

Discussion Questions

Smyrna and the Prosperity Gospel—Revelation 2:8-11

(Imagine for a moment you have been granted complete wealth, health, and contentment for the rest of your life. What would your life look like? What people, possessions, and circumstances would be present and why?)

In the sermon, we heard that Scripture reveals God chose to prosper the Jews. Prosperity is a *gift*. But the Jews were always tempted to think prosperity was their due—that they earned it.

- In what areas do you feel you are prosperous?
- In what ways are you tempted to think prosperity is your due (something you earned) as opposed to a gift from God?
- Can you identify where the idea of prosperity being your due, rather than a gift of God, came into your life? How might that idea, which is a lie from Satan, be linked to another lie: “You are better than your neighbor?”

According to a 2006 Pew survey, 46% of American Christians think God grants material possessions to believers (that is people with faith)... and 56% think rewards them with health.

- The word reward implies something that we earn or deserve. Do you believe that material possessions and health are rewards from God?
- Discuss the difference between a reward and a blessing.

Smyrna was a faithful church—one of only two that did not receive a rebuke from the Lord in The Revelation, so we might expect the Lord to reward them with something like prosperity.

- Do blessings always involve pleasure or health?
- At what times have you felt most blessed? Explain the circumstances that surrounded the blessing (before, during, and after it).

In Jeremiah 29:11 God clearly expresses His plans: “*For I know the plans I have for you,*” declares the Lord, “*plans to prosper you...*”

- If God desires prosperity in our lives, why does it often feel like we don't have it?
- What might God be up to in the midst of our struggles and hardships?

During the sermon, we heard that Jesus didn't say to Smyrna: “*You're poor and you're **going to be rich** sometime in the future.*”; He said, “*You **are** rich... already.*” And yet they were severely persecuted . . . even unto death.

- Do you ever get the feeling that we really just don't know what riches are . . . or what the Good is?
- What do you think true riches are—in God's eyes?
- Do you want that kind of prosperity and riches?

What excites you about those kinds of riches? What frightens you?

- Why does God say Smyrna is rich?
- Are you rich?

**These questions were created by Kimberly Weynen, Peter Hiatt's assistant.*

