

Should Christians Prosper?

James H. Hooks

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James H. Hooks responds to the question “Should Christians Prosper?” with a resounding “Yes!” in this Bible-based study of the Christian path to financial prosperity. However, that “yes” comes with a caveat: to enjoy a healthy bank balance, God and his will—not money—must be the focus of one’s life.

While Hooks says that most Christians believe God wants them to prosper, he notes that few actually enjoy the full prosperity God has planned for them—not because they lack the desire for prosperity, but because they do not understand how to access God’s gifts.

In providing a congenial, experiential guide to the biblical teachings on prosperity, Hooks takes on issues like fear and uncertainty, feelings of unworthiness, the real meaning of success, and how gratitude for what one already has opens the door to receiving more. But the author’s focus is not just on finances. Grounded in the belief that every word in the Bible is the word of God, Hooks sets prosperity into the context of a life lived in accordance with scriptural teachings; his work will be best appreciated by readers who share that belief.

The son of a hardworking Pennsylvania coal miner who died of cancer at the age of fifty-one, Hooks is no stranger to financial hardship. His first marriage, plagued by financial difficulties, ended in divorce. On the verge of bankruptcy, Hooks felt the Lord calling him to honor his commitments and to increase, rather than end, his tithe to his church—a decision with which his second wife, who married him despite his being in dire straits, agreed. Hooks writes: “It was at that time that God sent His financial blessings and multiplied our income to the point that we were able to tithe and pay off the creditors. God then laid on my heart that we weren’t the only Christians going through financial crises. Others need to know that God is true to His Word and that He always keeps His promises.”

While some of the author’s interpretation of scripture might be considered questionable—including his statement that during the Israelites’ forty-year sojourn in the desert, their clothes never wore out—his view of the role of God in a person’s financial life is more balanced than is that of some current “prosperity preachers.” Hooks states that rather than serving up prosperity on a plate, what God actually gives is the power to prosper in spite of the inevitable obstacles that will arise.

Overall, the book is well written, though not error free, and its conversational style is appealing. Errors include the lack of a question mark in the title as it appears on the cover (the question mark does, on occasion, appear in the text) and occasional mistakes in grammar, syntax, and word usage both within the book and in the back-cover material. Inclusion of the author’s educational background and the source of his ordination would lend greater credibility to his work, as would the provision of a more extensive bibliography. It is also suggested that the questionable interpretations mentioned above be removed or substantiated.

Those who take a literal approach to the Bible will appreciate the author's handling of the prosperity issue, as he has taken the diverse scriptures that deal with the topic and brought them together to provide an experiential guide to accessing the abundance he believes is always there for God's people.

Hooks is a church property and liability insurance professional. *Should Christians Prosper?* is the first in what he plans to be a series of books.

KRISTINE MORRIS (June 4, 2013)

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