

How to Maintain a Biblical Prosperity Mindset as COVID-19 Ravages Our Nation

The apostle Paul demonstrated character and contentment in challenging circumstances. "I know both how to face humble circumstances and how to have abundance. Everywhere and in all things I have learned the secret, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things because of Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:12-13).

Whatever our current financial situation during this global pandemic, don't we want to say the same thing? The good news is that the "secret" is not something doled out but developed ("learned") and it's not found in people, positions or possessions but in a personal relationship with Jesus.

Living this way enables us to shine as lights in a culture currently darkened by COVID-19. We have the opportunity to be thankful for all God's provisions, not taking anything for granted and not complaining as we go through a season with things in short supply (and I'm not just talking about toilet paper!).

During the lockdown in Italy, an elderly man was hospitalized for the coronavirus and needed a ventilator to sustain his life. After he improved and was discharged, he started crying. The medical personnel asked why he was crying and reassured him the bill would be taken care of in his time of need.

Holding back the tears and sniffing, he told them why he was crying.

"Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I'm not crying about the money; I'll help with that. I'm crying because I realize I've been breathing God's air for over 80 years and never had to

pay for it!”

How easy it is to take things for granted. Since losing the sight in my left eye years ago, I have cherished my vision every day!

We can also get accustomed to life’s comforts and complain if they diminish, disappear or don’t compare with others who have more.

A hunter got lost in a dense jungle and after many days was extremely hungry. His navigation skills failed him, and he started losing hope for survival. Then he saw an apple tree, and when he devoured the first apple, his joy knew no bounds with every succulent bite. He thanked God profusely.

Loading his sack, he resumed his journey. The next day as he ate a second apple, he again expressed gratitude to God for the provision. But as he walked and daily ate a third and then a fourth and fifth and sixth and seventh apple, he became increasingly discontent that apples were all he had. He kept walking, and when he ate his 10th apple, he was upset and complained about his “misfortune.”

That 10th apple was as sweet as the first one. The problem was not with the fruit but with the person eating the fruit. He had not learned the secret of being content.

Severity of COVID-19 Crisis

Few people minimize the seriousness of this pandemic and its economic impact.

Three months ago we were enjoying historic, record low unemployment. Today, there are almost 40 million out of work.

Explosive investment gains during three years of this robust economy evaporated in three weeks.

On the corporate level, consider just one example, the Disney

media empire. Profit plummeted 91% last quarter as all 12 theme parks were closed, and 100,000 were out of work.

Whether individuals, couples or business leaders, everyone faces the enormous challenge of resetting and recovery as we resolve not to surrender in this unprecedented season.

Abundance and Prosperity

While we cultivate contentment during this adversity, it's important we remember God's plan for us as His people. We're not exempt from the economic repercussions of the pandemic, but we must shun fear of lack and walk by faith believing for abundance and prosperity from a biblically informed perspective. This is not some phony "prosperity gospel" but God's normative will for His obedient children.

I'm not talking about ever-expanding paychecks, palatial homes, luxury cars, lavish vacations or "lifestyles of the rich and famous." Biblical prosperity and abundance center primarily on giving, not getting and staying thankful.

"God is able to make all grace abound toward you, so that you, always having enough of everything, may abound to every good work ... So you will be enriched in everything to all bountifulness which makes us give thanks to God" (2 Cor. 9:8,11).

Simply put, prosperity is "enough for our needs with enough left over for others." Likewise, abundance speaks of "ample quantity or plenty."

If my wife, Doris, needs \$200 for groceries at Costco yet only has \$100, she is shopping out of insufficiency. If she goes to the store with \$200, she's shopping out of sufficiency. If she goes with \$300, she's shopping out of abundance. In other words, she has all she needs and more!

Keep in mind one caution: "But godliness with contentment is

great gain ... those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evil. While coveting after money some have strayed from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:6,9-10).

Poverty or Prosperity?

Those experiencing or fearing poverty in this pandemic need to let God give us guidance. Obedient Christians can be assured that His expressed will is to "supply your every need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19b). God promises to meet our needs, not necessarily our wants!

We must be convinced from Scripture that poverty is not a virtue but a curse. Those choosing to disobey God's commands often experience this state (Deut. 28:48), and those who are obedient usually enjoy blessings that include among other things, "overflowing in prosperity" (Deut. 28:11b).

Of course some inspiring people voluntarily take a vow of poverty to live a simplified lifestyle to serve humanity. Others, unfortunately ignorant of God's Word; abandoned by parents or trapped under tyrannical governments, live lives of destitution and suffering. We are privileged to supply humanitarian aid plus reach them with the gospel and transformative truth.

During this corona crisis, we should be repentant if it revealed misplaced priorities or unpreparedness (66 million Americans have zero savings for any emergency!) Perhaps it revealed undisciplined spending habits making us "servant[s] to the lenders" (Prov. 22:7) and susceptible to dependency on socialistic big government deception.

We must also be good stewards regarding immoral and reckless spending by government officials resulting in an inevitable

curse of crushing poverty upon us and our children. I'm not speaking here about genuinely needed relief and critical stimulus spending to save families and our economy from collapse in a crisis.

Judgment Awaits if We Allow ...

With 40 million Americans out of work, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi wants to again include abortion funding (62 million unborn babies already killed) and now even a guaranteed minimum income for illegal aliens in the stimulus package.

California's Democrat politicians spend money providing 20,000 hotel rooms to homeless, mainly substance abusers as San Francisco supplies free drugs, alcohol and housing in hotels for derelicts, enabling their idle lifestyle and addictions.

Democrat governors in numerous states going bankrupt due to corruption, decades-long financial mismanagement, unfunded pensions (given to secure votes) and obscene entitlement programs, now attempt to secure "bailout" money intended for COVID-19 relief.

Democrats object to the Republican provision that no COVID-19 relief money be given without the prohibition of future lawsuits. The lawyer lobby donated \$151 million (2016) and \$137 million (2018) to the Democrat Party and salivates at opportunities to sue schools, universities, malls and businesses for COVID-19 related cases []. Watch for the ads by desperate attorneys out of work and ready to extort the big bucks.

Leaving Lockdown/Opening Up

If we're perceptive, we're finding questionable political agendas intent on defeating Trump in November as well as some folks' integrity and work ethic (or lack thereof) are being exposed.

–Kitchen workers making \$750 weekly can pull in \$1200 through government assistance and stimulus funds so many choose to sit idle and take the money.

–A lady lamented to me yesterday that her employer had her return to work while she could have stayed home for a third month and still gotten paid.

–A young man said he couldn't find work by spending an hour daily scanning the internet. Doesn't God say, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work" (Ex. 20:9)? In other words, if you don't have a job, why aren't you spending six days diligently trying to find one?

To make America great again, it's imperative we reset our thinking to a biblical work ethic, shunning any laziness and responsibly, carefully return to work and restart our economy. Proceeding in faith with Spirit-led wisdom, may we be discerning and reject idleness or "gaming the system."

The apostle Paul, whom I cited for his character and contentment at the outset, directs us from divine revelation to "withdraw yourselves from every brother who walks in idleness ... For we were not idle among you, neither did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it ... We commanded you that if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some among you who live in idleness, mere busybodies, not working at all. Now, concerning those who are such, we commanded and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ that they quietly work and eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3:6b-8,10-12).

Here's the deal: The time has arrived for Americans to begin a new chapter. At the National Day of Prayer our president affirmed, "Never forget that all things are possible with God." Let's embrace our opportunity like Isaac who "sowed in that land [of famine] and reaped in the same year a hundredfold" (Gen. 26:12a).