

Adult Group Study Guide for October 25, 2020

Series: "The Bible Doesn't Say That"

Message: "Obedience Leads to Prosperity, Part 1"

Goal: To place our trust in God who is the giver of every good and perfect gift.

Key Verse: *That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*
– 2 Corinthians 12:10 (NIV)

1. The idea that people should "get what they deserve" is implanted deep within our culture, both in a negative and positive sense – those who do bad things should be punished, and those who do good things should prosper. What happens when that is the only principle at work? What do we really deserve?
2. The "prosperity gospel" is based on the idea that if we are obedient and faithful to God, he will make us prosperous through health, wealth, and good fortune. Televangelists have used this idea to raise money by promising that those who donate to their ministry will receive a financial blessing from God, often a multiple of the amount of what they have given. There's a little bit of the prosperity gospel in all of us. What makes this view so attractive?
3. Some Christians point to specific verses in the Bible to support their version of the prosperity gospel, especially Matthew 7:7-11, Psalm 37:3-4, Genesis 39:2-4, Deuteronomy 8:17-18, and Jeremiah 29:11. As you have time, read each passage in context. What is the Bible teaching us about the relationship between obedience and blessing? For example, Matthew 7:7-11 is followed by Matthew 7:12 – *So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.* How does that verse change the way you read the previous verses? (We are blessed to be a blessing!)
4. What happens if we put all our hope in the property gospel? How does that affect our view of God (as a vending machine?) and our relationship with him (you owe me)? What happens to our self-esteem when we hold this view and then encounter suffering? (I must have failed.) What effect can it have on our salvation? (Matthew 6:24; Matthew 16:24-26; Luke 12:13-21)
5. Read 1 Peter 4:12-16, 2 Cor. 12:9-10, and Romans 8:18, 28. What do these verses teach us about how to handle suffering? What happens when we change our expectations (don't be surprised by suffering) and learn to rejoice in all circumstances? Read Romans 5:3-4 and Philippians 4:11-13. What was Paul's secret?