

A PROSPEROUS SOUL

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3 John 1:2 NKJV

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

We find the will of God and His instructions for our lives in this verse of Scripture. God speaks through the prayer of the Apostle John, as he prays that his readers prosper and be in health in all things (every aspect of life). Both are wonderful, intentional, forward-looking thoughts. However, John does not end with this part of his prayer wish. He goes on to provide biblical instruction that ties prosperity and health to the condition of the soul. He says, “...*even as your soul prospers.*”

We may consider the soul to consist of, at the least, a person’s mind, will and emotions. I would like to add that the soul is incomplete in its function without conscience and consciousness (awareness). Taken together, these elements paint the complete picture of us in our natural state. In his prayer, the Apostle John makes a “cause and effect” connection. He speaks first of the effect: prosperity in all things and health. Then he provides us with its cause: a prosperous soul. We may diagram this connection as follows.

Cause: a prosperous soul → Effect: prosperity in all things and health

Prosperity’s dictionary definition is, “*a successful, flourishing, or thriving condition, esp. in financial respects; good fortune.*”¹ My own definition of prosperity is, *living life to its fullest potential under the complete covering of the favor of God.* From these two definitions, we can construct the following.

Paraphrase of 3 John 2

Beloved, my desire is that that you lead a successful, flourishing, thriving life of God-given favor and fortune in every area. I pray that your life mirrors the condition of your soul (your mind, will, emotions, conscience and consciousness (your ways of thinking)). Require your soul to be fully submitted to the path of prosperity that is ordained and ordered by the Lord.

¹ Eurofield World Information Systems Wordgenius Dictionary, incorporating Random House’s Webster’s College Dictionary content

A life described in my paraphrase, above, is a life of wholeness. It is complete, lacking nothing and is able to achieve its destiny of success and significance. Such a life requires certain, universal attributes. Consider the following chart.

Requirements for a Prosperous, Healthy and Whole Way of Living	
<p>Respect <u>for</u> Others This requires your intentions to be trustworthy and honorable toward others... that your actions are selfless and sacrificial.... that they always indicate your concern that others are esteemed and valued in your heart more highly than yourself. (Philippians 2:3 NKJV)</p>	<p>Respect <u>from</u> Others This requires that what others see in your actions and hear from your words assures them you are trustworthy and honorable in your intentions toward them.</p>
<p>Respect <u>for</u> Self (Self-respect) This requires you to block the voices that label you anything but a winner and champion for Jesus. You may also have to break off some old relationships with people, places, media and memories.</p>	<p>Respect <u>from</u> Self This requires that you give priority to the voice of your conscience. It calls for you to refuse to allow yourself to be defiled. (See Daniel 1:8 NKJV)</p> <p>The following are dictionary definitions of “defile.”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to make foul, dirty, or unclean 2. to violate the chastity of 3. to desecrate 4. to sully, as a person's reputation
<p>Respect <u>for</u> God This is a reflection of your understanding of who He is and what He has done for you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He is absolute in power. - He is infinite in wisdom. - He rules over everything. <p>He loves you so much He gave Jesus to die on the cross for you. Jesus paid your price so you could enjoy God's favor and blessings, not His judgment.</p>	<p>Respect <u>from</u> God This requires a combination of three things.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That you respect Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross and embrace it as an incredible personal blessing and the gift that caused your personal redemption 2. That you live a life of obedience to God as an act of your love toward Him and respect for Him 3. That your life is a living epistle delivering the message of Christ and His redemptive work, with all the opportunities it brings to others (2 Corinthians 3:2-3 NKJV)

We all need this checklist when it comes to having a prosperous and healthy life - physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Dr. Charles Stanley, of In Touch Ministries, speaks of the three legs of any person's success and significance in life. They are (1) belonging, (2) worthiness and (3) competency. I would like to share with you some of my thoughts on these.

First Leg - Belonging

The roots of this powerful element of success and significance go all the way back to God's concern for Adam.

(Genesis 2:18 New Living Translation) "And the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion who will help him.""

Some things never change. It is still not good for a person to be alone. God's plan and design for us is that we are connected, part of some group of people (marriage, family, church, and a host of other opportunities to fellowship with others). God knew that with Adam, and He knows with us, that we need opportunities to affirm and to be affirmed. In the chart above, you read of respect. We give and receive it in the context of those to whom we belong. Respect is essential to affirmation. Knowing this should help us understand the value of being cared for by the community of people God gives us. Conversely, it helps us to know the value of our caring for those in our community. People who are regularly affirmed and regularly affirm feel they belong and are worthwhile. This brings us to our next leg of success and significance.

Second Leg - Worthiness

(Ephesians 4:1-3 NKJV) "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, {2} with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, {3} endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

(1 Peter 2:9-10 NKJV) "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; {10} who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

God understands the need for us to feel productive, meaningful and worthy as citizens of His kingdom and participants in the world around us. The alternative is the misfortune of feeling unworthy, or worthless (without worth). This is not God's desire for any of us. His Word says we are to "walk worthy" of our call. We cannot "walk worthy" unless we believe we are worthy. Ephesians 4:2-3 explains how to be worthy. It speaks of lowliness, gentleness and so forth. The Apostle Peter's words, above, tell us we are a chosen people who walk in God's mercy. With this favor and privilege comes the responsibility and ability to refuse what would prevent us from doing so. Worthiness and belonging work together to provide us a platform for success and significance. Within them, we find the

confident motivation to become competent in all God calls us to be and do. Now, let us look at the third leg, competence.

Third Leg - Competence

Competence may be defined as, *having sound capability, proficiency and expertise in the execution of particular skills or spiritual gifts.*² Competence comes through learning and practice. Competence has a great deal to do with experience. Unlike our first two legs (belonging and worthiness), competence does not depend on the opinions of others. It is inherent in the one who has it. However, its acceptance and usefulness among the communities to which the person belongs, does depend on the community's perceptions of him and their feelings about him. Is he accepted? Is he considered worthy of their trust? Do they think he can do the job, whatever it might be?

Let us look at the other side of the coin. Why is a person motivated to exercise his competence among the community, or to decline to do so? This depends, to a large degree, on how he feels about the community's acceptance of him. It is at this point, where his competence and emotions merge. As they do, he decides whether to commit himself and his skills and spiritual gifts to the well-being of others. His emotions influence, and sometimes even control his perception of himself. From within this perception he makes his decision. If it is a positive decision, from positive feelings, then he will act in service to the community. In the process, he builds his sense of wholeness.

In Genesis 2, when God said, *"it is not good for man to be alone,"* He knew that the success and significance of the individual and community was tied together. If individuals were whole, the community would be whole. Another way to say this is, if individuals in the community were sanctified, life in the community would be, too. So what can we do to bring wholeness to the communities to which we belong? (again, marriage, family, church etc.) Look once more at my paraphrase of 3 John 2. Study and apply it to your life. The application is found in the final sentence of the paraphrase. Let it be your challenge and guide.

Beloved, my desire is that that you lead a successful, flourishing, thriving life of God-given favor and fortune in every area. I pray that your life mirrors the condition of your soul (your mind, will, emotions, conscience and consciousness (or your ways of thinking)). Require your soul to be fully submitted to the path of prosperity that is ordained and ordered by the Lord.

² My definition