part of that balance is to realize that God does want us to prosper. I have experienced that prosperity in my own life.

Although according to the world’s standard I am by no means rich, I have all I need and more. Not only that, but my marriage is strong, my children are serving

God, and my health is good. Also, my relationship with the Lord is active and healthy. I believe it is God's will for this to be so in the life of every believer.

As a pastor I have spent many years teaching and observing the same group of people. I believe in the principles of prosperity that I teach, but I realized that far too many in my church were not reaping the benefits of those principles. As I prayed, I felt God spoke a Word to me for my people. It is based on a very familiar Bible story, (or :)the feeding of five thousand men with five loaves and two fish. In this story I believe we can find some valuable keys to releasing the power of God's prosperity in our lives.

In this book I want to share this principle with you. Take it and meditate on it. Let it grow in your thinking until you really believe it. Romans 10:17 says faith comes by hearing (reading, studying, and meditating in) the Word of God. Bury the truth of this word deep in your heart, act on it, (series) and see what God will do.

Chapter 1

What Do You Have?

Most people lead limited lives. Even those who have met Jesus as personal Lord and Savior fail to walk in the fullness of their potential in God. In most cases this is because of our focus. We spend our lives focused on what we need or what we lack.

We might need more money to pay our bills, or maybe our job is inadequate. Therefore, we need more education to get a better one. Perhaps we need someone with whom to be in relationship. Our need may lie in the area of physical or emotional healing. We might need more time, more energy, or more fulfillment. The list could go on and on.

If we are not looking at needs, we are looking at what we lack. Of course we lack all the things we need, but the lack focus tends to be more personally oriented. We lack gifts or talents. We lack the kind of connections that can help us. We lack the right family

name. We lack the right look. In truth, we find ourselves to be found “lacking” in every way.

To focus either on lack or need will cause us to be negative and powerless. We will seek any solution to the situation-whether it is the right one or not. We will be impatient with ourselves, with others, (series) and especially with God.

A need/lack focus makes it impossible to have faith for anything better in life. If we cultivate faith at all, it is to meet whatever need or lack is most pressing at the moment. We cannot see beyond the short term; therefore, we do short term things that produce short term results that inevitably lead to more lack and more need.

How can we stop this cycle? Obviously we need to change our focus, but how and to what? In praying for my own life and especially for the people to whom I minister , God revealed something to me from a simple

Bible story. You see, to change our focus we need to ask ourselves a different question.

Satan will continually remind us of our lack and our need. Our own mind and emotions will bombard us with questions concerning what we will do to meet those needs and fill in what is lacking. When we ask those questions, we will receive answers from many sources. We often hear answers from our own minds. They are usually scattered, frantic, (series) and unfocused. We might hear from the devil. The solutions he offers will involve some type of compromise and lead to a greater lack and greater need. We often are given the opinions of other people. I believe in receiving counsel from those we trust, but often the more opinions we hear, the more confused we become.

God will certainly answer our questions concerning what we need or lack; however, if we only ask God lack/need questions, He can only give us lack/need answers. They will be limited in scope and

vision. That is not God's fault, but He can only give us what we will hear, and when all we want to know is how to fill the immediate need or lack, that is what we will be willing to hear.

So what should be our question to God and to ourselves? Not, "What do I need?" Not, "What do I lack?" The question is, "What do I have?" When the Lord spoke this to me, I realized it could change my whole perspective on life. What do I have? You might say, "I don't have anything, that's the problem." But you see we all have something: some gift or some talent or some ability that we do not realize we have. Maybe we have some money or some relationships. We all have something--even if we do not know what it is.

As we begin this study, take a moment to get your focus off what you need and what you lack ,and just ask yourself this simple question; "What do I have?" Come on, humor me. What could it hurt? Just ask yourself and ask the Lord, "What do I have?" Give it

some time. After all, you have given the other questions plenty of thought haven't you? Even if nothing comes to mind at first, keep the question in your mind and before the Lord as we look at this story in the Bible. I believe that the Lord is going to show us what we have and what He can do with it when we give it to Him.

Chapter 2

Five Loaves and Two Fish

The story we are going to study is very familiar to most of us. We find it in John 6:4-14. Because of the healings and miracles He had done in their midst, a great multitude of people follow Jesus into the wilderness. We find out later in the story that this multitude consisted of five thousand men.

Now I suppose there could have been only men at this meeting, but I find it highly unlikely. If each man had a wife and each family two children, the crowd would have been 40,000. In order to understand the number of people involved, you might think of a full baseball stadium: that is the size of the multitude that was with Jesus in this deserted area.

CONFRONTED WITH THE PROBLEM

Let us read verses 4-6:

⁴Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near.

⁵Then Jesus lifted up *His* eyes, and seeing a great

multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”⁶ But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.

I picture Jesus scanning this great crowd. He knows that there are no fast food restaurants anywhere in the area. There are no supermarkets or convenience stores. There is no place for this great crowd of people to get food. Another account of the story says they were in a desert place. The disciples told Jesus to send the people into the surrounding countryside to buy food. However, they were hungry, and Jesus did not want them to faint on the way.

Jesus knows what He will do to meet the need, but his eyes stop on Philip. Jesus says, “Philip, how are we going to feed these folks?” Can you imagine how Philip must have felt? How would you feel if the boss at work confronted you with an impossible situation and asked you for the solution? I know I would feel pressured. I am sure that is how Philip felt.

The Bible says that Jesus was testing Philip. Jesus wanted Him to feel the pressure of the situation.

There is something we need to understand about God. He is always bringing us into situations that will cause us to grow in our relationship with Him. He wants to stretch our faith. He does not do this to hurt us. He does it because He knows that these challenges will cause us to go farther than we would if we stayed comfortable.

When you are confronted with a difficult or even impossible situation, God is looking for your response. What He can do for us and what we need to learn are revealed by that response. God will bring the situation right in front of you and say, “How are we going to deal with this?”

Often our first response is to try to put it aside. We want to ignore it and hope it will go away, but God knows it will not go away. When we turn to the left, there He is again with the same question: “What are

we going to do about this?” We turn to the right, and there He is again: “Excuse me, but what are we going to do about this?” We go to bed, we go to work, we try to hide in the TV or movies or some other distraction, but God is faithful to keep the question before us: “What are we going to do about this situation?”

You see, Jesus wants to bring us into confrontation with the fact that we cannot meet every need or solve every problem. Jesus knew that Philip could not buy food for these people. Jesus also knew how to meet the need. What He really wanted was for Philip to realize where to go for the solution. I am afraid Philip did not do much better than we would have in the same situation.

TWO RESPONSES

Let us look at Philip’s response:

7Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.”

Philip immediately focuses on two things: the number of people and how much it would cost to provide them with a minimal amount of food. I think it is interesting that Philip did not even address the question Jesus actually asked. Jesus did not ask how much money was needed to buy food, but where could they buy it. There was nowhere close enough for them to buy food. How much money they had was really immaterial. Even in our own lives we often miss what Jesus is trying to tell us because we are focused on our needs or lacks.

To better understand the amount Philip is talking about, we need to know that one denarius is the average wage for one day's work at a normal job. So, Philip is saying that 200 days' wages would not be enough to go very far in feeding this crowd. Two hundred days' wages is the better part of a year's work. That is quite an amount, and Philip is emphasizing that it would not be enough.

I was wondering why Philip chose that amount. This is total speculation on my part, but I wonder if Philip knew what was in the ministry money bag. I wonder if he was looking at what they had and measuring it against the need. Philip's focus was on the need and the lack. He was thinking, "We need food for a multitude of people. We have 200 denarii, but even that amount is far short of what is needed."

You see, Philip's focus was on *his* ability to meet this need, the size of the need, series and how far short their resources would fall in meeting that need. I do not know about you, but I see myself pretty clearly in Philip.

When we are confronted with a problem, our first focus is often need/lack based. The need is great, and the lack is impossible to overcome. In Philip's case, it was a need for food to feed a multitude. In your case, it could be any number of needs, but if you are focused on the need, the result will be the same. Philip was paralyzed. He had no idea what to do or how to meet

the need. We will find ourselves in the same condition if we focus on the need or what we lack to meet it.

There was another disciple that had a very different focus and, therefore, a different response:

⁸One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, ⁹“There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?”

Andrew was confronted with the same need and the same lack, but he did something very interesting. He brings some food to Jesus that a young boy had carried with him into the place where they were. Andrew knows that what the boy has is nowhere near enough to meet the need, but he brings it to Jesus anyway. He has questions in his mind about what good can be done with so small an amount, but he still brings it to Jesus

Most of us would have dismissed the little boy's offer out of hand. I can imagine the struggle in Andrew's mind. The lad offers his food, and Andrew

pats him on the head and says, “Thank you, son, but this won’t feed all these people.” However, the boy insists, and Andrew smiles and takes the small offering, thanking the boy for his generosity.

As he walks away, something begins to stir within him: “You should give this to Jesus.” He then responds to himself, “But why?” The feeling is persistent, however, and finally he succumbs to taking the five loaves and two fish to the Master. “I don’t know how this will do any good, but it is what we have. I am giving it to you; what you do with it is your business.”

It is what we have! If it is measured against the need, it is nothing. The gift lacks any ability to accomplish the task at hand, but it is what we have. We have no ability to control what needs arise in life. Most of the time we cannot provide what may be lacking. The only thing we have control over is what we have. What we have may be small in our eyes

when compared to the need, but if it is what we have, it is what we have. I can choose what I will do with it.

Let us consider the lad for a moment. He probably had the best focus of anyone in the story. He was a boy. He did not fully understand the magnitude of the need, but he knew he had five loaves and two fish. He could have looked around at all the people and said to himself, “I better hide this for myself. If I eat just a little each day, I can sustain myself until I get home.” Or he might have tried to sell what he had. Bread and fish would command a good price in the midst of hungry people with nowhere to buy food. Instead, he chose to make what he had available to meet the need at hand. It did not seem like it would do much good, but it was what he had.

What impossible needs face you today? What are you lacking in order to be a true success in your life and your Christianity? Are you like Philip who looked at what he had and said that it is not enough? Or are you going to be like Andrew and this young lad who,

in the midst of the impossibility, came to Jesus and said, “This is what I have.”

If the story ended here, the thought of focusing on what you have would be a nice motivational life enhancement thought, but not much else. However, the story does not end here. Let us see what Jesus did with what they had.

Chapter 3

Multiplied

As we continue to read this story I think we can see some things that we can expect Jesus to do with what we have. It is interesting to me that Jesus has no answer for Philip. You see, Philip's need/lack response gave Jesus nothing with which to work ; There was no faith in it.

Faith, not need, moves God, . When we come to God with our needs, He understands us and He will minister comfort to us. He will attempt to bring us to the understanding we need to get that need met. However, it is not until we begin to release faith that God has something He can work with to bring change into our lives.

In this case Philip gave Jesus nothing with which to workt, but Andrew did. It (or "What he brought")did not seem very significant, but it was something. God does not need some great thing to be

able to work with and in us, but He does need something. He will take what you have and build on it, but if you (because you are using you everywhere else in this sentence) bring him nothing, He will be able to do nothing for you.

When Andrew brought Jesus what he had ,Jesus immediately began to do something with it. I can see four things that Jesus did with what they brought to Him. I believe He will do these same four things with what you have if you bring it (clarify what “it” is...unclear pronoun reference)to Him. If you hold back until you think that what you have is significant enough or large enough to impress Jesus, then He will not be able to do these for you. However ,if you simply present what you have to Jesus, He will meet you where you are and go to work on what you have.

JESUS TOLD THEM WHAT TO DO

When Andrew brought the five loaves and two fish to Jesus, he had no idea how this small amount

could meet the needs of so many. However, when Andrew presented what he had, Jesus gave him instructions as to what steps to take to utilize it. Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” In another account He told them to make them sit down in groups of fifty.

I believe that if we will present Jesus with what we have, He will begin to give us insight and wisdom as to what to do with whatever it may be. In the case of money, for instance, He will show you where to sow offerings or He may show you how to invest it. In the case of a gift or talent, He may begin to show you the need to improve or develop it. In the case of business, he may give you instructions on how to find clients or what to do to make your business known. The specific possibilities are endless, but one thing is certain: if you present him with nothing, He has nothing (about which to)t Instruct you.

Now the instructions Jesus gave to Andrew did not seem to be of any real help to the situation. Asking thousands of people to sit down in groups would not

make the five loaves and two fish go any further. Jesus' instructions seem foolish to the natural mind. Even when I read the story today, I do not see how it made any difference. However, if Jesus said to do it, it must have been relevant.

When the Lord talks to you about what you have, He may say things that make no sense to your mind. Do them anyway. He may ask you to do things that will make sense later. He may require things you will never understand, but if He is asking, it is important. Remember, when you bring what you have to Jesus, you are bringing it into contact with the wisdom of God.

JESUS TOOK THE BREAD AND ANOINTED IT

After giving instructions, Jesus took what they offered Him. He did not say to the young boy, "I cannot use what you have." He did not say to Andrew, "Couldn't you do better than this?" He received what

they brought to Him by faith. As a matter of fact, He gave thanks to God for it.

If you bring what you have to Jesus, I can assure you that He will not reject it. Others may look at what you have and ridicule or reject it, but the Lord is just waiting for you to bring it to Him. He will give thanks to the Father that you have given him something with which He can bless multitudes through you. Bring what you have by faith, believing that Jesus can do something with it.

When He receives what is given to Him, He must touch it. The touch of Jesus brings the anointing of God to what you have. It is the anointing that caused five loaves and two fish to feed thousands. The anointing is the enabling ability of God. When Jesus touches what you have, it becomes supernatural. What it could not do before, it can do now. There will be no limitation except the will of God in your life.

The anointing on your gifting will make it a supernatural gifting. The anointing on your financial offering will make it a supernatural seed capable of producing more than you could imagine. The anointing on your business will make it a supernatural business. You will have solutions to problems that others do not have and supernatural supply to meet the needs of customers or clients. The touch of Jesus will make all the difference.

I believe there is something about the anointing that we have never fully understood. The anointing, or enabling ability of God, is not just for the pulpit or the ministry. It is for whatever God has called you to do. Furthermore, what you have is what God has given you because He knows what you were made to be. When we give it to the Lord, He returns it to us anointed with His supernatural power. It is still the thing you gave Him, but it will have a supernatural touch upon it that will take it farther than you could ever imagine.

JESUS BROKE THE BREAD

In Matthews's account of this story it says that Jesus broke the bread. We need to realize that until Jesus breaks what we have, He will not be able to multiply it.

All bread has some kind of crust. Many types of bread have a very hard shell that conceals the soft moist interior. Until you break the bread, you do not know the quality of it. I believe that when we bring what we have to Jesus, He will break it. What does this mean?

We usually think we know the quality and nature of what we are bringing to Jesus. We assume that it is ready to be used and will produce immediate results. This is rarely true. The Lord has a way of taking what we offer Him and breaking it open to reveal what is inside. He may change our thinking or our methods. He may take what we think is important and discard it, while revealing that the real strength of what we have

lies somewhere else. In any case, when the Lord is done with our offering, it will be ready to produce all that it possibly can.

Another aspect of the broken bread involves us personally. God is more concerned with us than with what we have. He will begin to work on us until our motives are right and our desires are in line with His. He will examine our character and our integrity. This often takes time and we usually do not understand, but as we allow the Lord to work in our lives, He molds us into people ready for success.

JESUS GIVES TO YOU TO GIVE TO THEM

The final thing that Jesus did was distribute the bread and fish to his disciples. However, He did not give it to them so they could eat it. He gave it to them so they could distribute it to the multitude. This may be the most important thing of all. What you have is not for you ;it is to be given to those in need.

It does not matter if you are talking about business, ministry, or finances. Whatever gift or talent you have is not for you, but it is for those around you. When you give it to Jesus, He gives the anointed, broken, and improved version back to you. You must find someone to give it to.

There is an axiom in business that has almost been forgotten, but it is still true. If you serve people, you will be successful. It is true because it is the Word of God. In any area of life, if you make service your main goal, you will be successful.

Luke 6:38 says that if we give, it will be given back to us, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. I believe the truth behind this is that our giving produces a draw in the spirit that will bring whatever we need back to us. The key is that we must first give.

What you have can become great if you will invest it in others. I have seen this over and over again

in my own life. You cannot be successful in Christianity by focusing on self; however, you will never fail in Christianity if you make giving the heart and soul of all you do and all you have.

Chapter 4

Results

As we come to the close of this powerful story, I am reminded of Philip's words at the beginning:

⁷Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little."

When Philip focused on the need and the lack, the best he could see was a little bit for everyone. That was all his ability could provide. The result of Andrew's obedience, however, was much different:

So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost." ¹³ Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

When Jesus had finished distributing this small gift, the Bible says they were all filled. I know what it is like to be filled. We have certain restaurants we like to go to, and when we are finished eating, we are filled. Our stomachs are full to the point that we could

not eat another thing if we tried. One place in particular always asks if we saved room for desert, and I can never remember ordering one.

What we have may not be nearly enough, but when it is anointed by the Lord, it will meet the need in abundance. Jesus tells His disciples to pick up the leftovers so nothing will be lost. I do not believe we are talking about half eaten pieces of fish and bread crusts with bites taken out of them. I believe we are talking about pieces that were not touched. There were twelve baskets full of food left over. What happened to them? I do not really know, but I wonder if the boy went home with far more than he gave to the Lord.

If you bring what you have to Jesus, it will produce more than you can imagine. The question is, what do you have? I cannot tell you, but He can. Take some time and find out; you will not regret it.

Chapter 4

My Personal Experience

In my own life, the main thing I have to bring to the Lord is my ministry. I was saved at fourteen years of age and filled with the Spirit at seventeen. About the time God filled me with His Spirit, I received the call to ministry. At that time I had two ministry examples to draw from. One was the church in which I was raised: the Catholic Church. The other was a Baptist pastor: the father of my future wife (otherwise it sounds as if your wife was the Baptist pastor) I knew I already loved my (wife-to-be) too much to be a priest, and I wanted no part of the lifestyle my father-in-law lived.

Shortly after graduating from high school, my wife and I were married. I chose not to enter college and went to work in a factory. After five years of “higher education” in real life, going to work everyday

and raising a family, the Lord said it was time to fulfill the call on my life.

I went to work with another man who became my mentor in ministry. He taught me how to study, prepare, and preach, as well as many other things related to touching people with the life and Word of God. After some time he asked me to pastor a church under his authority. Although I was not nearly as equipped as I should have been, I took up the challenge. In those early days, over twenty-five years ago, the Lord began to speak into my life prophetically through various people. There was a consistent theme in most of the prophetic words that came to me: I would minister to many people in foreign lands.

In my immaturity I had an image of what that meant. Of course I would become a famous teacher who would travel around the world. I remember one word in particular that said I would be passing out bread so fast that I could not get the bread fast enough

to meet the need. My ego and anticipation became equally inflated.

As the years passed, I continued in the original church started with my mentor and then moved to another city and started another church. After some time and some serious mistakes on my part, I knew it was time for me to move on. As I was considering what to do, a pastor friend of mine encouraged me to talk to the man that had raised him in the ministry. He was an older man with a heart for leaders. He became a real father in the faith to me.

My desire at that time was to begin my “world wide” teaching ministry, but there were no doors open to me. The only thing that seemed to be available was a group of four or five people from a small town about two hours south of where we lived who wanted a church. This father in the faith encouraged me that I should go in this direction. The decision was not that hard since I had no other direction anyway.

At the time I told the small group that I would only be there a short time. I would help them get started and put someone else over them because I had a “world wide” teaching ministry to attend to. As time went by, I began to learn things from both my new found father in the faith and from this small group of people.

Both the small group and my new father poured into my wife and me. I began to see this man as my pastor, and he shared the wisdom of God drawn from his own experiences with us. This small group that needed a shepherd also treated us with a love and respect that brought healing to the wounds we had sustained in our ignorance. I did not leave after a few months as I had planned, but I stayed, put down roots, and the church began to grow.

I tell this story for a purpose. You see, when all of this began, I came to Jesus with my ministry and said, “Here it is Lord. I am supposed to travel around the world and I believe this is the time to start.” He

began to give me instruction. He began to bring me into certain relationships that He knew were important to me. He also began to change my view of life and ministry. I brought Him what I had, and He began to instruct me and change me, but nothing that was happening seemed to have anything to do with building a “world wide” teaching ministry.

He told me to go to a new place, but it was smaller and more remote than the one I was in. He gave me contacts, but not with people who seemed to be able to open the doors for a “world wide” teaching ministry. However, as I changed I began to redefine what that meant. I began to understand the true nature of Christian relationships; I saw a different example of ministry.

I do not say that those I was following before were wrong, but I had no personal contact with them. My understanding of who they were and how they got to be what I saw was most likely wrong. As my pastor and my people loved me and my family, my whole

view changed and I committed to this small group in this small place. There was a wonderful breaking occurring in my life that would shape me for the rest of my days.

I still had a seed in my spirit. I had not forgotten the prophetic words from my youth, but I was obeying Jesus. Maybe I was wrong in my interpretation of the prophetic words or maybe they would be for a later time, but I knew that I was where I needed to be.

After a number of years in this church, my pastor came and asked me to attend a meeting in which he was going to be praying about starting a new ministry. This ministry would take teams of ministry, primarily from the United States, to other parts of the world to minister to people who did not have the resources that we do in America.

We fasted, prayed, and began the work. I was still the pastor of my church, but I was asked to go on the first trip sponsored by this new organization. It

was to India. I had never been out of my country and India was a very different place, but I found myself teaching the Word of God halfway around the world. In one meeting I was praying and there were literally thousands of people coming to us for prayer, and I felt I could not receive from the Lord what they needed fast enough to minister it to them in prayer. Afterwards, I remembered that prophetic word from so many years before.

Since then I have traveled to over twenty nations, teaching leaders and preaching the word of God around the globe. I have a “world wide” teaching ministry. It is not what I expected, but it is more than what I ever dreamed.

I believe that when I presented my sincere, but immature ministry to the Lord, He took it and began to work with it. He gave me direction; He brought about the changes in my life and in my ministry that would enable me to do what He knew I was made to do. He put into my life the things that I was lacking. He

anointed me with His anointing and multiplied me by letting me speak into the lives of countless churches through their leaders. He touched my life in a way that I did not expect and did not even know I needed.

I believe if I had not obeyed Him when he asked me to go to this small place and if I had not submitted to the leadership he was bringing into my life, I would still be trying to have a “world wide” teaching ministry instead of traveling the world teaching the Word of God. This small group of people did not look like a launching pad to the world, but because of their heart of giving and willingness to sow me, my wife, and others into the world, many people have been blessed in many countries.

Bring what you have to Jesus. It may seem small, but in the hands of the Master it can accomplish much. Obey His instructions. He knows the end from the beginning. Let Him break the bread of your life. When He does, it will become more than you ever dreamed it could be. Let His anointing overflow into

your ministry, business, or whatever else you have to offer. He will multiply it and give you something to give to people that will enable you to fulfill His plan and purpose for your life.

It all starts by saying, “Here I am, Lord, and this is what I have.”