



What are God's promises regarding prosperity, and how do we step into it?  
**Rev Jeffrey Wong** explains.

In my pre-Christian days, whenever we celebrated Chinese New Year, I joined my parents to usher in a deity commonly associated with prosperity. However year after year, we didn't prosper. Upon reflection, I realise that prosperity is not something we usher in; it is something we step into!

# GOD'S PROSPERITY

At the Watchnight Service, Pastor Dominic declared that God wants us to enter into Abundant Living, and one of its expressions is through enjoying God's prosperity. How do we step into God's prosperity during this economic downturn, predicted to remain for at least the next two years?

First, it is important for us to understand what prosperity means in the biblical context. The other day, Rev Lam Ee Lin offered me a cup of ice-cream. I declined by saying, "No, thank

you... I am too fat for ice-cream". Immediately Pastor David Chng interjected, "Pastor Jeff, that's prosperity!" I told him, "Ah, but that's not biblical prosperity." What is God's definition of prosperity? In the Old Testament, prosperity connotes the following meanings:

- **To prosper is to be successful in attaining what we are seeking for**

In Genesis 24, Abraham wanted to find his son Isaac a wife who had to be one of his relatives. Abraham sent his chief servant to seek her out. The chief servant set out on that journey. Along the way he met Rebekah, and the rest is history. But note what the chief servant said in verse 56: "The Lord has granted success to my journey." To prosper is to be successful in attaining what we are seeking for as we journey in life. What are you seeking for in life?

- **To prosper is to be successful in the things we do**

In Genesis 39, Joseph found favour with Potiphar, a high-ranking Egyptian official and was appointed as his personal attendant and put in charge of everything. What was the factor that put Joseph in Potiphar's good books? Verse 3 tells us that Potiphar saw that the Lord was with Joseph and that the Lord gave Joseph success in everything he did. To prosper is to be successful in the things we do. Are you successful in the things you do?

- **To prosper is to experience peace and rest**

2 Chronicles 14 is an account of King Asa who did what was good and right before God. Because of that the country was at peace for ten years. In verses 6 and 7, it is written that the Lord gave King Asa rest on every side and God prospered him. We see this concept in Lamentations 3:17 as well: "I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is." You cannot separate peace and rest from prosperity. To prosper is to experience peace and rest. Are you experiencing peace and rest?

- **To prosper is to acquire and possess wealth**

This needs no further explanation. In fact, wealth is what most of us associate with prosperity.

As you can see, the biblical concept of prosperity is more than having wealth. You can have wealth without experiencing peace and rest, but true biblical prosperity encompasses all these facets. God's prosperity includes having success in whatever we do, experiencing rest and peace and of course, enjoying the wealth we acquire along the way.

But more importantly, true biblical prosperity is linked to the blessings of covenantal obedience. There are many Scripture verses that support this understanding:

- "Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do." – Deuteronomy 29:9

- "Observe what the Lord your God requires: Walk in His ways, and keep His decrees and commands, His laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go." – 1 Kings 2:3
- "Then you will have success if you are careful to observe the decrees and laws that the Lord gave Moses for Israel." – 1 Chronicles 22:13

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Let us take a closer look at how we step into and enjoy God's prosperity. In 2 Kings 4:1-7, there are three principles we can glean from this passage of Scripture:

1

**Man's Adversity is God's Opportunity**

*"The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves." (2 Kings 4:1)*

The widow mentioned here was the wife of a certain prophet who had died. The widow was in a state of desolation. It is highly possible she had no one to turn to. She was left alone to face the harsh reality of life without her husband.

She was oppressed by her debtors as her husband had died insolvent, leaving her with debts to settle. Her sorrow was further intensified with the possibility of losing her two sons. But her adversity became God's opportunity to prosper her. By the end of the episode, she had paid off all her debts and had more-than-enough for her livelihood. In spite of her adversity, she enjoyed God's prosperity!

Some of us have experienced the loss of income or investment. Others may have lost a loved one or suffered in our health. Like the widow, you may be in the place of helplessness or are under tremendous pressure, yet not being able to produce enough with the little you have.

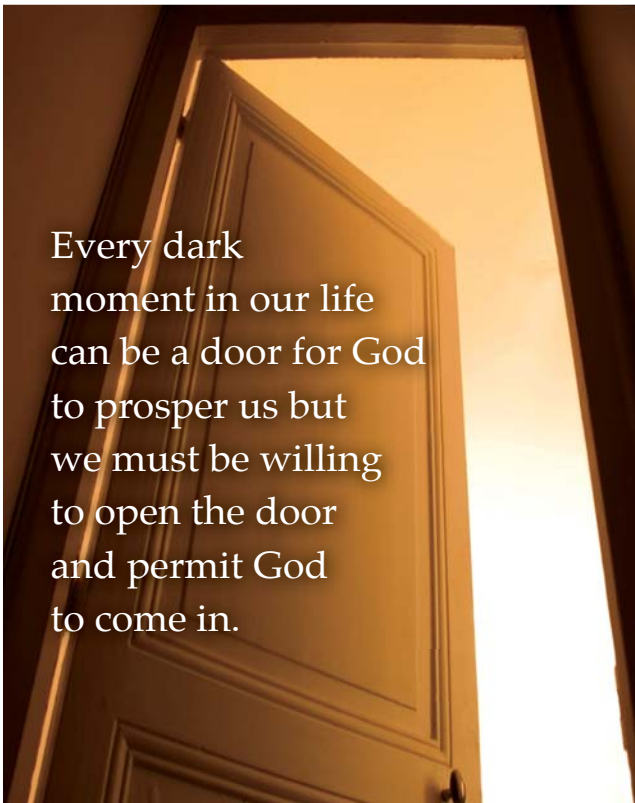
I was talking to someone recently. He said that before the economic crisis, he already had to tighten his belt but now, he did not even have any belt to tighten. But like the widow, your adversity can be God's opportunity. God can take your adversity and turn it into a blessing. Joseph is an excellent example. He suffered the adversity of being sold into slavery, was wrongly accused by his master's wife and then betrayed and forgotten by his fellow prisoner. Despite these adversities, God brought him through and seated him next to Pharaoh's seat of power.

Let's talk about someone from contemporary times.

He was a drop-out from elementary school, ran a small business but went broke, took 19 years to pay off his debts; He had a law firm, but his partner ran off and left him with sums unpaid; He was married but his wife suffered from mental illness and paranoia; He had a son who was physically weak and died at a young age; He ran for political office four times, twice for the House and twice for the Senate, and lost all four times. Ultimately, he held office but was despised by half the country; the press derided him almost on a daily basis; Most audiences felt his speeches were dull and boring, and his classic speech was met with indifference. Do you know who this man was? He was Abraham Lincoln. He was a believer who faced incredible adversity but this became God's opportunity to prosper him – Abraham Lincoln emerged as one of the greatest presidents of all time.

God can take your adversity  
and turn it into a blessing.

Today, your loss of finances can be God's opportunity to provide for you. Your pain of losing your loved one can be God's opportunity to comfort you with His peace and rest. Your loss of health can be God's opportunity to heal you. The widow was in dire straits: she had lost her husband, income, was in debt and was about to lose her two sons too. Could it get any worse? Yet her adversity became God's opportunity to prosper her. Every dark moment in our life can be a door for God to prosper us but we must be willing to open the door and permit God to come in. This leads us to the next point.



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## 2 Man's Confession is God's Permission

*Elisha replied to her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" "Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a little oil." (2 Kings 4:2)*

I am sure Elisha was fully aware of the situation and of the widow's need, yet he asked, "How can I help you?" Were I the widow, I would have retorted, "What kind of prophet are you? Don't you know my situation?"

The question "How can I help you?" provided the

widow an opportunity to confess her need before God. We confess in acknowledging our inability and insufficiency. Our confession of helplessness becomes God's permission to help us; the key is to open the door of our needs and permit God to enter in. It is the same with prayer. God knows our needs before we ask Him, and yet we pray because our prayers are our confession to God that we are dependent on Him.

Elisha asked a second question: "What do you have in your house?" Now this question was not meant to be a form of means testing to see whether the widow qualified for God's social service scheme. God can create something from nothing, but it is His plan to start with what we have. The widow replied, "Your servant has nothing there at all except a little oil" – the phrase 'except a little oil' is a statement of confession of her faith. The 'little oil' we give to God is enough to permit Him to prosper us.

**God can create something from nothing, but it is His plan to start with what we have.**

Our confession is God's permission to prosper us. But to what extent God prospers us would depend on how we approach God. This brings us to the third point.

## 3 Man's Emptiness is God's Readiness

*Elisha said, "Go around and ask all your neighbours for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as*

*each is filled, put it to one side." She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. (2 Kings 4:3-5)*

God is always ready to pour out His blessings, but we must approach God as empty vessels. God is always ready to provide, but it is man that determines the capacity. How much we receive from God will be determined by how empty we are.

God has the ability to give us the best but we must be empty enough to have the desire to receive it. The degree of your desire to receive from God will be the measure of your capacity to receive from Him. If you knock on 10 doors, you will receive 10 doors' worth of blessing. **If you knock on 100 doors, you will receive a 100-door blessing.**

**b) Are you empty enough to expect to receive from God?**

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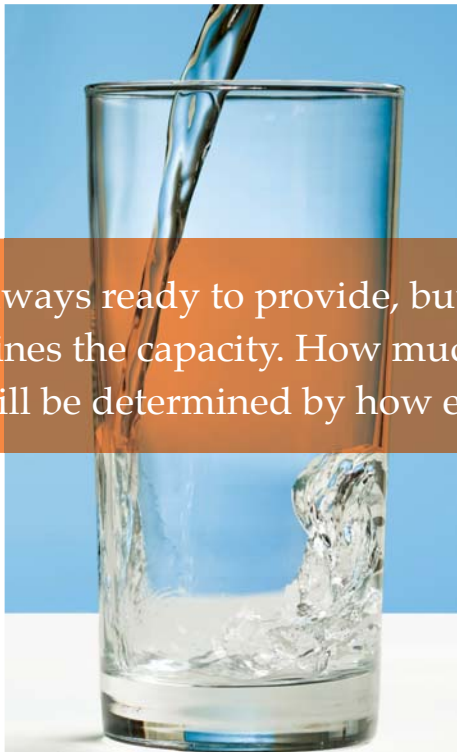
**a) Are you empty enough to desire to receive from God?**

The widow was told by Elisha to go around asking all her neighbors for empty jars. Notice it is not some neighbours or only the neighbours whom she got along with. Elisha told her "...ALL of your neighbours."

This widow was empty enough to desire to ask all her neighbours for empty jars. If you were told to do the same today, to personally knock on your neighbours' doors and ask for empty bottles, how many doors will you knock on? Would you do five doors, ten doors, one floor, the whole block, two blocks, five blocks or the whole neighborhood?

Elisha told the widow 'Don't just ask for a few jars'. I believe Elisha was telling the widow to take all the empty jars that were available in each household. The widow was empty enough to expect that God would fill them all up.

A certain fisherman would bring a ruler and a basket each time he went fishing. The moment he caught a fish, he would measure it. On one occasion, the fish he caught was six inches long, and he threw it into the basket. Not long after, he pulled in a nine-inch fish, and he threw it into the basket as well. A little later, he felt a violent jerk on the line and pulled in a twenty-inch fish, and threw the fish back in the water.



A little girl had been watching this fisherman all this while. When the fisherman threw the twenty-inch fish back into the water, she asked him, "Why do you throw back the big fish and keep the little ones?" The fisherman replied, "Because my frying pan is only ten inches wide."

Are you limiting yourself because you are not empty enough to contain the bigger 'fish' God wants to bless you with? How empty are you in expecting God to fill you with His abundance?

**c) Are you empty enough to obey God's instruction in order to receive from Him?**

Elisha told the widow to pour oil into all the jars. This was no ordinary instruction. How could the little oil fill up all the jars? She must have been empty enough to obey an instruction that violated all human logic; but obey she did, and received the fullness of God's prosperity: The oil kept flowing until all the jars were filled up.

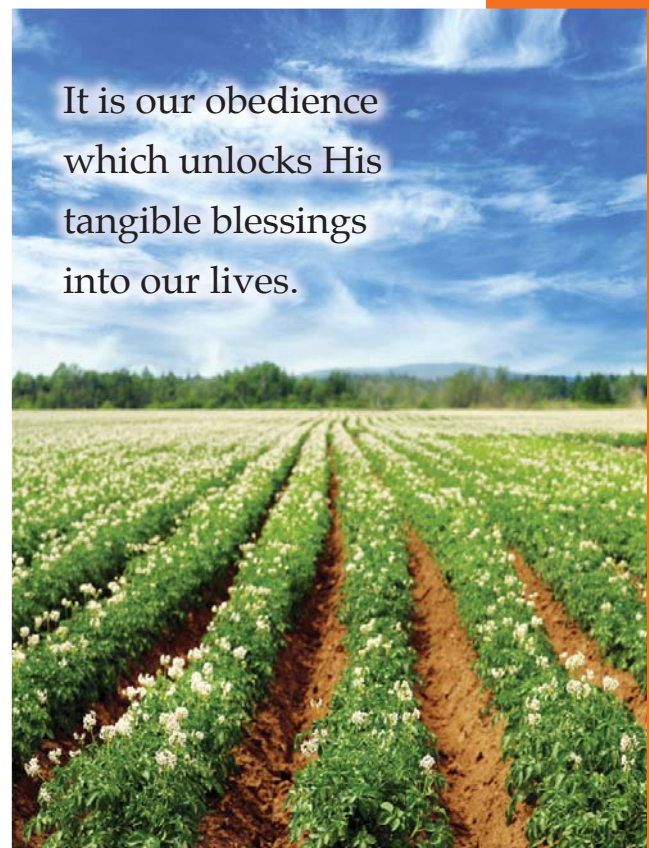
To obey is to act upon what we have been told. To do what God has instructed us to do is more than merely promising that we will do it. There are two categories of people in this world:

- Those who promise anything, but fail to perform
- Those who promise you nothing, but perform more than their talk

The only way we can show our obedience is by doing what we have been instructed to do, not by what we say we will do.

A husband and wife were discussing about the possibility of taking a holiday trip to the Holy Land. With excitement the husband said to his wife, "Wouldn't it be fantastic to go up to Mount Sinai, to stand there and shout out the Ten Commandments?"

The wife looked at her husband and responded, "Darling, that is a great idea but it would be better if we stayed home and just kept them."



If we want to step into God's prosperity, we must be empty enough to obey God's instruction even when it does not make sense. It is our obedience which unlocks His tangible blessings into our lives.

## Living in Abundance

*When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing. She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left." (2 Kings 4:6-7)*

This widow experienced God's abundance in no small measure. She sold the oil, settled all the debts, and had sufficient money for her own livelihood and enough to raise her two sons. How much would that amount be in today's terms? It is certainly not a small sum! Now that's stepping into God's prosperity! Are you empty enough to desire, to expect and to obey? These are the keys to stepping into God's prosperity.

**Rev. Jeffrey Wong** serves on the Leadership Team of Trinity Christian Centre and is Trinity's Missions Director.

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*Every dark moment in our life can be a door for God to prosper us but we must be willing to open the door and permit God to come in. If you would like to open the door of your heart for Jesus to come in, say this simple prayer:*

*"Dear God, please forgive me of all my sins. I believe Jesus died on the cross for me and rose again on the third day. Thank you for taking away all my sins. Please come into my life and be my Lord and Saviour. In Jesus' name, amen."*

