



I needed more than money.

When things were difficult, a large amount of money would have solved my immediate problems, but I wanted solutions that would last throughout my lifetime—not merely a temporary fix. I had concluded that I must be doing something wrong, and if I could identify it, perhaps I would be able to change.

Jesus said that if we make the tree good, the fruit will be good (Matt. 12:33). I wanted different fruit in my life, so I knew the real change would have to occur within me.

Let me illustrate how character influences circumstances by telling you about Goldie, a dog that belongs to one of my neighbors. Goldie is one of the cutest puppies you ever could meet. He is a medium-sized dog with big paws into which he has not yet fully grown. His pleading eyes and fluffy white hair make him easy to love.

But Goldie regularly gets into trouble. Every time he breaks free from his chain, he finds his way into someone's yard and begins to chew up some treasured item. Once he fell into our next-door neighbor's swimming pool. Who knows how long he swam around before the owner came and pulled him out. When the neighborhood heard

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about a dog having been trapped in the swimming pool, they all knew it had to be Goldie. True to character, that dog gets into one problem after another.

People are like that. Some people seem to have personalities or character traits that just seem to yield problems. On the other hand, others seem to have qualities about their lives that cause blessings to flow their way.

Here is the good news: Goldie is changing. As he grows older, the “puppy clumsiness” is melting away. In his maturity, he is taking on a different character. Everyone who lives in the neighborhood is happy about that, and we no longer see him as “trouble looking for a place to happen.” He has learned to stay home now and is turning out to be a good dog.

Just like Goldie, people can change. They can outgrow wrong attitudes and characteristics. In part, it is just a matter of maturing as a person. However, it is also the result of consciously realizing that certain ways of doing things are not working and so change is necessary. If Goldie can change, so can you and I.

The Apostle John recorded his prayer for the early Christians:

*Beloved, I pray that in all respects you
may prosper and be in health, just as
your soul prospers. (III John verse 2)*

Notice the connection between prosperity and

having a prosperous soul. It is possible to develop prosperous attitudes and thought patterns—then, as a consequence, our circumstances and conditions will improve.

What then does it mean to have a *prosperous soul*? Simply this: **to have within oneself the faith, truth, correct thinking, perspective, and attitudes which produce success in life.** Prosperous actions arise from a prosperous soul.

The opposite of a prosperous soul is a *poverty spirit*. Christians sometime use the term “poverty spirit” when describing the conditions of a person who is under constant financial stress, no matter what they do. Need and lack are badgering them continually. The bills always are coming. There is never quite enough. As soon as there is a little extra money in the checking account, the car breaks down or someone in the family has an accident. No matter how hard they work, it seems they are living under a curse.

A poverty spirit can be on anyone’s life, no matter how much money they actually have. Even very wealthy people may have a poverty spirit. This results in living under constant stress and continually worrying about financial matters. What they do own, they never really enjoy. They are never satisfied. A poverty spirit can be upon a rich person just as easily as it can be upon one who owns nothing.

By using the words *poverty spirit* we do not mean that a devil is at work in an individual’s life. No. It is more accurate to think of it as a negative

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attitude, way of thinking, or grid through which they perceive and view the world. On the positive side, we could talk about being renewed in the “spirit of your mind,” as the Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:23. That would mean allowing the breath of God to flood your mind so that holy and faith-filled thoughts replace negative ones. It is in a corresponding way that the terminology *poverty spirit* is used, not to refer to a devil, but rather to attitudes and thought patterns which keep a person in financial bondage.

When people are under a poverty spirit, forces are at work in their lives to cause failure and defeat. Lack seems to hound them, no matter how hard they work or try. Their car breaks down more than the guy’s down the street. They get sick when they need to work. Their fuel bill seems to be higher. There simply is not enough money at the end of the month—month after month. Nothing seems to succeed the way it would for a successful person. It is as if they are under a dark cloud or a curse.

People with a poverty spirit feel as if their money is out of control. *It comes and it goes*. How or where, they are not sure. They feel helpless and really don’t know what to do differently to gain control. That sense of helplessness and things being out of their control is the very identification mark of the poverty spirit. Recognize it. Know if and when it has touched your life.

A poverty spirit may come over a person because of certain attitudes they developed as they

were raised. It may be the result of living in an environment of lack and defeat. Bad experiences along life's path may add to it. Negative self-images and wrong concepts of God also can work upon a person and enslave them to poverty. Many influences around us and within us all may add to the inability of a person to succeed as God wants them to succeed.

Whatever the cause, we need a solution. As we take on a different spirit, we will find the spirit of poverty being overcome. That is where we offer the solution—develop a prosperous soul.

Through every page of this book, we will be helping you to think differently. I want to share some of the prosperous attitudes and behaviors which I have observed in successful people. I want to take you through the changes that took place in my own thought patterns as I broke the spirit of poverty off my own life.

Of course, we never would attempt to change any person without the grace of God working inside and alongside of them and ourselves. *“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.”* (Ps. 127:1a). We are not so naive as to believe that our own human efforts or mind techniques are going to produce long-lasting results. Therefore, in coming pages we will be talking much about yielding to God's hand of blessings in our lives. Our faith is in Him. With this perspective, we want to actively remove from our lives any attitudes that may be blocking us from being all He wants us to be.