

**FIRSTFRUITS AND BREAKING THE SPIRIT OF POVERTY
STEWARDSHIP SERIES**

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TEXT: 3 John 2 Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.

INTRO: The big change in Sue's and my life financially was breaking the spirit of poverty over my life and my bloodline. This happened in 1997 in a very embarrassing way. But before I share this episode, I knew I had a spirit of poverty going back to 1992 when my father retired as Senior Pastor from his church, the Antioch Baptist Church in northern Virginia. It was also during the time I had resigned from my previous church, Abundant Life Church in Pasadena. My dad asked me to speak at his retirement service, and my brother and I flew from LA to D.C. to participate in this milestone.

After the service, we went to a Chinese restaurant for lunch, and after eating, my dad leaned back and said, "Ché Ho (he called me by my full name when he got serious), normally I would give you an honorarium (which is true because I had spoken at his church several times before). But I am going to give you something better. I am going to give you my Rolex watch!" He took off his watch and handed it to me. My heart sank. First because I was looking forward to the cash honorarium to support my family in LA. But second, because of my poverty mentality, I would never wear a Rolex watch even if it was given to me by my dad.

I quickly said, "Dad, I can't wear a Rolex watch—I am a pastor!" As soon as I said it, I immediately realized what a stupid statement that was. My dad laughed, "What are you talking about? I am a pastor and I have been wearing this watch for years, and now I am giving it to you." I realized that I would hurt my dad if I didn't receive it. So, I received his gift but put the watch in my drawer and never wore it until God broke the spirit of poverty off my life through Cindy Jacobs several years later.

PURPOSE STATEMENT: I WANT TO SHARE THREE TRUTHS THAT HAVE HELPED ME TO BREAK THE SPIRIT OF POVERTY AND TO PROSPER SINCE 1998.

I. BREAK OFF THE SPIRIT OR THE MENTALITY OF POVERTY FROM YOU AND YOUR BLOODLINE

There are two roots to poverty that I want to address. One is:

A. PLATONIC THINKING: a religious spirit of poverty.

1. Plato lived 350-400 years before Jesus was born. He was a disciple of Socrates and the mentor to Aristotle. His writings had a tremendous influence on the early church fathers like Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and even Augustine. He taught dualism.
2. Dualism is the philosophical doctrine that the universe contains opposed powers of good and evil, especially seen as balanced equals. Plato taught that the spirit world was good, and the material world was evil. It sounded Christian, but there were two flaws to that philosophy. First, when God created the physical world in Genesis 1, He declared His material world “good.” Second, there is good and evil, but they are not equal. It is not like the Yin and Yang, the Dark Force, and the Good Force in Star Wars. God is greater than Satan, and good overcomes evil. Unfortunately, Plato’s philosophy sounded Christian. **1 John 2:15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**
3. Ironically, not loving the world is not just hating sin and evil, but not conforming to the ideologies and vain philosophies of the world.
4. As a result, a heresy formed called Gnosticism. It refers to a certain “knowing” and revelation of dualism, and it influenced the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Docetic Gnostics did not believe that Jesus bodily rose from the dead because it would affirm the material world; the physical world was inferior. They believed that Jesus rose as a ghost.
5. John combats this heresy by saying in **1 John 1:1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life...** John is basically saying, “I was there after the resurrection, and I even ate fish and bread with Jesus on the beach” (John 21:12-14).
6. But by the end of the 1st Century, the damage was done. By 140 AD you have the writings of *The Shepherd of Hermas* saying that you can go to a high level of spirituality through asceticism. You start to see the beginnings of the monastic movement. Many believers who went into the monastic life wanted to seek God and salvation, and they thought you had to live an ascetic life to achieve that union with God. Salvation had been reduced to works instead of grace until Martin Luther’s 1517 Reformation.
7. In the monastic movement, you had to make three vows. First, a vow of chastity: no sex. Again, the physical was inferior to the spirit world. Second, a vow of poverty: no money and possessions. And third, a vow of obedience. This mentality entered the Church, and to this day, poverty is equated with piety. It is a religious spirit.

8. God used the monks to translate and upkeep the Scriptures. They invented the clock to call the monks to prayer. They were some of the most literate people, and soon they became the teachers at schools and universities. But, in my opinion, more damage was done than good.

B. BORN IN POVERTY – EVEN GENERATIONS OF POVERTY

1. **THE OTHER WAY A SPIRIT OF POVERTY CAN COME IN IS BECAUSE YOU WERE BROUGHT UP IN POVERTY.** The Depression generation or the Great Recession generation. An immigrant upbringing.
2. If Jesus came to give us a prosperous life, then it stands to reason that Satan wants to keep people poor. He comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10).
3. Peter Wagner was brought up near the end of the Depression, and then he was influenced with a religious spirit of poverty as a missionary.
4. At the end of this message, before we bring forth our firstfruits, I want to as your pastor, break the spirit of poverty off you and your bloodline.
5. Some of you have gone through this, but from my experience, there are layers to this issue, and I believe that God wants you to be totally delivered!

C. A SIGN OF A POVERTY MENTALITY IS THAT YOU HAVE A HARD TIME RECEIVING OR YOU APOLOGIZE FOR BEING BLESSED

1. Finish the testimony with Cindy Jacobs at our prophetic conference at Mott.

D. ANOTHER SIGN IS THAT YOU ARE STINGY AND YOU ARE NOT GENEROUS (e.g. you don't pick up the tab, don't give spontaneous gifts to others)

E. YOU STRUGGLE WITH THE FEAR OF LACK. Even though you know that the Word says that He will meet all your needs according to His riches, you are still bound in fear.

F. YOU ARE ANXIOUS AND EVEN DEPRESSED ABOUT YOUR FINANCIAL SITUATION.

1. **Proverbs 11:25 The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered.**

II. RENEW YOUR MIND

A. YOU HAVE TO REMOVE THE UNGODLY BELIEF OF POVERTY AND PUT ON THE BIBLICAL MENTALITY OF PROSPERITY

1. **Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**
2. **Psalm 1:1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law (*Torah*) he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water**

that yields its fruit (attractive, nutritious, and bearing seed) **in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.**

B. 3 John 2 Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.

1. Background to 3 Jn 2. It was written by the Apostle John, who wrote the Gospel of John and scholars date this 90 to 95 AD. He wrote it to the church in Ephesus. We know that he became the apostle overseeing Ephesus. He addresses himself as an elder, which is *presbyteros*. Extremely humble doesn't even use his name but it is implied that Gaius which was a common name. There are three Gaius that are mentioned in the NT, Gaius of Cor, Gaius of Macedonia, and Gaius of Derbe, and no one knows if he was any one of them. Most likely not.
2. Prosperity in the Old Testament: happiness, living in peace and security, success in labor, benefits of good family relationships, riches, and wealth. Implied in the word is the blessing that came from obeying God and His Word. Deuteronomy 28: It is God who bestows prosperity to those who obey God's Word. In the Old Testament, prosperity is one of the fruits of national revival (Psalm 106:5, Zechariah 1:17).
3. In the New Testament, the word is *euodoo*, "to be led down a good path," or "to have a successful journey", hence, to prosper or succeed. Recently, David Yonggi Cho passed away. He founded Yoido Full Gospel Church. It was on Yoi Island, but he used the Greek word *euodoo*, and thus prosperity came to the Church when Korea was in abject poverty. The church was founded in 1958. **Cho often said that 3 Jn 2 was his life verse.**
4. Prosperity, therefore, is more than financial. It is a way of thinking, feeling, deciding about life, health, and money. This is the Father's will for you. He loves you and wants to bless you. What you must do is get aligned with His will. One way is to get your soul healed.
5. However, Paul uses the same Greek word, *euodoo* in the context of finances. He tells the Corinthian Church in **1 Cor 16:2 On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.**
6. By the way, next year we are going to have annual first fruits offering and you can save and put it aside what you sense the Lord telling you to give.
7. He invites us to partner, to participate with Him regarding the future of your life, your family, and the world you live in. This is what prosperity and stewardship is all about.
8. The soul is your mind, emotions, and will. The greatest blessing or struggle is in your mind.

9. I believe this is more than giving a nice greeting to Gaius. I believe John begins this letter to break that gnostic spirit that started to lead people into extreme asceticism and poverty. We too will pray for prosperity in your life.
10. You must believe that God loves you and wants you to prosper!

III. COME IN THE OPPOSITE SPIRIT WITH GENEROSITY

A. GOD HAS INSTITUTED THE TITHE AND OFFERINGS TO HELP US FROM TWO EVILS: THE LOVE OF MONEY AND A SPIRIT OF POVERTY

B. FIRSTFRUITS PRINCIPLES

2. **Romans 11:16 (NIV) If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.**
3. Given at the beginning – sanctifies the whole (our life and all we love).
4. I know that we are doing this in December, but one of the reasons is that we want you to get a tax write-off by the end of the year. Second, people will be making faith promises and need some time to get the money in, so we want to give you until the end of December to bring your money in.
5. This is a firstfruits offering for 2022. As you sow your firstfruits offering, we are praying as pastors that you will receive a breakthrough in 2022.
6. Holy: outside the natural, separate from the ordinary, pure. When something is sanctified to the Lord, He treats it as His own. It is kept, blessed, increased, and enlarged to greater capacities.
7. Simply, we honor the Lord with the first and the best, and the whole or the rest is blessed. A pattern is a revelation of His ways.
8. **Ezekiel 44:30 (NKJV) The best of all firstfruits of any kind... you shall give... to cause a *blessing* to rest on your house. (*to settle, find a resting place, imparted favor and protection*)**
9. Generosity – an indicator of grace and love at work. It is becoming more like Jesus.
- 10.2 **Corinthians 8:7 (NIV) But just as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us — see that you also excel in this grace of giving. 8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.**
11. God isn't after our money; He's after our hearts. Giving will transform our hearts.
12. Matthew 6:21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
13. We give according to what we have.
14. 1 Kings 17:8ff – the Widow of Zarephath
15. We may think we have nothing, but we do. Our last can be a new FIRST.

C. FOUR FINAL KEYS TO FIRSTFRUITS:

1. **Cyclical** – Annual basis or the beginning of a venture. E.g., when I started a new job, I would give the first paycheck to the Lord.
2. **Sacrificial** – What moves you, often moves God. **2 Samuel 24:24** “**I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing...**”
3. **Focused** – Prioritize the areas you are sowing into for breakthrough. It may be your marriage. A supernatural healing. It should reflect the godly passions of our heart (Psalm 37:4).
4. **Let's Pray:** Before I break the spirit of poverty and fear off your life and your blood line, I feel it is important to give you an invitation of becoming a lover and follower of Jesus. You can only do this by the grace of God.
Salvation prayer.

I want to make an apostolic decree and break the spirit of poverty, fear, anxiety, and depression off your life in Jesus' mighty name. Hold up your firstfruits offering in your hand...